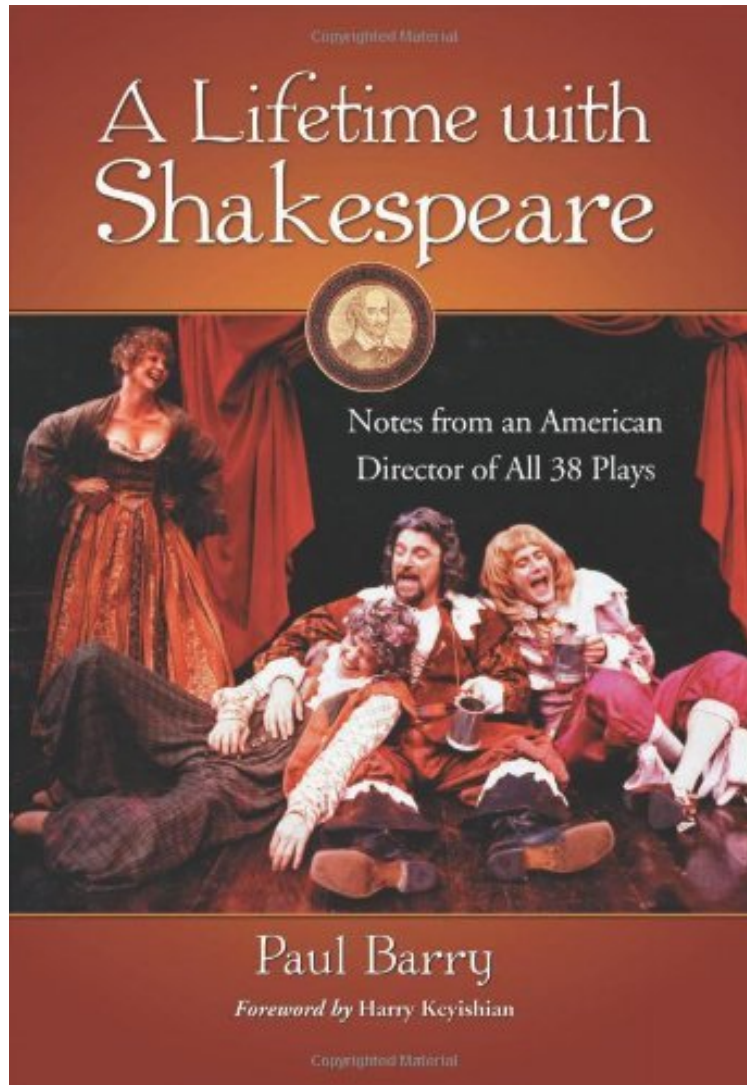


A Lifetime with Shakespeare: Notes from an American Director of All 38 Plays

Paul Barry, Foreword by Harry Keyishian
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Paul Barry, Foreword by Harry Keyishian : A Lifetime with Shakespeare: Notes from an American Director of All 38 Plays before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Lifetime with Shakespeare: Notes from an American Director of All 38 Plays:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading for shakespeare aficionados By honey This is a book for anyone who loves Shakespeare, but especially important for those who direct or act in his plays. As we are told Paul Barry has the distinction of being the only American ever to have directed all of the Shakespeare plays. I relished every page; I savored every word. There are surprises, revelations galore. But I can attest from personal

experience that the excellence of this enjoyable book reflects the singularity of the man who wrote it. I was one of those privileged to have attended all seven of the Shakespeare Colloquia weekends at Drew University where I saw many of the productions alluded to in this book. The superb scholars Paul Barry brought to us and the discussions with them and among ourselves enriched those weekends. The Barrys are marvelous actors and interpreters. And Paul Barry seems to know everything about Shakespeare. I consider those weekends some of the most important events of my life. With all that I have read about Shakespeare and his plays, I still learned a great deal from this book. And I had so much fun reading it. I loved Barry's joke that latecomers are punished because they miss the expositions at the beginnings of plays and remain in confusion as they spend lots of energy and time trying to figure out what's going on. Barry tells of one production of the very famous Hamlet where a youngster in the audience reacts to the announcement of Ophelia's drowning by spontaneously exclaiming, "Oh, she died." He says how wonderful it was to be there when one person hears that and reacts to it for the first time. Barry gives us insights throughout about things Shakespearians think they can never learn anything new about. Some examples: His description of the first scene with Kate and Petrucchio. Another is that Hamlet is the tale of three sons avenging father's deaths. You ask yourself, three? Hamlet avenging his father's death, okay. Laertes avenging Polonius's. Okay. So Barry reminds us of Fortinbras avenging his father's death. In fact the whole chapter on Hamlet is filled with fascinating new information for me explaining the answers to many riddles we have about motivation. I loved what Barry says about the coveted female role of Lady Macbeth. "Lady Mac is not a co star role:...Macbeth is not Antony and Cleopatra. Try telling that to a modern American actress, especially one with a name. she'll call her agent." The story about the dog in a production of Two Gentlemen of Verona is hilarious. Though the play is described as two families feuding, Barry asserts that the main conflicts in Romeo and Juliet are between teenagers and their parents. Page 75 begins an overview of Shakespeare's warrior plays. This is a special area of Barry's expertise. I couldn't help thinking about the song, Imagine, and how naive and out of place it would be in this context. The chapter on Troilus and Cressida is fabulous. This hash of a play gets the Barry treatment and it is terrific. The paragraph on page 87 about how Julius Caesar begins gives a tiny insight. Just another example of the special quality of this book. Barry elaborates on the goofy stage direction, "Exit, pursued by a bear", from A Winter's Tale, in a lengthy section full of information. "There is no subtext in Shakespeare." I read that and thought, of course! Is that not marvelous? In this book, Paul Barry's shares with the reader his extensive knowledge about text, religion, warfare, patriarchy in Shakespeare. Barry is expert in the rules of staging fighting scenes. He gives advice about how to rehearse. He constantly admonishes directors to trust and to stick to the script. A wonderful read. This is a book I would recommend highly. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A book to savor By J. Falen This is a very entertaining and informative book, full of wit and good sense and a passion for Shakespeare's plays. Part engaging memoir, part practical handbook, distilling a lifetime's creative experience of acting in and directing Shakespeare, it offers an opinionated (in the best sense) and useful reflection on the challenges, pitfalls and pleasures of staging the great Master Will. Certainly there are scholars who know the full canon well, but I can't imagine that there is another director who has such a comprehensive grasp of all these truly wonderful as well as the not-so-wonderful plays and who brings such an informed theater person's perspective to them. The author's central dogma as a director: fidelity to the playwright and his text and to his emotional truths and his intellectual questionings, to his intentions insofar as study and research and deep thought can help in determining them. His exploration of individual plays and his discussion of specific problems in staging them is full of insights and of plain, but uncommon good sense. His discussions on casting, characterization, timing, motivation, the importance of seasons and times of day, and a host of other matters come from long experience in theater, but his approach is also informed by close scholarly study as well. It would have been more pedestrian, perhaps, to do so, but there might have been some advantages had the author organized his discussion of the plays into genre categories: comedies, tragedies, histories and fantasies(?). But his discussion of individual plays is full of provocative insights. He is especially eloquent on the plays he regards as Shakespeare's great three: Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Lear. With these masterworks, as with other of the plays, his book invites one to reread these treasures of our civilization along with his commentary as a guide to the challenges that staging them poses. One may not agree with all of his arguments, but he is never less than challenging. His love of the poetry and his readings of the plays are always stimulating and often moving. The book offers many ideas for potential directors of these works as well as pleasures and illuminations for the general reader, not least in the elegance of its writing. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A LIFETIME WITH SHAKESPEARE - A TREASURE CHEST OF INFORMATION By maureen Flaherty After attending many wonderful productions at the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, I became a fan of Paul Barry, its Artistic Director and author of a new book, A LIFETIME WITH SHAKESPEARE. I read this book recently and found his writing style easy to follow and its contents illuminating. The first chapter is essential in getting the reader to understand the importance of the actors, the stage, and the resident company. Turning to the plays, I like his discussion of casting and his vision of what the characters should be like. Important to me are his comments on various actors, their performances, and the background of the plays including the historical aspects of some of the productions. Of course, the fight scenes and his comments about them add insight into what he emphasizes in his productions. Comparing the warriors with the United States Marines is great because if one understands the mental mindset of these

contemporary fighters, then one will understand that combat soldiers have not changed through the centuries. "We continually wage war because we've always waged war." He describes in wonderful detail the staging of the battle scenes and the evolution of the uniforms and battle gear to look effective to the audience while protecting the actors. He takes each play and discusses the process of staging it while also referring to what works on the stage and what does not. It is interesting that he discusses other directors' productions of the plays, their successes, and their failures, although he does not criticize them harshly. The side comments are great. An example is when Herman LaVerne Jones is Roger Robinson's understudy. Mr. Barry discusses Herman's fears when he took over the job of Othello because Rogers is too sick to perform; this adds a personal touch. The chapter entitled The Chronicle Plays is very effective in transitioning to the history plays. Looking at the Chronicle Plays in their historical order is logical because the reader can then make sense of these history plays especially when some characters move from one play to another one. There is continuity here. A LIETIME WITH SHAKESPEARE is the kind of book that one can and should read more than once because there is so much material in it. It is a great read!

Written by the only American to direct and fight-choreograph all of Shakespeare's plays, this text represents an expert and practical guide to the Bard's oeuvre. From the Henry VI plays through The Tempest, each play is explored in its full theatrical complexity, with particular attention paid to directorial and acting challenges, character quirks and development, and the particularities of Shakespearean language. Directing successes are recounted, but the failures are not shied away from, making this work indispensable for anyone interested in producing plays by Shakespeare.

"valuable...insightful...entertaining"--The Shakespeare Newsletter. About the Author Paul Barry has spent 60 years as a professional actor and musician on stage and in films, and has directed over 300 plays and musicals.