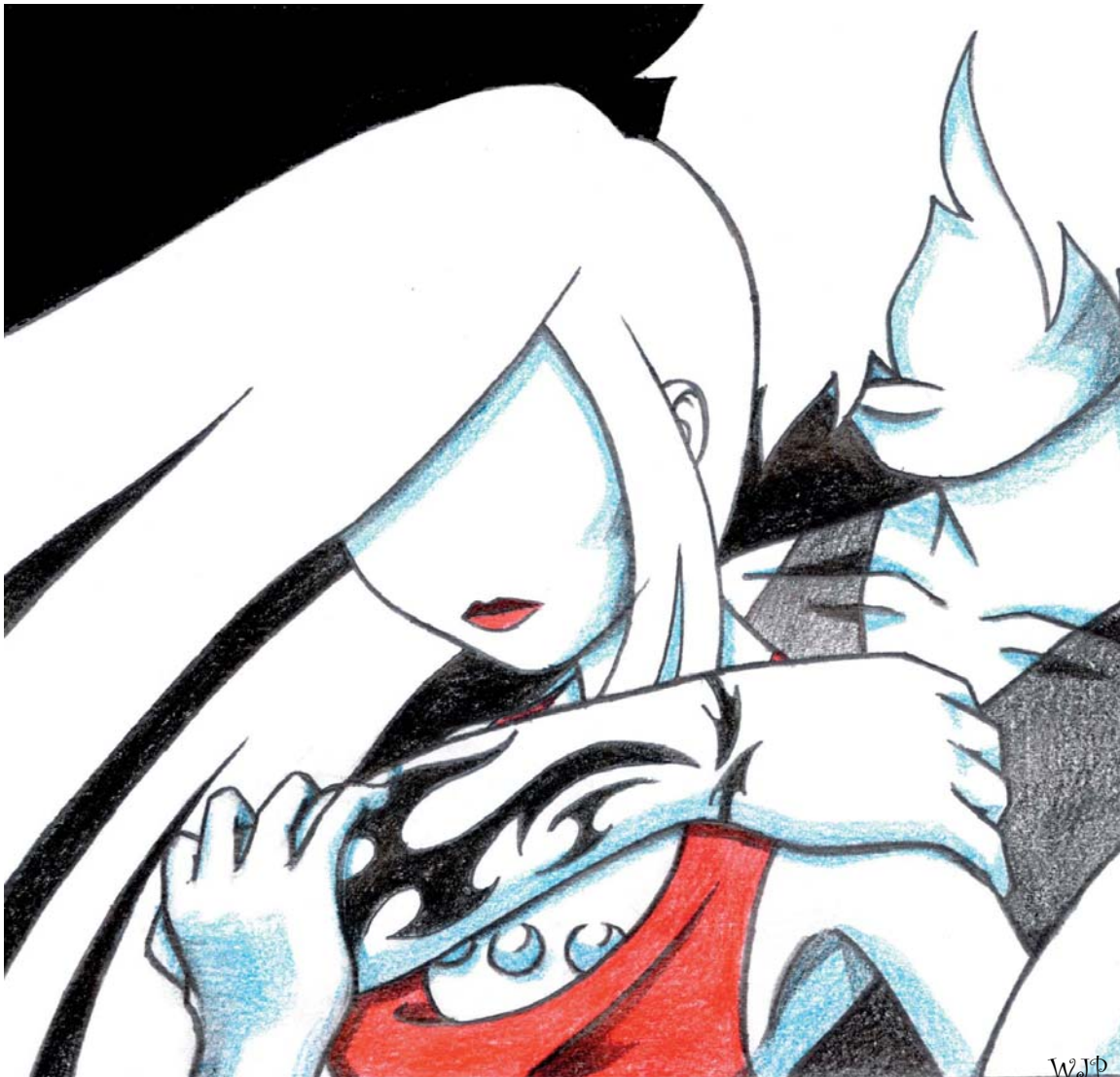


Miss Julie

Study Guide



Birmingham-Southern College
College Theatre
Department of Theatre & Dance – 2007

What is Miss Julie all about?

This updated telling of Strindberg's classic play, set in the American South, is produced and performed by Birmingham-Southern College. Strindberg's characters are among the most ill-matched couples in theatrical history. Each is mistaken about the other, and in the shadow of night long-hidden secrets are unleashed in the claustrophobic confessional of the family home. The conflict between Julie and John escalates to psychological and physical warfare—and total destruction.

BSC's Deep South American adaptation was inspired by a passion to rediscover the issues and danger of this classic play for contemporary audiences. As it heightens the characters' struggle to new levels of danger, "Miss Julie" renews its challenging examination of such issues as gender and social division, as well as the larger questions of realizing human dignity around the world.

Interview with a Dead Guy

August Strindberg

(Born Johan August Strindberg: 22 January 1849 - died 14 May 1912)

With Matthew Mielke and Mac Smith (M&M)

Strindberg – student, tutor, theatrical extra, pharmacy assistant, journalist, biographer, painter, library assistant, photographer, telegrapher, occultist and alchemist; but more importantly, one of the most influential Scandinavian authors of drama the theatre has seen.

M&M: So, Mr. Strindberg, this is quite a list of jobs you've held over the years. What led you into writing plays?

AS: Yes, well. It is quite a list, isn't it? I got into the writing of the plays to meet girls while at university. I went to Uppsala U., you know. GO, FIGHTING LEMMINGS! Never graduated, though. I was a bit of a "hippie," if you will. Did almost anything to make ends meet, including tutoring, translating, and even being an insurance agent. Ah, those were the days...

M&M: But Mr. Strindberg, the plays...

AS: Oh, yes. I had my first published play, Master Olof, when I was only 23 years old, but the Royal Dramatic Theatre dumped it because my play was too realistic for their bourgeoisie sensibilities. A word of advice: if you want a play performed don't use it to make fun of national heroes.

M&M: I'll pass that on... But you did find success in writing plays, didn't you?

AS: I pushed the Theatre for a more naturalistic writing style about the relations between men and women, but found it very difficult to stay objective—some of it got a little too close to home. I eventually left Naturalism behind and wrote in the style of Symbolism in order to keep my plays from being scientific treatises.

M&M: Did you find success in other writings?

AS: Yes, I did, not just plays. I wrote the novel The Red Room. Big success, made me famous. I got married as well, to an actress, and wrote a play for her to act in, Lucky Per's Journey. It was also a big success. Funny though, the next year I had to flee the country with my wife and kids. Even my Miss Julie was censored due to its ultra-realistic nature. Miss Julie demanded that audiences see and hear things that they were not used to viewing in the melodramas of the time.

M&M: The success of your writing garnered you a lot of attention?

AS: You better believe it! I was married three times and had plenty of affairs on the side. I wrote a lot about the hypocrisy of society's gender roles and stuff like that, but my personal relationships crashed and burned. Each of my wives was a strong, independent woman.

M&M: Wait a minute! You wrote about the empowerment of women but in *your* life expected them to give up their careers and stay at home and take care of you?

AS: I never said I was consistent.

M&M: Clearly. But it couldn't have been all that bad...

AS: Nah, I loved my kids. I left them the small fortune I made in selling my works to a publisher about a year before my death.

M&M: How generous... well, thank you for joining us, Mr. Strindberg. ... It was certainly, enlightening.

AS: I just like to keep it real.

M&M: Quite...

Strindberg vs. BSC Adaptation

Story: On the evening of a holiday celebration, two fatally ill-matched individuals form a romantic attachment. Their dark fates raise vital questions about the nature of privilege, gender roles in our culture, and how actions define the future.

Setting: His was on a Midsummer's Eve in the depths of the 19th century.
Ours, the Fourth of July, right here in the early 21st century.

Country: His, Sweden; ours, USA, the deep south.

Characters: Strindberg: Julie: young woman of privilege
Jean: house valet
Kristin: house cook
Julie's father: lord of the manor
BSC: Julie: young woman of privilege.
John: aspiring rock artist
Kristin: house-keeper
Julie's father: music mogul

Some Key Actions in Strindberg's 19th Century play

Julie offers John beer
John kills Julie's pet bird, which is unnamed
John is intimidated by the sight of Julie's father's shoes
Julie's father calls Jean with the sound of a bell
Julie commits suicide with her father's gun

Some Key Actions in BSC's Adaptation

Julie is intrigued by an internet stalker
Julie offers John southern moonshine
John kills Julie's pet cat, Iphigenia
John is intimidated by Julie's father's numerous emails
Julie commits suicide by Oleander

Dialogue Contrasts

Original: *That reminds me of a dream I sometimes have, in which I'm on top of a pillar and can't see any way of getting down. When I look down, I'm dizzy. I have to get down but I haven't the courage to jump... There can't be any peace for me at all until I'm down, right down on the ground.*

BSC Adaptation: *Not so long ago, the cable television guy was here. In the attic. He fell through the ceiling. That night I dreamt I fell. No, not from the attic. Nothing so mundane as that. I was in the sky, in my father's plane. I jumped out, without a parachute, falling free through the air, falling and falling and falling, no Earth in sight, moving through ... Eternity.*

Victorian Era Miss Julie

The Victorian Era (the 1800s) would have seen Julie dressed in corset, petticoat, probably pantaloons, white silk or cotton stockings, maybe light color shoes (as it is summer.) She would have worn a fitted dress (with a slender, pinched-in waist) of lightweight, light color silk, or perhaps fine cotton and fine linen. It would have some delicate trim, as her father would have wanted that. Her hair was swept back-and-up and possibly held in place by ornate hair pins.



Hair styles of such a day might have had a curled bang in the front. Julie also would have a ‘hanky’, probably fine, sheer linen with a perfumed scent.

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/C/caillebotte/rainy.jpg.html>

Strindberg describes Kristin as wearing a light-color cotton dress and apron. The cotton was probably home-spun, and not the quality of Julie’s. The apron was probably long, a bit stained from cooking—making her look the role of the working domestic. Kristin’s shoes are dark or brown leather, and she probably just owns the one pair. Her sleeves are short or rolled up to work in the kitchen. When Kristin comes dressed for church she may wear the same garment, or just a clean simple cotton dress. She would wear the same shoes though maybe add a lightweight shawl and a reticule bag.



<http://www.mezzo-mondo.com/arts/mm/caillebotte/CAG008.html>

Jean/John is a father’s “valet,” or “gentleman’s servant.” He wears “livery,” which is a sort of uniform. He is probably dressed in a grey or neutral color, neat cut-away coat, clean shirt and cravat, vest, and trousers (long, clean, nice ones.) Likewise his boots or shoes would be “uniform.” He is clean polished in order to serve the Count. When Julie asks him to discard his formality, he would put on a shorter, less fitted, dark, less fine fabric coat. Were he daring he would perhaps wear dark rumpled trousers, remove his dickey (a shirt collar) and tie—dressing more the part of a casual-wear situation, to drink or ‘hang out’ with other hired help.

2007's Miss Julie

By contrast, our 2007 Miss Julie is conceived in 'Black and White.' Julie is ethereal and in a dress that is sheer or translucent and very airy. For this effect, we chose this summer's big fashion hit, a cotton eyelet halter dress. Julie's dress looks very expensive and put-together with matching wedge 'peep-toe' white sandals. This costume was inspired by the look of *People Magazine* (Eva Longoria, Paris Hilton, Reese Witherspoon are all photographed in similar attire). Julie's haircut is expensive-chic-sleek, a pretty, clean, fresh shoulder-length red.



John is imagined as a dark and dirty rock and roller. He is dressed in black—a sinister color. He has black tattoos, body and ear piercings, black unbuttoned and frayed jeans, black dress shirt, black sports coat, and black sandals. John also sports a black and silver cuff wristband. He has somewhat of a rock-and-roll sophistication to him.



Kristin is in black and white as well. As the "server" and the housekeeper at the party, she is in the "waitperson's" formal black trousers, white tux-like blouse, black bow tie, and short black apron which clearly says "servant!" Her hair is simply pulled back and up, unstructured. Her glasses are on for a more business-like, no-

nonsense look. Sensible black loafers and black socks complete her look.

Her church-wear is a black and white print cotton summer dress that is not as expensive looking as Julie's. We gave her simple black ballet flats and a small black handbag with a painted white-bamboo handle that looks summery, and a white cotton light-weight sweater. Kristin keeps her glasses and pulls her curled hair back into a prettier style.

August Strindberg's Miss Julie was released in 1888, when many other significant events were happening around the world. We thought it would be interesting to take a look back at other notable events at that time.

SO, DID YOU KNOW?

- Nope, it's not a typo. Even though Miss Julie was released in 1888, August Strindberg set the play in 1894, six years in the future.
- In May of 1888, in Scotland, the Celtic F.C. played its first official match against the Rangers F.C. and won, 5-2.
- July 17, 1888 – British parliament made waves when it allowed bicycles on the road, as long as they were equipped with a bell to be used while on the carriageway.
- Love looking at MySpace pictures? Did you know that George Eastman registered the trademark Kodak, and introduced his roll film camera in 1888?
- Think your life has drama? After a fight with a close friend, Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh infamously cut off the lower part of his own left ear on December 23, 1888.
- Jack the Ripper was an alias given to an unidentified serial killer (or killers_ active in the largely impoverished Whitechapel area and adjacent districts of London, England in the latter half of 1888. Despite one of the most intensive manhunts ever conducted by Scotland Yard detectives, "The Ripper" was never actually caught, although there were several suspects. November 9 marked the fifth and last of Jack the Ripper's victims when the body of Mary Jane Kelly was found, the following murders were attributed to copy-cat killers.
- Tired of taking notes and your pencils always breaking? Use your ballpoint pent. It was first patented in 1888.
- At the café and afraid to put your mouth on the glass? Use a straw! The first wax drinking straw was patented in 1888, by Marvin C. Stone in Washington DC. Germophobes get excited!
- Your city skyline is filled with tall buildings because Leroy Buffington patented a way to build skyscrapers.
- Harpo Marx, one of the infamous Marx brothers (a group of Broadway entertainers who later became motion picture comedians) was born in 1888.
- St. Andrew's Golf Club the first American golf club in Yonkers, NY opened due to John Reid of Scotland's demonstration of golf to Americans earlier that year.
- Suffragette City! In 1888, Susan B. Anthony organized the International Council of Women. She is the first real woman to be cast on a coin.
- The Annual Broadway Tony Awards were named after the actress-producer Antionette (Tony) Perry, born in (You Guessed It!) 1888.
- The year 1888 marked the coming of electric street cars and the passing of horse and mule-drawn carts.
- Thomas P. "Boston" Corbette, the alleged soldier who shot John Wilkes Booth, once he was cornered, had trouble adjusting to life without the fame he felt he deserved for the shooting. After escaping from the Topeka asylum, where he'd be confined for supposed insanity, he died in the great Hinckley fire in Minnesota.

Questions for After Viewing the Production

- What motivates John and Julie to one another? Why is Julie attracted to John? Why is John attracted to Julie? Why does the combination of the two characters lead to destruction, and what can we learn from Julie and John?
- In the play, Julie chooses to poison herself with Oleander, spurred on by John. How might Julie have avoided destroying herself? Could Julie have learned from her mistakes? What positive choices might Julie have made?
- What motivates Julie's drive to blog and follow the trial of her internet stalker? What does Julie's discovery about the nature of her stalker do to her world?
- Why do you think Julie constantly wears Oleander around her neck?
- Why is the cat so important to Julie? How is this shown by the cat's name?
- What point was Julie's mother trying to make by raising Julie as a boy? Do you think the flipped social roles hurt or helped Julie? How?
- Why does John respond to Kristin differently than he does to Julie?
- Of the three characters, who is the most responsible for Julie's death?

Edinburgh Fringe Festival Review

The three-handed play Miss Julie, written by August Strindberg, has been adapted by Alan Litsey, bringing it up-to-date. It has been relocated to the American deep south, and is performed with zest and no mean talent by Birmingham-Southern College Theatre, hailing from Alabama.

The play, now set in the home of a wealthy family on the fourth of July, centers around Kate Jenkins's passionate portrayal of Julie, the beautiful, 'rich bitch', crazy daughter of the home; Amanda Kramer's Kristin, the much put upon family maid; and Julie's trailer-trash musician 'with a past' boyfriend, John, portrayed by Mac Smith.

At the party, Julie makes a play for John "because she can." Her attentions are not rebutted by him, but does he have an ulterior motive? Who is Julie's stalker? Is Kristin as mild as she seems?

The answer to these questions can be found by going to see this superb interpretation of an engaging play, but be quick – the show only runs until the 11th. ~Geoffrey Evans

www.one4review.com

Miss Julie

Vocabulary and References

Antithesis (p. 60) – opposition; contrast

Brickteacher (p. 31) – a teacher who knows the whole class will fail at the task she is about to assign, but does it anyway

Bucolic (p. 52) – pertaining to shepherds; pastoral

Henry Charles Bukowski (p. 41) – (16 August 1920 – 09 March 1994) was an influential Los Angeles poet and novelist

Kurt Cobain – (Aberdeen, Washington, USA; 20 February 1967 – c. 05 April 1994) was the lead singer, guitarist, and songwriter of the Seattle-based rock band Nirvana

Dionysus or **Dionysos (12)** – Greek god of wine, represents not only the intoxicating power of wine, but also its social and beneficial influences. He was also known as the Liberator, freeing one from one's normal self, by madness, ecstasy, or wine. The divine mission of Dionysus was to mingle the music of the flute and to bring an end to care and worry.

Euripides (p. 23) – (ca. 480 BC- 406 BC) was a classical Greek tragic playwright. Euripides is known primarily for having reshaped the formal structure of traditional Attic tragedy by showing strong women characters and intelligent slaves, and by satirizing many heroes of Greek mythology. His plays seem modern by comparison with those of his contemporaries, focusing on the inner lives and motives of his characters in a way previously unknown to Greek audiences.

Gnarl (p.31) – a petty, annoying person

King Henry VIII (p.52) – (28 June 1491 – 28 January 1547) was King of England, then Lord of Ireland, and lastly King of Ireland

Iphigeneia (p. 6) – is a daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in Greek mythology. In Attic accounts, Iphigeneia is sometimes called a daughter of Theseus and Helen raised by Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. The name means “strong-born.”

Sir Elton John (p. 26) – (Born Reginald Kenneth Dwight on 25 March 1947) is a five-time Grammy and one-time Academy Award-winning English pop/rock singer, composer and pianist. In his four-decade career, John has been one of the dominant forces in rock and popular music, especially in the 1970s. John has sold more than 250 million albums, plus hundreds of millions of singles, making him one of the most successful artists of all time.

Carson McCullers (p. 41) – (19 February 1917 – 29 September 1967) was an American writer. She wrote fiction that explores the spiritual isolation of misfits and outcasts of the South.

Medea (p.41) – was the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis and wife to Jason. In the play, *Medea*, Medea offers a poisonous gold diadem to the new wife of Jason, husband who left her when Creon, King of Corinth offers him his daughter, which ultimately kills the new wife and her father. Also, Medea sacrifices the two sons she had with Jason as retribution for leaving her.

Moonshine (p. 11) – is a common slang term for home-distilled alcohol, or whiskey for the hills, especially in places where this production is illegal. It sometimes contains impurities, off flavors, and toxins such as methanol that the more sophisticated distillation methods of commercial distilleries are able to control. In popular culture, moonshine is usually presented as being extremely strong.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (p. 22) – (15 October 1844 – 25 August 1900) was a German philosopher. He wrote critiques of religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy, and science, using a distinctive style. Nietzsche radically criticized the value and objectivity of truth, and his key ideas include interpreting tragedy as an affirmation of life.

Oleander (p. 39) – an evergreen shrub or small tree; one of the most poisonous plants

Sylvia Plath (p.1) – (27 October 1932 – 11 February 1963) was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer. Known primarily for her poetry, Plath also wrote a semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas, detailing her struggle with depression.

Rhinoceros by Eugene Ionesco (p. 56) – born Eugen Ionescu (26 November 1909 – 29 March 1994) was a French-Romanian playwright and dramatist

Martha Stewart (p. 56) – (born Martha Helen Kostyra on 03 August 1941) is an American business magnate, author, editor, and homemaking advocate.

Waiting for Godot (p. 56) – is an absurdist play by Samuel Beckett, written in the late 1940s and first published in 1952.

- * “Those who danced were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music” (p. 31) – quote by Angela Monet
- * “Listen to many, speak to a few” (p. 37) – quote by William Shakespeare
- * “You want me to tell you about the rabbits, George” (p. 38) – quote from *Of Mice and Men*, written by John Steinbeck
- * “Hand in hand from the Eiffel tower...” (p. 39) – quote from *Waiting for Godot*
- * “Quick bright things come from confusion” (p. 42) – quote *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* by character Lysander; written by William Shakespeare
- * “...the bell of the ball.” (p. 56) – a quote from *The Birthday Party*, by Harold Pinter

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Miss Julie

Company Biographies

(Students, Faculty, Staff)

Birmingham-Southern College (BSC)

Theatre Program

Alex Brouwer (Assistant Directory/Stage Manager/Company Manager) is a Birmingham-Southern senior Theatre Arts major from Fort Payne, Alabama. Alex has participated in over nineteen productions in the South Eastern United States. Some of her previous roles include: “Delightful” in *Dearly Departed*, “June” in *Smoke on the Mountain*, Stage Manager for *As You Like It*, Company Manager for *Urinetown*, Assistant Director for *Our Town* and *Peter Pan*.

Nikki Craft (Co-Fight Choreographer/Co-Costume Designer) is a senior Theatre Arts major from Decatur, Alabama. She has been involved in the theatre since the age of 8, and has performed in over 20 productions. Some of her favorite roles include Shelby, *Steel Magnolias*; Patricia, *Extremities*; and Celia, *As You Like It*. Nikki is also a member and certified Actor/Combatant in the Society of American Fight Directors.

Michael Flowers (Director) currently serves as a Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at Birmingham-Southern College, where he has been a faculty member since 1984. In addition to directing productions for the College Theatre, he teaches courses in musical theatre, acting, and stage movement. Michael’s work as a director has been recognized on numerous occasions through the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

Kate Jenkins (Julie) is a 2007 graduate of Birmingham-Southern with a B.A. in Theatre and is from Vestavia, Alabama. Her previous roles include Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Terry from *Extremities*.

Amanda Kramer (Kristin) is a junior theatre major at BSC. In her past two years of college, she has acted in a one-act play called *Don’t Pick Up* and has also played Phoebe in the main-stage production of *As You Like It*. In addition to her college acting credits, she has also had ample technical experience; she has worked as a stage manager, a sound board operator, and a member of lighting, costume, props, and set construction crews for various shows.

Alan Litsey (Playwright/Professor of Theatre) is a recipient of the Individual Artist Fellowship in Playwriting by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. His works include *Marian Faustus*, *Ph.D.* and *Aphra Behn: Emperor of the Moon*. He most recently directed BSC's *As You Like It* and performed in *Faith Healer* with Birmingham, Alabama's City Equity Theatre. He is a Member of Actor's Equity Association and the Dramatists' Guild.

Patti J. Manning (BSC Costume Designer in Residence/ Costume co-designer for *Miss Julie*) has 30 year professional experience in costume design and wardrobe for Opera, Ballet, Children's Theatre and Theatre. Costume credits number over 170, and she is celebrating 26 years with BSC and the BSC National Opera Association Apprenticeship with Birmingham Civic Opera. Patti's career highlights include the World Premiere design concept for *Madama Butterfly* with the Birmingham Civic Opera – 1979; Costume Design for the National Opera Association convention – *Il Trovatore*' Birmingham Civic Opera 1980; Costume Exhibit, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans 1982; Designed costume puppets for theatrical production, *Cape Town, South Africa*, 1984; Costume Construction and wardrobe for the Alabama Ballet- *Baryshnikov Gala* 1986; Designed masks, Exhibited in 1989 International Festival of Masks, Los Angeles; Alabama State American College Theatre Festival – Design award for *Hamlet the Musical*, 2001; *The National Society of Arts and LETTERS*- Career Award 2007.

Matthew Mielke (Professor of Theatre/Designer and Technical Directory) has designed scenery and/or lighting for over 75 productions. He is originally from Minnesota, but has made his home in Birmingham since 1990. His interests include computer design and graphics, theatre history, and he is a licensed pilot.

MacKenzie Smith (John) is a Sophomore theatre major from Auburn, Alabama. He is an aspiring film actor and draws his inspiration from Christopher Walken and Christian Bale. Most recently, he has performed in *Ah, Wilderness* and *As You Like It* at BSC.

Laura Spurgeon (Lighting Designer/Student Technical Director) is a second year student at BSC who is currently majoring in theatre. She intends on entering the field of film and media after graduation. While acting for film is a short term goal, Laura plans to become a film producer as well.

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