

What has always attracted me to Shakespeare is his deep understanding of humanity. His work and characters are timeless, and reoccurring, because they penetrate beyond our terrestrial world. To quote Maurice Maeterlinck, *"If we stay on a realistic level we remain ignorant of the eternal world and therefore of the true meaning of existence and destiny, of life and death."* Politics and culture are only a manifestation of an age, humanity and soul are eternal – this is where I root my work.

When I went back into *Love's Labour's Lost*, I first began by removing the signifiers of time and place to see what the nucleus of the work was. For me, it was embedded in the line "Young blood doth not obey an old decree." It's a play about growing up, and love. Love for ourselves and learning to love someone else. These characters, not unlike our current generation, have inherited a system of beliefs, expectations and "rules" they quickly realize need to change. But what does it mean to fundamentally change something deeply rooted in your being? What lurks in those mental trunks you haven't opened?

This is a play about a group of young people hiding from the unhealed parts of themselves they sequester into shadow and thus driving them to *perform* their identity instead of existing in their true authenticity. Isn't this us in 2025 everyday?

*Love's Labour's Lost* feels strikingly contemporary. It's Shakespeare's version of a coming-of-age story, complete with the joy, chaos, confusion, and vulnerability of first (or any) love. It dances with themes of gender, sexuality, privilege, and longing — all under the guise of a romantic comedy. It's rambunctious, tender, and a little bit scary — just like growing up.