

The Drolls: A Dramaturgy Mini-Zine

Alyssa Barrack

ORCID 0000-0003-1930-2255

Abstract

As one part of a set of audience-centric lobby materials for a new play development workshop at the University of Central Florida in summer 2025, I created this small zine to synthesize essential historical context and translate intensive research into an accessible, bite-sized format for audience engagement. This document had the goal of providing needed information to audiences to help them understand a historically complex new play. Audiences were receptive to this unique form of dramaturgical outreach and reported enjoyment of both the information provided and the inclusion of entertaining activities, indicating the enrichment of the play-world through interaction with the zine as a program insert.

This approach to the public-facing role of the dramaturg emphasizes playful, approachable, and audience-focused strategies to translate dramaturgical concepts to diverse audiences with variable levels of understanding about both the show's historical context and the nuances of dramaturgy. The zine provides formal constraints on the amount, type, and organization of information that can be communicated, which is useful when attempting to share a lot of context in short-form with a public. It is also a cost-effective DIY interactive element, printed here in black and white and on a single double-sided page, then cut and hand-assembled by the author in the days leading up to opening night. This nontraditional dramaturgy method garnered praise from collaborators and audience members alike, proving its efficacy and meriting further exploration, especially for low-budget and educational productions. My project demonstrates the potential of zines as a sustainable, replicable, and engaging tool for dramaturgical outreach to audiences.

Print and Assembly Instructions

1. Print using one standard sheet of paper, printing on both sides.
2. Cut:
 - a. Cut sheet in half along the long edge (horizontal cut, "hamburger style").
 - b. After cutting you should have:
 - i. Top half: "The Drolls" title page + "Thanks for attending" final page.
 - ii. Bottom half: "Timeline" (starting with 1650s) + "About Drolls"
3. Fold Each Half:
 - a. Top half: Fold so that "The Drolls" title page and "Thanks for attending" are on the outside.
 - b. Bottom half: Flip over so "Match the Shakespeare Quote" and "Timeline" (starting 1623) are visible, then fold so these are on the outside.

4. Combine and Staple:
 - a. Place folded bottom half inside folded top half (“The Drolls” title page should be on top).
 - b. Staple once in the center of the fold.

Final Page Order:

1. “The Drolls” title page
2. Timeline (starts 1558)
3. Timeline (starts 1623)
4. Timeline (starts 1650s)
5. About Drolls
6. Match the Shakespeare Quote
7. Devil’s Dance Mask activity
8. Thank you page with QR code

References

List of references for the images in the zine

- Ashton, John. “The Foole Rides Me”. From *Humour, Wit, & Satire of the Seventeenth Century*. Project Gutenberg, 1883. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50874/50874-h/50874-h.htm>
- Red, C. W. “The River Thames Map”. London Theatre, Wikipedia, 1917. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London_theatres_C16—C17,_after_Redwood.svgwood.
- Roberts, Robert. *Choyce Drollery*. Strait Bar-Gate (printer). Project Gutenberg, 1661 reprint. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/60454/60454-h/60454-h.htm>
- Kirkman, Francis. *Restoration Theatre Drolls*, Wikipedia. 1662. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Restoration_Theatre_Drolls_1662.jpg

List of references involved in this research process at large

- Barish, Jonas A. 1966. “The Antitheatrical Prejudice”. *Critical Quarterly* 8:4. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8705.1966.tb01315.x>.
- BBC Bitesize. “Popular Culture in Elizabethan England: Theatre, Shakespeare and the arts”. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z28vdmn/revision/1>.
- Bidisha. 2018. “Tudor, English and black – and not a slave in sight”. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/29/tudor-english-black-not-slave-in-sight-miranda-kaufmann-history>.
- Bridgen, James. “That Takes Guts: 7 Gory Execution Methods from Tudor England”. <https://www.history.co.uk/articles/that-takes-guts-7-gory-execution-methods-from-tudor-england>.
- Capp, Bernard. 2003. “Playgoers, Players and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern London: The Bridewell Evidence”. *The Seventeenth Century* 18:2. 159-171.
- Craig, Heidi. 2018. “Midnight the Gaps of Early Modern Drama”. Folger Shakespeare Library. <https://www.folger.edu/blogs/collation/minding-the-gaps/>.

- Ebsworth, J. Woodfall (ed.). 1656, upd. 1875. *Choyce Drollery*.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/60454>.
- Eubanks Winkler, A., & Schoch, R. 2022. *Sir William Davenant and the Duke's Company. Shakespeare in the Theatre*. Bloomsbury Press. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350130609>.
- Harding, James T. 2016. "Drolls: The Illegal Comedies Time Forgot". *BroadwayBaby.com*.
<https://broadwaybaby.com/features/drolls-the-illegal-comedies-time-forgot/1535>.
- Johnson, Samuel. 2021. *A Dictionary of the English Language*. 1755, 1773. Edited by Beth Rapp Young, Jack Lynch, William Dorner, Amy Lerner Giroux, Carmen Faye Mathes, and Abigail Moreshead. <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/>.
- Kaufmann, Miranda. 2017. *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*. Oneworld Publications.
- Kirkman, Francis. 1673. *The Wits, or, Sport Upon Sport*. Accessed on Internet Archive.
<https://archive.org/details/witsorsportupons00kirk/page/14/mode/1up>.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. 2003. "Marlowe's Lives". *Michigan Quarterly Review* 42:3.
- Ohlmeyer, Jane H. Upd. 2025. "English Civil Wars". *Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/English-Civil-Wars>.
- "Oliver Cromwell and Family". Westminster Abbey.
<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/oliver-cromwell-and-family>.
- Prickett, Katy. 2024. "The macabre tale of Oliver Cromwell's head". BBC News.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0j8vn2ne70o>.
- Prynne, William. 1633. *Histrio-matrix: The players scourge, or, actors, tragedy, divided into two parts*.
<https://archive.org/details/maspla00pryn/page/n1/mode/2up>.
- Rolins, Hyder E. 1923. "The Commonwealth Drama: Miscellaneous Notes". *Studies in Philology* 20:1. 52-69.
- Škrobánková, Klára. 2017. "Kirkman's The Wits or Sport Upon Sport as a Testimony of the Theatre Life during the Civil Wars and the Interregnum." MA Thesis.
- Taylor, Rupert. 2022 (Upd 2025). "When Puritans Closed Theatres". HubPages.
<https://discover.hubpages.com/entertainment/When-Puritans-Closed-Theatres>.
- "Trials and Execution of King Charles I | English Civil War | History for Schools and Teens". 2024. Uploaded to YouTube by Teach with Historic Royal Palaces.
<https://youtu.be/899il5aiTBg?si=gdPEfECh9clALrMp>.
- Zagha, Muriel. 2002. "The Puritan Paradox". *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2002/feb/16/artsandhumanities.highereducation>.
- Zildjian, Alexa. "Shakespeare, Saved by the Clown: The Problem of Print and Performance in the Interregnum". *Preserving the World's Rarest Books*.
<https://www.ustc.ac.uk/news/shakespeare-saved-by-the-clown-the-problem-of-print-and-performance-in-the-interregnum>.