

Reflections on What The Bard had Given Me

by Cathy C. Bonczek

I enjoy celebrating Shakespeare's birthday – not just because we're both April born, but because his words have had a huge impact on my life and work.

When I was in middle school, I was asked to MC a Shakespeare fest. This meant that I would go up on stage and introduce Shakespeare's bio and then usher in a variety of acts to honor the man. The whole event was videotaped.

I was very proud of myself for getting up on stage and for my ability to memorize my short introductory speech. Part of me liked the attention and the spotlight, the other part was happy to be part of the ensemble.

After the celebration had taken place, our teacher brought the videotape to class and said, "Let's watch it together and enjoy all your hard work."

I was the first person onscreen. I began my speech about Shakespeare's life story. I had waist-length brown hair in those days and everyone could quickly see that I had a nervous habit of flipping the hair over my shoulder. Right hand up, hair flip. Left hand up, hair flip. My head began to bobble from side to side as nerves increased my self-consciousness.

It was hugely distracting and the words became irrelevant – everyone was drawn into the syncopation of my hands and hair. Right hand up, hair flip. Left hand up, hair flip. In fact, the cameraman had tried to compensate for all the movement by zooming in and doing a tight focus on just my head. It was better, but my head continued to move from side to side.

It was hysterical. I started to giggle and then the whole class followed suit. I became the inadvertent comedic touch of the event. It was funny – but it was also deeply embarrassing. That was my first lesson in the power of movement and gestures and how they could either support – or undermine – a message.

In high school, I performed in Hamlet as Queen Gertrude, and learned how to convey age through movement. I also learned more about the impact of the voice and intonation on setting a mood. Living with Shakespeare's words every day in rehearsal made his language all so comprehensible and real.

In college, I studied Shakespeare's plays and walked away with the impression that every saying I'd ever loved, he had written.

Nowadays, I wonder if my ability to decipher Shakespearean English is a good foundation for understanding the many case studies, business updates and investment themes that my clients share on a daily basis.

I am often surprised on how often I think about Shakespeare and reference him. It always stuns me when someone admits they don't like his work, or they don't really know it.

I could jump up and give them a quick summary and bio – if nothing else, it might provide a good chuckle.

