

Toil and Trouble . . . and Totally Worth It

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor
Tuesday, 08 April 2014 12:48



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My husband and I met over a mutual interest in Shakespeare. Yes, we are *that* geeky.

Jeff was living on Hilton Head at the time, having relocated from San Francisco, where he'd apprenticed as an actor with the Berkeley Shakespeare Company.

I was living in Beaufort, the editor of the now-defunct *Beaufort Magazine*, serving on the board of the now-defunct SC Playwrights Festival. (Apparently, I'm a jinx.) Our board had contacted Jeff about producing a performance of staged Shakespeare readings as a fundraiser for the Festival. We met to discuss it over lunch at the old La Hacienda. Jeff was late and flustered – he'd had a flat tire – but also very cute, and the rest is history. We've been admitting impediments to this marriage of true minds ever since. (Sonnet 116, baby!)

Jeff eventually moved to Beaufort, where he began producing Shakespeare – once, sometimes twice, a year – at USCB and in Waterfront Park. His company, Lowcountry Shakespeare, flourished for about a decade. Producing Shakespeare in a small southern town – even one as cool as Beaufort – is a Herculean task and a labor of love. It's difficult, time-sucking, very costly and not always widely appreciated. For ten years, Lowcountry Shakespeare was both the bane of my existence and a source of great joy and pride. I eventually began acting in the plays, myself – how else was I going to see my husband now and

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then? – and the friendships I developed on those productions are precious to me to this day.

An English scholar in my former life, I had only ever approached Shakespeare's plays as literature – something to be pored over, poked at, and parsed – and engaging with them on stage, the way they were meant to be engaged, was a thrill and revelation. It was also a chance to see my husband in his element: juggling a thousand balls at once, making himself (and me) crazy, then somehow – at the last possible minute – magically bringing it all together in a seamless work of beauty. Always the producer, he was sometimes also the director, the set builder, and one of the actors. In fact, the last time *Macbeth* was produced in Beaufort, Jeff was Macbeth. And he was dazzling. We were still newlyweds at the time, and I remember watching him on stage opening night, just dumbstruck, thinking, "Who *is* this man I married? I don't even *know* this person." At the risk of sharing too much information . . . our daughter was born about nine months later. Never doubt that Shakespeare is sexy.

That was almost 13 years ago, and I am happy to report that there's a new (sexy) Macbeth in



town. Santiago Sosa has traveled to Beaufort from his home in Chicago to take on this role with the newly-formed company Shakespeare Rep. He's a professional actor with an MFA in theatre and countless Shakespearean roles on his resume. His costar Erin Dailey is a Julliard-trained Beaufort resident who's also done plenty of Shakespeare. On April 23rd, they will be joined by a cast of local actors – many of whom performed with Lowcountry Shakespeare back in the day – to celebrate the Bard's 450th birthday with a brand new production of *Macbeth* on the stage at USCB. My husband Jeff is producing – Me: "Just when I thought I was out, they pull

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