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Dramatic Publishing

AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS

by
TERRENCE ORTWEIN

An adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*



Dramatic Publishing
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(AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS)

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AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS

A Play in One Act
For 16 actors, flexible (male or female)

CHARACTERS

HAMLET	.....	Prince of Denmark
HORATIO	.....	friend to Hamlet
CLAUDIUS	.....	King of Denmark
POLONIUS	.....	Lord Chamberlain
LAERTES	.....	son of Polonius
ROSENCRANTZ	.....	courtier
GUILDENSTERN	.....	courtier
OSRIC	.....	courtier
A PRIEST		
GRAVEDIGGER		
PLAYERS		
GERTRUDE	.....	Queen of Denmark
OPHELIA	.....	daughter of Polonius
THE GHOST OF HAMLET'S FATHER		

Running time: Approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes.

AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS was developed by the Discovery Project at the Choate Rosemary Hall Summer Theatre Program, Wallingford, Connecticut, July 1991. The author is indebted to director, Ron Emmons, and to the following cast:

DYING HAMLET *Jen Snyder*
HORATIO *Rachel Easterly*
CLAUDIUS *Kara Brown*
GERTRUDE *Elizabeth Licht*
POLONIUS *Angela Lauria*
LAERTES *Caroline Gordon-Elliot*
HAMLET *Katherine Powell*
OPHELIA *Zoe Koff*
ROSENCRANTZ *Karen Matiskella*
GULDENSTERN *Jessica Provenz*
GRAVEDIGGER *Andrea Oess*
OSRIC *Lindsay Morgan*
PLAYER QUEEN *Elizabeth Peterson*

AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS

(A tight spot on HORATIO, who is holding his dying friend in his arms. A cup is near them.)

HAMLET. I am dead Horatio. Wretched Queen, adieu!
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time O, I could tell you—
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO. Never believe it.
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.
Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET. As th'art a man,
Give me the cup. Let go. By heaven, I'll ha't!
(HORATIO allows the weakened HAMLET to wrest the cup of poison from him. HAMLET raises the cup in a toast to himself.)
Hamlet! *(He drinks all the poison.)*
Hamlet, what a wounded name!
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. (*HAMLET dies.*)

HORATIO. Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet

Prince,

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

(Looking directly at the audience.)

What is it you would see?

(He sets the dead HAMLET gently down. He rises and walks directly to the audience. Tight spot on HORATIO as the lights fade to black on HAMLET.)

What is it you would see?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world

How these things came about. So shall you hear

Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,

Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,

Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,

And, in this upshot, purposes mistook

Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I

Truly deliver.

(He claps his hands, and lights come up on one side of the stage, revealing the assembled PLAYERS. To audience.)

These are the players. They are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death, you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

(He leads the audience in applause for the PLAYERS.)

Your hands.

(To the PLAYERS.)

Come, then.

(As the PLAYERS come to HORATIO, he gives them scripts. They then take positions in the acting area. All the PLAYERS use the scripts in all the early scenes. Gradually, and one-by-one, the PLAYERS drop using the scripts, so by the final few scenes, no scripts are used. To the player doing CLAUDIUS.)

He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me. (*LAERTES.*) The adventurous knight shall use his foil and target. (*GERTRUDE.*) The lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for it. (*HORATIO. To distinguish between HORATIO and the player acting HORATIO throughout the following scenes, the player will be designated HORATIO(P). HORATIO keeps HORATIO(P) by his side after he presents him with a script.*)

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines. (*HAMLET.*) Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand thus, but use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. (*OPHELIA.*) Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. (*To the audience.*) For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (*To GRAVEDIGGER, POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.*) And let those that play your

clowns speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, as though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.

(He makes sure the PLAYERS are properly arranged on stage for the first scene. He may need to switch positions of two actors. When he is satisfied, he says to the PLAYERS.) You are welcome to Elsinore.

(He turns to the audience, bows, and says.)

You are welcome to Elsinore.

(He invites the audience to applaud the PLAYERS. They do. The PLAYERS join in the applause, and this applause becomes the applause of the court for their new KING, Claudius. He enjoys their applause and then holds up his hands for silence.)

KING. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen,
Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere,
With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit. What is't, Laertes?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES. My dread lord,
Your leave and favor to return to France,
From whence, though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS. He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laborsome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

KING. Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

HAMLET (*aside*). A little more than kin, and less than kind!

KING. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET. Not so, my lord. I am too much in the sun.

QUEEN. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not forever with thy vailèd lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET. Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET. Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not "seems."
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play,
But I have that within which passes show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING. 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father,
But you must know your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his.
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature.
We pray you throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father, for let the world take note
You are the most immediate to our throne,
And with no less nobility of love

Than that which dearest father bears his son
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire,
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.
I pray thee stay with us, go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

KING. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.

Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come.
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart. Come away.

(CLAUDIUS, accompanied by GERTRUDE and followed by POLONIUS and the rest of the court, exits. HORATIO signals to LAERTES and OPHELIA to stay. Then HORATIO cues HAMLET, who goes to OPHELIA, kisses her hand and exits. HORATIO nods to LAERTES to begin.)

LAERTES. Fear it Ophelia, fear it my dear sister,
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmastered importunity.

OPHELIA. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep
As watchman to my heart, but, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,

Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.

(Enter POLONIUS.)

POLONIUS. Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!

The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stayed for.
There—my blessing with thee,
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Beware of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that th' opposèd may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulleth the edge of husbandry.
This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell. My blessing season this in thee!

LAERTES. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS. The time invites you. Go, your servants tend.

LAERTES. Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well
What I have said to you.

OPHELIA. 'Tis in my memory locked,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES. Farewell. (*Exit LAERTES.*)

POLONIUS. What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA. So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS. Marry, well bethought.
'Tis told me he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.
If it be so—I must tell you
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behooves my daughter and your honor.
What is between you? Give me up the truth.

OPHELIA. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS. Affection pooh! You speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS. Marry, I will teach you. Think yourself a baby
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly.

OPHELIA. My lord, he hath impórtuned me with love
In honorable fashion.

POLONIUS. Ay, fashion you may call it. Go to, go to.

OPHELIA. And hath given countenance to his speech,
My lord, with almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS. Ay, springes to catch woodcock. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be something scanted of your maiden presence.
For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows. This is for all:
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
Have you so slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways.

OPHELIA. I shall obey, my lord.
(Exit POLONIUS and OPHELIA.)

(HORATIO places HORATIO(P) in the playing area and then withdraws. He claps his hands to indicate HAMLET's entrance. HAMLET enters. He does not see HORATIO(P).)

HAMLET. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO(P). It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET. Horatio—or I do forget myself. I am glad to see you well.

HORATIO(P). The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

HAMLET. Sir, my good friend, I'll change that name with you.

But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

HORATIO(P). A truant disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET. I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do my ear that violence
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself. I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?

HORATIO(P). My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

HAMLET. I prithee do not mock me, fellow student.
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

HORATIO(P). Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

HAMLET. Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.

(Lost in his memory of the moment, HORATIO joins in with HAMLET's following three sentences.)

O God, God,

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world!

Fie on't, ah, fie, 'tis an unweeded garden

That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. That it should come to this:

But two months dead, nay, not so much, not two,

Within a month—

Let me not think on't; frailty, thy name is woman—

A little month, or ere those shoes were old

With which she followed my poor father's body

Like Niobe, all tears, she married with my uncle,

My father's brother, but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules. My father, methinks I see my father.

HORATIO(P). Where, my lord?

HAMLET. In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO. I saw him once. He was a goodly king.

HAMLET. He was a man, take him for all in all,

I shall not look upon his like again.

HORATIO(P). My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET. Saw? Who?

HORATIO(P). My lord, the King your father.

HAMLET. The King my father?