

### BLOCKBUSTER

## JEFFREY BRACCO TELLS US HOW SHAKESPEARE GOT HIS IPOD



Jeffrey Bracco, author and co-director of ShakesPod

The story of ShakesPod is a familiar one: a young girl falls in love, defies her parents in doing so, runs away from home and discovers lessons about life in general and herself in particular.

To tell this story, I have constructed a pastiche, borrowing scenes directly from some of William Shakespeare's plays, paraphrasing sections of some of those scenes and also writing entirely new scenes in modern prose. Throughout this unique blend of textual styles, the play draws on story devices that Shakespeare was fond of using: gender disguises, misunderstandings in love, chance encounters, a coming-of-age journey, and a near-magical resolution.

And yet, even with these echoes of the Bard's work, ShakesPod is an entirely new creation, rooted firmly in the modern world.

Rosalind is a teen-age girl from a middle-class bi-lingual household.

Mercutio, her brother, stirs up students to protest the actions of the government. Her father, a shrewd businessman, arranges his daughter's marriage for financial reasons.

Rosalind and Mercutio, leave home and go underground on the streets of the city.

Through it all, like most teenagers, Rosalind goes through her daily life listening to an iPod, a device which figures prominently in the action of the play.

This device also provides an important theatrical convention in ShakesPod.

When Rosalind is listening to her iPod, other characters around her speak in Shakespearean verse, and she too gets drawn into their manner of speech.

When she removes her headphones, everyone speaks in contemporary language. However, using an iPod is not just a trick to allow us to cut and paste scenes from Shakespeare's work.

Instead this convention provides a way to bring the classic text into the modern world, helping the audience connect to it in a fresh and exciting way.

Furthermore, today's teenagers and indeed, people of all ages, often seem in another world while using their iPods, cell phones, computers, etc.

The heroine's use of her iPod reflects this modern trend. Whether she does so for the purpose of isolation or inspiration is ultimately for ShakesPod's audience to decide.

The original Shakespeare scenes, many taken from Romeo and Juliet or As You Like It, will be instantly recognizable to certain audience members.

Others who are having their first contact with Shakespeare through ShakesPod, will discover and recognize, just as audiences for centuries have done, the common experiences they share with the characters: parental conflict, coming of age, rebellion, abuse of power, falling in love. Therefore, ShakesPod, a play performed in English for a primarily French-speaking audience, has a greater relevance due to these timeless themes and its universal story.

**Exclusive  
interview  
with  
Jeffrey Bracco**

Listen here



Audio recording will be available  
December 4th on the ShakesBlog