I'm surprised at how many students still seem surprised at adaptations of Shakespeare. “You mean that all the parts are played by women?” “You mean that Hamlet has a dog, and kills his mother?” “You mean it's set after World War II?” “You mean it's been shortened?”

In fact humans have practiced so much complicated artistic metamorphosis that there’s a category of literary criticism called “Adaptation Studies.” Shakespeare himself was a great adapter. Of his thirty-eight plays, only three or four do not have a prominent literary/historical source, and even those have some identifiable debts. It is possible that some collaborators began to revise some of Shakespeare’s plays even before he died, and when his plays were revived fifty years later, after the re-opening following the Puritan theater closing in 1642, most were radically reshaped – tragedies were given comic endings, two plays were sometimes carved out of one, and new plays with new titles incorporated large chunks of Shakespeare’s original plays.

This is not to say that all adaptations are equal: Shakespeare’s plays are greater than most of the sources he drew from, and many adaptations of Shakespeare are less comprehensive and compelling than their originals. My main point is that, historically, what we’ve been doing in the dance program this fall isn’t terribly shocking. It has never been anything but “an exciting exploratory process that has been for all of us a rich (liberal arts) educational experience and that has resulted in an excellent piece of dance. Book your tickets now!”

Macbeth

“Macbeth” is a play that many of you know in some way. Some of your high school English courses or your AP lit classes included it as a reading. Some of you have seen films, or film adaptations; the most popular recent adaptation is “Scotland, PA.” And many of the rest of you have bumped into some cultural references to Macbeth the king-murderer, Lady Macbeth the “unsex me here” harpy/witch. Bram Stoker’s Dracula has a few characters who are Macbeth, and there’s an entire play called “Blood Brothers” about them. And then there’s the “an exciting exploratory process that has been for all of us a rich (liberal arts) educational experience and that has resulted in an excellent piece of dance. Book your tickets now!”

A Tragedy Like Macbeth

As a student in the dance program for the last six years, I was interested in working on a production. As the Jones Professor responsible for the “Our Shakespeare” project, I was – quoting my overall goal – eager to “nurture our community’s rediscovery of the range, power and wisdom of Shakespeare’s art.” And my friend and colleague [Associate Professor of Dance] Jane Hawley is always on the lookout for dance ideas.

For both of us, then, “Macbeth”’ primary interest was as a source for a cohesive plot with which audiences might be familiar. And what did we end up with? The project involves eighteen dancers, in addition to a large supporting cast of stage managers, production assistants and costumers. [Associate Professor of Theatre] Lisa Lantz has designed some stunning, medieval-inspired costumes, Professor Jeff Dintaman has created a dramatic lighting plan, and Technical Director Tom Berger has taken himself in designing an elaborate and evocative set.

If you didn’t like “Much Ado About Nothing” because of its text tampering, you probably won’t like “A Tragedy Like Macbeth.” But the rest of you will get a vivid picture of how different two “Shakespeare” productions from the same program can be. And make sure you arrive early enough to take in the thirty-minute pre-show experience in the lobby – that alone will be more than worth the price of admission.

“Faith in Shakespeare” Chapel Jane Hawley, Mark Z. Muggli and the Tragedy Like Macbeth dance ensemble Friday, Nov. 9, 10:30-10:50 a.m.

“A Tragedy Like Macbeth” Nov. 9-10, 15-16, 7:30 p.m.

All performances are in Jewel Theatre, with a lobby pre-show beginning 30 minutes before the listed performance time.

Our Shakespeare

Renewing Connections
The Luther College 2011-13 Dennis M. Jones Distinguished Teaching Professorship in the Humanities
www.luther.edu/english/ourshakespeare

Editorial: Great taste, less filling

Defending the Caf

Among the most common phrases at Luther, including jokes about burning down Main III and comments about their sport being in a building year, stands the most uttered sentence in all of student vocabulary: “The caf is bad.”

I have to admit, I was definitely one of those students. I didn’t think it was particularly awful, per se, but it seemed as though there was nothing easier to break the ice and start a conversation with someone new than complaining about what was in the caf for supper than night.

After three years of caf-eating, I started getting really excited to have an off-campus meal plan at Baker, and more importantly, having a kitchen to make my own meals. I could imagine all the power that had been able to choose my own meal. I could mix bread, milk and ramen in as many ways as I felt, because I was the ruler of my own domain.

Before this year started, I went to a bulk food store and bought more noodles and instant rice than you could imagine. I intended to become the next Guy Fieri, Julia Child or even Swedish Chef — somebody who could look at a spice rack and cure civil unrest. I still got a small meal plan, because of course Marty’s shakes are a must during a time of stress.

A couple of months into this new adventure, a mischievous thought started to creep into my subconscious. “Do I want to eat at the caf for dinner tonight?” Of course not! I said to the anthropomorphized version of my thoughts I guess I talk to. “There is no need. I have so much ramen and Jack’s Pizza.” “But the food is already made over there. You don’t even have to do dishes.”

I visited the caf and realized I had been missing out. After years of complaining, I never stopped to think what I was complaining out of boredom. Just because they don’t make your favorite foods every night doesn’t make it an awful selection.

Consider how many institutions actually let you have pizza, pasta and chocolate milk every meal for every day of the week. The biggest thing that I had been missing was the social atmosphere. Don’t take for granted that you can eat an unlimited amount of food with almost the entire campus. As a senior living off campus, I don’t get that anymore. I may have the control over what to eat, but I’m almost always alone in my kitchen. I still only go maybe twice a week, but from what I have learned, you miss the things you chateise for and then your turn back from. Especially if they supply chocolate milk.