

Matt Directs Hamlet  
A Metatheatrical Odyssey

By

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## CHARACTERS

Hamlet	The one and only prince of Denmark.
Player	The one and only Player from <u>Hamlet</u> .
Actor Playing Ophelia (APO)	An actor playing Ophelia.
Matt	The one and only actual Matt.
Actor Playing Matt (APM)	Actor playing Matt. Some resemblance.
Actor Playing Matt The Director (APMD)	Name says it all. Played by a female.
Actor Playing Matt Directing the Actor Playing Matt the Director (APMDAPMD)	Name says it all. Played by a female with no resemblance. A copy of a copy of a copy.
Actor Playing Matt the Playwright (APMP)	Name says it all. Some resemblance.
Actual Stage Manager (ASM)	The production's stage manager.
Actor Playing the Stage Manager (APSM)	The name says it all. Same actor as Actual Stage Manager.
Fortinbras, Horatio and Anybody else alive at the End of Hamlet (FH)	The name says it all. One actor.

## SETTING

A theatre set up for a rehearsal.

THE PLAY

(Lights come up on a theatre space. The group is in the midst of a rehearsal for Hamlet.)

MATT

Okay, let's take it from the top.

APM

Okay, let's take it from the top.

APMDAPMD

Okay, let's take it from the top.

ASM

Places!

APMD

Okay, let's take it from the top. Remember, be big. Do the exact opposite of what you're saying.

APSM

Places!

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus-

APMD

More hand sawing. Player, mimic the sawing. You're both sawing. We're cutting down a forest.

HAMLET

(Continuing.)

-but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod. Pray you, avoid it.

PLAYER

I warrant your honour.

HAMLET

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your  
tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action—

APMD

Cut!

APMDAPMD

Cut! I don't say cut. Say twenty second time out.

APMD

What is a twenty second time out?

APMDAPMD

It's a basketball thing.

APMD

Actor's get that?

APMDAPMD

No. But it's in the script.

APMD

(To actors.)

Your life depends on this speech. Think of a dying puppy—

APMDAPMD

Cut! Cut! Twenty second time out. I wouldn't say that.

APMD

But I said it. So you would say that.

APMDAPMD

Matt, would I say that?

APM

No.

APMDAPMD

And I'm not a Korean woman.

APMD

I'm actually from China.

APMDAPMD

I'm a six foot five white guy from Chicago.

APM

Seriously. This isn't believable.

APMDAPMD

Don't look at me. I'm just the actor playing Matt playing the actor directing the actor that is playing Matt. I didn't write this.

APMP

Don't blame the playwright.

APM

You didn't write it.  
He did. I did. It was me. Which is him! And her! And her.

MATT

Stage manager!

ASM

Can we get back on track please!

APSM

They do have a point.

ASM

Quiet please.

APSM

Why am I yelling at myself?

ASM

Because you're talking and you're not Hamlet. Let's go - 3.2 from the top.

APSM

I'd say Act 3 scene 2.

HAMLET

What does "robustious" mean?

APMD

What do you think it means?

APMDAPMD

I don't ask questions like that. More like, 'um, okay. If you were playing basketball and you had to take a free throw how would you shoot it?'

APM

I don't actually know what robustious means. Playwright!

APMP

I didn't write that part of the play. That was Shakespeare.

MATT

You didn't write any of the play.

APMP

Then why am I the playwright?

APSM

You're an actor playing the playwright.

ASM

People! Please!

PLAYER

How come I don't have more lines? I thought we were doing the player scene?

HAMLET

Advice to the player scene. This play is about me, not you.

PLAYER

Can I give him some advice?

APMDAPMD

Let's try it.

APMD

No.

APMDAPMD

I don't say no to actors.

APMD

You aren't directing.

APMDAPMD

Neither are you.

APM

You said no to Polonius.

APMDAPMD

He wanted to wear roller skates.

APMD

I said yes to that.

PLAYER

Can I wear roller skates?

HAMLET

How come everybody else gets to be in roller skates?

ASM

We need some more roller skates. Props!

APSM

Stage managers don't just yell out 'props!' This play sucks.

APMP

I didn't write it.

APM

You're the playwright.

APMP

You're the playwright.

APMD

I'm the playwright.

APMDAPMD

You're playing me directing.

APM

You're playing me directing.

MATT

You're playing me directing.

ASM

So who wrote this?

HAMLET

Wait, what do you mean who wrote this? This is my life.

PLAYER

I play many plays. The Mousetrap. The Murder of Gonzago.

APO

Child, Shakespeare made your ass up.

HAMLET

You mean? I'm a character? I'm not real?

PLAYER

Who amongst us is?

APO

Somebody tell me how come I don't have any lines?

APMP

Matt forgot how many people were in the play.

APMD

It was a choice!

APMDAPMD

It was a choice!

APM

I forgot.

MATT

Sorry.

APO

This is bullshit. I thought we were friends.

APMD

We are.

APMDAPMD

We are? I didn't know you and Matt were friends.

APM

Can we get back to the play please?

ASM

Act 3 scene 2. Better?

APSM

Much.

PLAYER

Can we take it from my line?

'I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.'

APO

At least you have a line.

HAMLET

At least you're real!

APMDAPMD

You have lines. Ophelia just isn't in this scene. Hamlet, um—

APO

I'm not in any scenes. I thought you said Ophelia was a good part.

APMD

It is.

APM

Tell her she has lines.

APMDAPMD

I did.

APM

No, have Matt tell her.

APMDAPMD

I am Matt.

APM

No, her.

APMD

Me?

APM

Yes.

APMD

Twenty second time out. You have lines.

APO

Have I said anything?

APMD

In the play or in real life?

APMDAPMD

You just had a bunch of lines.

APO

Not in the play.

APM  
This is the play.

APMP  
This is the play?

APMD  
This is the play?

APMDAPMD  
This is the play?

ASM  
This is the play.

APSM  
This is the play?

APO  
This is the play? Hell no, I did not sign up for this.

HAMLET  
You didn't sign up for this? I didn't sign up for not being real! Fuck this is depressing. To be, or not to be—

PLAYER  
What about my play within the play?

HAMLET  
My whole plan hinges on it. Not that it matters anymore.

APMD  
Twenty second time out.

APMDAPMD  
Let's make it a full time out.

APM  
Actors take five.

ASM  
But we've only done twenty lines. This play is four hours long and we open in two weeks!

PLAYER  
I think this is the play.

HAMLET  
You mean this...this...

HAMLET (Con't)  
(Realizing he's in yet another play)

...this?

PLAYER  
God, this is worse than community theatre summer stock.

APMDAPMD  
A theatre rehearsing Hamlet. It's still Hamlet—

APM  
Except it's not Hamlet. Do you see?

APMD  
So I'm not actually directing?

APMDAPMD  
I'm directing you directing them even though they aren't really who they think they are.

HAMLET  
Why don't we go run lines since we apparently don't actually have minds of our own just in case they decide that people don't want to pay money to see this self-indulgent crap and want to see the real thing?

(HAMLET and PLAYER exit.)

APMD  
People are paying for this?

APMDAPMD  
How come I'm not getting paid?

APM  
Everyone will get paid after the show opens.

MATT  
No they won't.

(Each actor takes a sip from a cup, which is the poison cup that Gertrude drinks from at the end of Hamlet. They say their line and then die onstage.)

APMP  
I quit.

I quit. APMD

I quit. APMDAPMD

I quit. APM

You know my ass quit. APO

I quit. ASM

Let me quit first otherwise you can't quit because you won't exist. APSM

Got it. I'm back. ASM  
(She jumps back up.)

I quit. APSM

Me too! ASM

Me three. MATT

God forsakes us! FH  
(All are 'dead' except for FH, who enters during the deaths.)  
(Blackout.)

THE END