

'Then shall we have again our ancient glory,  
And let this called be' ...

# *Love's Victory*

*Lady Mary Wroth*



27 September 2022



# WITH THANKS TO...

Lord and Lady De L'Isle,  
Philip Sidney,  
Arts and Humanities Research Council,  
Staff at Penshurst Place,  
David Findlay,  
David Novell



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council





# LADY MARY WROTH

## (1587-1651)

Lady Mary Wroth was the daughter of Sir Robert Sidney, first Earl of Leicester and Barbara Gamage, whose home was Penshurst Place. Her play *Love's Victory* is the first original comedy by a British woman, written sometime between 1617-1619. The play was never printed and exists in only two manuscript copies, the Huntington Manuscript (which has missing pages at the end) and the Penshurst Manuscript, on which our production is based. We have no evidence that the play was ever performed in its own day, either in a commercial theatre like Shakespeare's Globe, or elsewhere. This had nothing to do with the quality of the writing and everything to do with the cultural and theatrical traditions of seventeenth-century England. Female actors and writers were not part of the commercial companies like 'The Admiral's Men' or 'The King's Men', although they did take part in entertainments at Court and in great households like Penshurst Place. The only recorded performances of *Love's Victory* to date are a student production in 1999, a 'Read not Dead' reading at Penshurst in 2014 and this performance's 2018 predecessor at the Dramatizing Penshurst Festival.

Contrasting Virginia Woolf's famous hypothetical figure in *A Room of One's Own* of Shakespeare's 'wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith' - who 'picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages' and perhaps 'scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them' - Wroth offers an optimistic alternative amongst 'Shakespeare's Sisters'. Tonight's performance of her play is thus a victory, in so much more than name alone.





# LOVE'S VICTORY

1617-1619

*Love's Victory* is a pastoral tragi-comedy which stages a plot by the goddess Venus and her son Cupid to make the shepherds and shepherdesses respect the power of love. Like Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, it follows four pairs of lovers.

Philisses and Musella have both been reticent about declaring their love for each other. Philisses believes she loves his best friend Lissius. Musella is bound by the early modern conventions of female modesty and by another tie that is revealed in Act 5, with potentially tragic effects.

Lissius scorns love altogether and has scorned the love of Simeana, sister to Philisses, so is a natural target for Cupid's arrows.

A third couple are the Forest, a model of unrequited courtly love and his beloved, Silvesta. Silvesta's unrequited love for Philisses has made her renounce love as 'folly', dedicate herself to Diana, and vow to live independently, 'free and untouched of thought but chastity'.

The shepherdess Dalina, who has been fickle in love in the past, needs to find a husband. The clown Rustic is interested in Musella, though mainly as another asset among his farm animals. He is clearly out of place in the poetic games of wit played by the other shepherds and shepherdesses. Nevertheless, he poses a threat to Musella and Philisses's romantic attachment.

While the shepherds and shepherdesses sing songs, play a game of fortune telling and make up riddles, Cupid, who doubles as the villain Arcas in our production, puts them through experiences of pain and loss to make them feel the power of love. The action is interspersed with songs which articulate characters' emotions. The plot comes to a climax when the star-crossed lovers Musella and Philisses vow to sacrifice themselves in the Temple of Venus. This is where the Huntington Manuscript breaks off; our production stages the fuller Penshurst Manuscript in which 'Love's Victory' is achieved...

# CAST



**Kunle  
Adeniran**  
Lacon / Priest

Kunle Adeniran is an actor based in Leeds and London. He is a medical doctor who later followed his passion and graduated with a diploma from the Yorkshire Academy for Film and Television Acting. Since then he has been in various independent film projects and has been privileged to grace the stage as well.

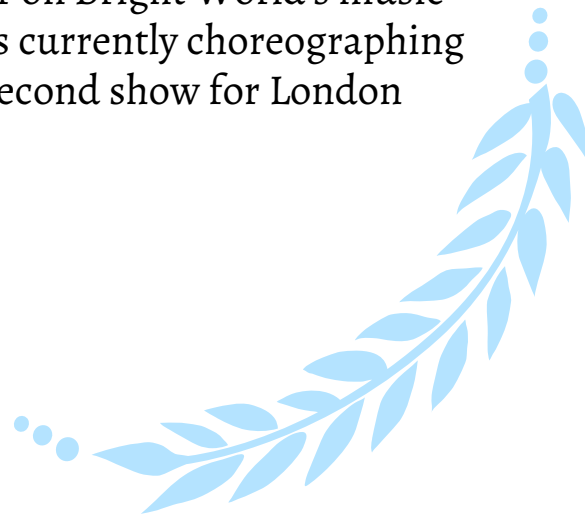
Spotlight: 8219-4504-7338



**Molly  
Barton**  
Climeana

Molly is a performer/creative from Preston, Lancashire. Earlier this year, Molly played The Sister in *Whodunnit [Unrehearsed] 2* at Park Theatre, London. Prior to this, she appeared in the music video for *It's Christmas Again (The Show Must Go On!)* for Theatre Support Fund+. Pieces of her writing have been performed at the Lion & Unicorn Theatre, The Cockpit, Canal Cafe Theatre, Canada Water Theatre, and the Old Royal Naval College.

Molly also choreographs, and recently worked as assistant choreographer on Bright World's music video 'So It Goes'. She is currently choreographing and co-producing her second show for London Studio Centre.







**Cal**  
**Chapman**  
Philisses

Cal Chapman is an actor, musician and writer who trained at ArtsEd, where he received a BA (Hons) in Acting for Film & Television. He has since signed with Brood Management and has gone onto work in new writing, classical plays and contemporary work in venues across the UK, including Theatre 503, the Greenwich Theatre and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Currently, Cal is finishing work on his first feature film, *The Miner's Son*, which follows a rock band trying to make it big during the 1980's Miner's Strike, where Cal plays a lead role as the band's singer and frontman. Previously, Cal starred as Pip in a site-specific performance of Dickens' *Great Expectations* at The Geffrye Museum alongside 'The Steam Industry'. Cal has also tutored young actors and filmmakers as part of the BFI Film Academy alongside the creative youth outreach charity CultureWorksEast, who aim to provide young people with opportunities to express themselves and discover their artistic potential.

Spotlight: 8419-6726-9271



**Matthew**  
**Christmas**  
Lissius

Matthew has toured extensively across the UK, Ireland, Germany and China in roles such as Oberon (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Heathcliff (*Wuthering Heights*), Mr Darcy (*Pride and Prejudice*), Ebenezer Scrooge (*A Christmas Carol*), Mr Rochester (*Jane Eyre*), Sherlock Holmes (*The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*) and Mercutio (*Romeo and Juliet*). Further credits include Joe (*Flowers of the Dead Red Sea*), Theseus (*Phaedra's Love*), Dan (*Closer*) and Colin (*The Life of Riley*).

Spotlight: 5414-7835-7082



**Imogen  
Greenwood**  
Simeana

Imogen is an actor from Manchester. She trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama specialising in Acting for Stage, Screen & Radio. Her recent stage credits include *Wife* (Richard Burton Company), *The Toll* (Dir. Jesse Jones), *The Merchant of Venice* (RWCMD), *Bear Pit* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and *This is Your Musical – Improvised!* (Bristol Improv Theatre, Wardrobe Theatre). She enjoys classical text and is excited to be performing in such a rare play. Represented by LJP Management. When not performing she is usually surfing in the sea or hiking up a mountain or two!  
Spotlight: 1093-6755-6612



**Mary  
Hooton**  
Mother

Mary Gerardine Hooton is a Hull born actor who trained at Bretton Hall. She has performed throughout the UK, and Europe, and created her own street theatre and children's shows. Her credits include: *The Island of Animals* (Ismaili Centre), *A Fist Full Of Love* (Proud Productions - Winner of Manchester Forever Award 2011), *Mouth - Language/Sex/Violence/Other* (Magpie Man Productions - Winner of Best Spoken Word at The Greater Manchester Fringe Festival 2015), *Parents Without Children* (Manana Productions, nominated for Best Fringe Production Manchester Theatre Awards 2016), *Once A Year On Blackpool Sands* (Babydog Films), *One Day At A Time* (Twelve Steps Productions), *Cricket* (Austin Brothers Films).  
Spotlight: 3416-7868-0492







**Miles  
Kinsley**  
Cupid / Arcas

Miles is an actor and writer based in North Yorkshire. He has a largely stage-based performance background, and enjoys working on both Jacobean texts and pieces of new writing, particularly those which focus on Northern stories and experiences. Miles is a graduate of the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama.

Acting credits include: Martin in *Greatest Britain* (New Works Playhouse), Horatio in *Hamlet* and Macbeth in *Macbeth* (Theatre Space North East), Percussionist in *Mother of the Revolution* (archipelago arts), and The T-Rex (Puppeteer) in *The Living Fossil Theatre Company* (Theatre Illumiere).

Writing credits include: *The Southern Side of the Wall* (Live Theatre, Newcastle).

Spotlight: 0538-9058-9403



**Adam  
Perrott**  
Rustic

Adam Perrott is a writer/performer from Manchester. He is the author of three children's books (*Eerie Deirdre Darkly*, *The Odds* and *The Odds Strike Back!*) and the recipient of the inaugural People's Book Prize and the Lancashire Fantastic Book Award. Other writing credits include two series of BBC Radio 4's sketch programme *The Show What You Wrote* and an original sitcom with CBBC. Television credits include Netflix's *The Irregulars*, *Everything I Know About Love* and *Nandor Fodor and the Talking Mongoose*. Theatre credits include original play *I Remain* for the Greater Manchester Fringe 2021, ensemble show *Oomph!* for Poppa'most Productions, original show *BABA* for the Greater Manchester Fringe 2022, King Louie in *Jungle Book*, Alfred Hitchcock in *Hitchcock Blonde* for Northern Comedy Theatre and Rustic in *Love's Victory*. He will be playing the role of Toad in a touring production of *The Wind in the Willows* for Northumberland Theatre Company Christmas 2022.

Spotlight: 6299-0165-1066





**Jessica  
Porter**  
Silvesta

Jessica graduated in Musical Theatre from Liverpool Theatre School in the summer of 2018. Her drama school credits include Edie Beale in *Grey Gardens*, Death in *Blood Wedding* and The Barge Woman/Ensemble in *The Wind in The Willows*. Since graduating, Jessica has played Martha in *The Secret Garden* and Pirate Pew in *Treasure Island* in an open-air summer tour around the UK and Ireland. Recently, Jessica has returned from the South West where she has been touring a play called *Mary Anning: Lost in Time* which is about the first female paleontologist.

When Jessica isn't acting, she enjoys writing poetry which advocates for women, trans and non-binary people fighting against a patriarchal society. She is extremely proud to be shooting Amazonian feminist arrows as Silvesta in *Love's Victory*.  
Spotlight: 0516-5641-5302



**Josh  
Richardson**  
Forester

Josh trained at Court Theatre training company and holds a BA (Hons) in Acting. His credits include: Macbeth in *Macbeth* (Courtyard Theatre), Landlord in *Two* (Courtyard Theatre), Charlie in *On the Shore of the Wide World* (Courtyard Theatre), Matthew Trafford in *15 Minutes of Fame* (Canal Cafe Theatre), Scott in *Ace of Hearts* (Australian original cast) and others. Josh has starred in numerous award-winning films and looks forward to bringing this piece to life, alongside this wonderful cast.





**Sammi  
Searle**  
Dalina

Sammi Searle is a theatre practitioner and visual artist who trained at Lancaster University. Theatre credits: *Tom, Dick and Harry* (Southwold Theatre Co.), *Measure for Measure* (Lancaster Castle), *A Christmas Carol* (Dukes Playhouse) *As You Like It*, *Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming Of The Shrew* (Bingo Dragon Theatre Co.)



**Francesca  
Swarbrick**  
Venus

Training: London School of Musical Theatre  
Theatre credits include: 'Manchester 1, Lead Female' in *In The Room* (The Hen and Chickens Theatre, London), 'Cathy' in *Eclipsed* (The Space, London), 'Lead Vocalist/Dancer' in *Back To Broadway* (UK Tour), 'Princess Fiona' in *Shrek the Musical* (The Gaiety Theatre, Isle of Man), 'Glum Fran' in *Stop The Train* (The Gran), 'Ronette'/Choreographer in *Little Shop of Horrors*, and 'Wendla' in *Spring Awakening* (both as part of the Manchester Fringe).  
Film credits include: *Out of The Darkness* (director Zach Weinstein).

Recordings include: 'Seek Bromance'; 'Jar Of Hearts' (both for AATW record label).  
Workshops include: 'Mad Wasps and Englishwomen' (RADA); 'In the Room' (RADA Studios).  
Other credits include 'Genie'/Dancer (Global Event Services, Disneyland Paris).  
Choreographer/Dancer/Model (Fashion for Fairtrade and I Heart Vintage Fashion),  
Choreographer/Vocalist/Dancer (Barnardos).  
Francesca is delighted to be joining the cast of *Love's Victory*.





**Maggie  
Wignall**  
Musella

Maggie is an actor from Lancaster. She graduated from the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts in 2021. Credits while training include: Viola (*Twelfth Night*), Nora (*Nora: A Doll's House*) and Varia (*Longing*). Before *Love's Victory*, Maggie was performing *The Smashed Project* sponsored by Diageo. Maggie's own show *Salsa Brava* has been performed at suicide prevention conferences in Cumbria. Maggie is a Spanish speaker and has lived in Barcelona, Amsterdam and Trujillo, Peru. Spotlight: 8418-5640-4979



**Isabella  
Williams**  
Fillis / Priest

Isabella is an actor and model from Nottingham. Her most recent venture was on the cobbles in *Coronation Street* (ITV). Prior to this, she played Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* (The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham), Bonnie/Ensemble in *The History of Bonnie and Clyde* (The Birmingham Rep Theatre) and the Wife in *Blood Wedding* (The Crescent Theatre). She has also featured in Artist Saint Raymond's music video and you may have seen her in the Deliveroo and Doughnut Time commercial as Princess Leia. Isabella is delighted to join the cast in *Love's Victory*.







# DIRECTOR



**Emma  
Rucastle**

Emma Rucastle is a Lancaster-based theatre director and creative practitioner. Passionate about inclusive theatre, she has devised and directed a wide variety of professional and community performances in theatres, libraries, churches, parks, streets, squares and castles. She has particular interests in early modern texts, verbatim theatre, audio drama and new writing. Selected directing credits include: *Macbeth* (Rotherham Shakespeare Festival), *A Christmas Carol* and *Holmes for Christmas* (Lancaster Castle), *I Have A Speech of Fire* (The Rose Company), *Right Where We Are* (TramShed Inclusive Theatre Company), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A North Lancashire Passion* (ELART Productions). Emma is delighted to be directing her second early modern women's play - her first being Lady Jane Lumley's *Iphigenia* for The Rose Company - and is thoroughly enjoying the challenges and delights that Love's Victory offers a company in rehearsal.  
[www.elartproductions.co.uk](http://www.elartproductions.co.uk) @elartpro  
#LovesVictory22

# PRODUCER & DRAMATURG



**Professor  
Alison Findlay**

Alison Findlay is Professor of Renaissance Drama and Director of the Shakespeare Programme in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. She specialises in sixteenth and seventeenth century drama.

# MUSICAL DIRECTORS



**Tamsin Lewis**

Tamsin studied violin at the Florence Conservatoire before reading Classics and Italian at Oxford. She directs the early music ensemble *Passamezzo*, and has written, arranged, directed and played music for theatre productions at venues including Shakespeare's Globe, the Rose Theatre and Hampton Court. She collaborates with theatre and dance historians and practitioners to reconstruct masques and other 16th and 17th Century entertainments. Recent work in film and TV includes singing with Lucy Worsley in *A Merry Tudor Christmas*; and working as historical and musical consultant on *Firebrand*, *A Discovery of Witches*, *Becoming Elizabeth* and *Draw on Sweet Night*.

Tamsin has written a number of books and articles on early modern music and society. She is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and is currently teaching a course on Renaissance music and art at the Courtauld Institute.

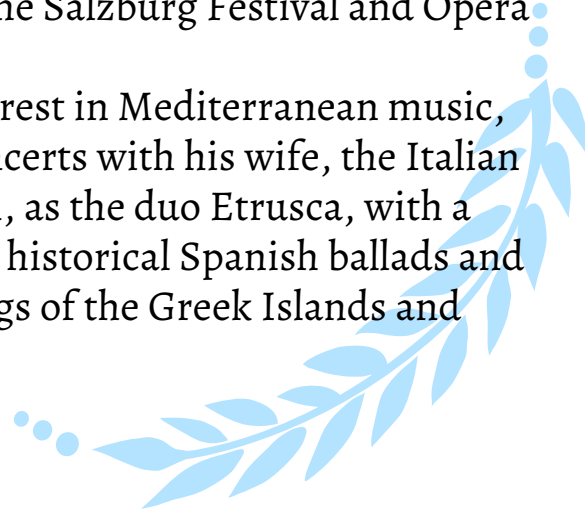


**Robin Jeffrey**

Robin is a versatile performer on historical plucked instruments, and has played the lute, theorbo and baroque guitar with many of the well-known names in the early music field, including The Sixteen, The King's Consort, the Purcell Quartet and Nigel Kennedy.

Robin has a long track record in stage music. He has contributed to many productions at the National Theatre, and several seasons at Shakespeare's Globe. He has also played in historical operas for English National Opera, Scottish Opera and other companies, in settings ranging from the ancient Odeon in Pompeii to La Fenice in Venice, the Salzburg Festival and Opera City in Tokyo.

Robin has a lifelong interest in Mediterranean music, and frequently gives concerts with his wife, the Italian singer Alessandra Testai, as the duo Etrusca, with a repertoire ranging from historical Spanish ballads and Italian madrigals to songs of the Greek Islands and Constantinople.





# MUSICAL DIRECTOR (CHORAL WORK)

**Stephen Sewell**

## MUSICIANS

**Lynda Sayce**

**Jen Waghorn**

## COSTUMES

**Elizabeth Bell**

**Kate Reid**

**Alison Findlay**

**David Findlay**

**Gill Hayton**

**Arlene Mounsey**



# PERFORMING AT PENSHURST PLACE

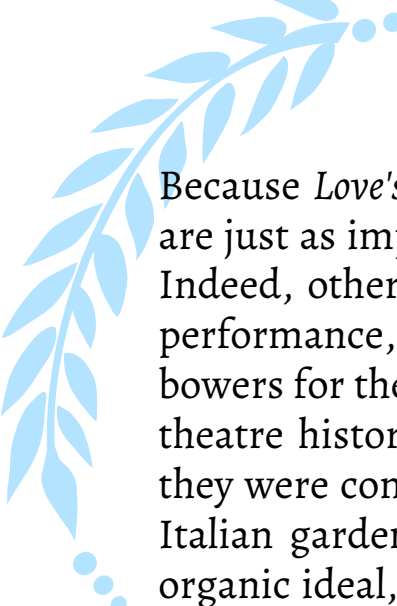
Penshurst Place, the Sidney family home since 1552, is the perfect place to revive *Love's Victory* because all the evidence points to the fact that this is where the play was composed and possibly produced. Professor Margaret Hannay even suggested that it might have been performed here for the wedding of Mary Wroth's younger sister Barbara in 1619. Ben Jonson's poem 'To Penshurst' famously commented that although 'thy walls may be of country stone' the house was more like an organic, growing entity at the heart of a living community. *Love's Victory* likewise celebrates the regeneration of a harmonious community in the pastoral world.



Image from [www.penshurstplace.com](http://www.penshurstplace.com)

Tonight's performance takes place in the Baron's Hall, part of the original manor house built by Sir John de Puteney and completed in 1341 . The Baron's Hall, whose beamed roof soars to 60ft (18.3m) high, is upheld by wooden statues of rural workers. It would have been a living space for all those on the estate in the medieval period. The Hall's large windows look out spatially across the estate while its history looks back across time to the feudal ideal of an enduring cooperative community, as celebrated in Jonson's 'To Penshurst' .





Because *Love's Victory* is a pastoral play, the gardens of Penshurst Place are just as important as the house in terms of a site-specific production. Indeed, other writings from the Sidney coterie suggest that an outside performance, using the formal gardens, wooded walks, mounds and bowers for the various scenes in the play, might also have been part of its theatre history. A large part of the terraced, walled gardens remain as they were constructed by Sir Henry Sidney in the 1560s. He designed an Italian garden, vegetable gardens and orchards, where, as in Jonson's organic ideal, fruit hangs 'on thy walls where every child can reach'. Just as the ending of *Love's Victory* looks optimistically to future generations, so the Penshurst gardens offer fruitful possibilities to expand its stage history.

Professor Alison Findlay (Lancaster University)



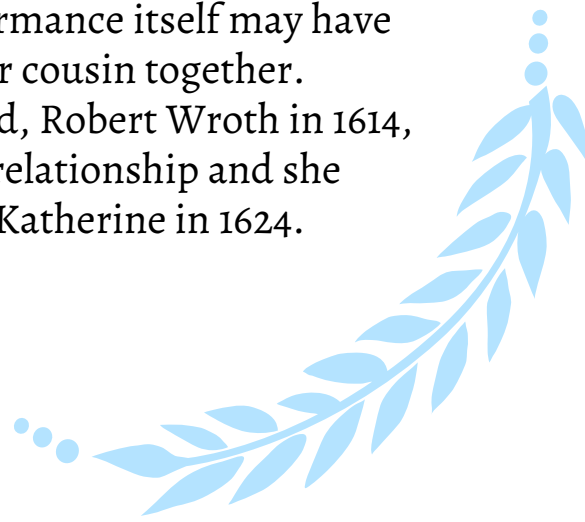
# THE SIDNEY FAMILY

Lady Mary Wroth's prose, poetry and drama emerged from a rich literary coterie in which both men and women were encouraged to write.

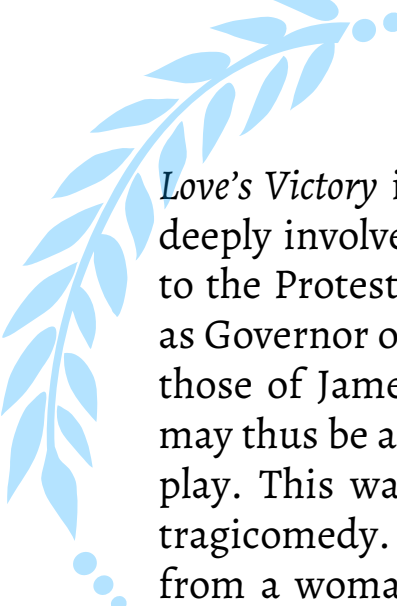
Wroth's uncle, Sir Philip Sidney, was author of the famous love sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, an early piece of literary criticism *A Defence of Poetry*, and a prose romance, the *Arcadia*. Wroth's father, Robert Sidney and her cousin William Herbert, also wrote poetry. Her aunt Mary Sidney Herbert arguably provided an even more important literary model for Lady Mary Wroth. Mary Sidney Herbert translated a play by Garnier as *The Tragedy of Antony*, a possible influence on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. She was a writer and translator of poetry and prose as well as overseeing the publication of her brother's prose romance *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*.

The family had strong connections with the Court. As Chamberlain to Queen Anna, Robert Sidney organised entertainments at court, including *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Beauty* in which Wroth and her sisters appeared. Her cousins William Herbert, later third Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Herbert were the dedicatees of the First Folio of Shakespeare's Works (1623).

At one level, *Love's Victory* can be read as dramatising the Sidney-Herbert family's own romantic entanglements on two generational levels. The difficult courtship between Philisses and Musella may look back to the thwarted love of Sir Philip Sidney for Lady Penelope Rich, the 'Stella' of his sonnet sequence. In the younger generation, Wroth may be figuring the frustrations of her constant (but constantly disappointed) love of her first cousin, William Herbert. The Penshurst Manuscript is a fine presentation copy on whose cover their initials are intertwined. If she and William took part in a production, the performance itself may have been instrumental in bringing Lady Mary and her cousin together. Sometime after the death of Lady Mary's husband, Robert Wroth in 1614, she and William Herbert did consummate their relationship and she bore him two illegitimate children, William and Katherine in 1624.







*Love's Victory* is not just a family affair though. The Sidney family were deeply involved in court politics and international diplomacy, in service to the Protestant cause in the Netherlands, where Robert Sidney served as Governor of Flushing from 1589-1616. The Sidney family's fortunes and those of James I's daughter Elizabeth, the 'Winter Queen' of Bohemia, may thus be a layer of allusion under the rural idyll of shepherd life in the play. This was common in the fashionable dramatic genre of pastoral tragicomedy. *Love's Victory* rewrites dramatic and theatrical tradition from a woman's perspective, through satire, comedy, music, spectacle and romance. It thereby gives unique insights into female experiences of courtship, rivalry, friendship and sacrifice.

Professor Alison Findlay (Lancaster University)

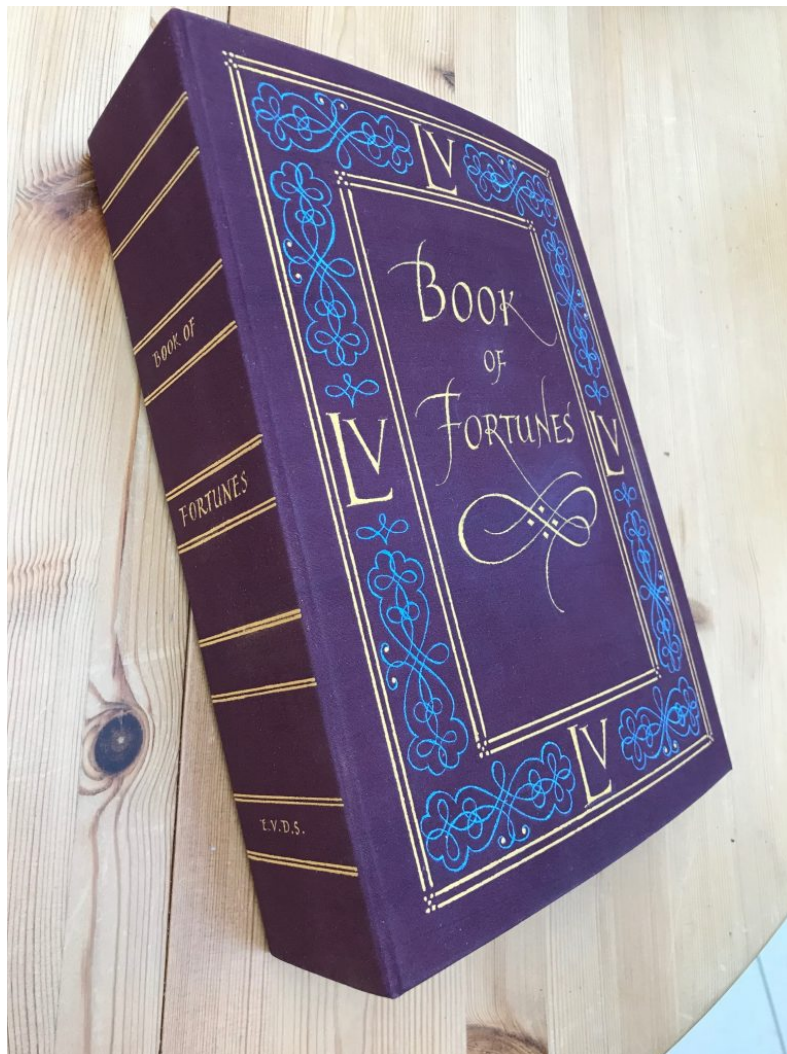


# THE BOOK OF FORTUNES

A 'Book of Fortunes' is similar to a romantic horoscope. It is based on a Renaissance game played by courtly ladies and gentlemen originating in Italy and France. Each person in turn would let the book of fortunes fall open at a random page and stick a pin into the page, which would determine his or her fortune. The fortunes, written in verse, were then read aloud to the group.

The 'Book of Fortunes' is the most important prop in the play and was designed and handmade by Els Van Den Steen. The pages in the book have been written by Els and students of her calligraphy classes in Sevenoaks & Maidstone Adult Education Centres.

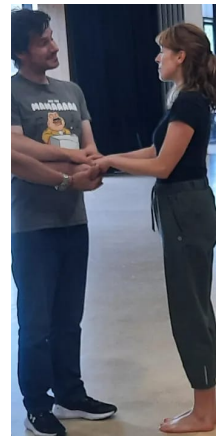
'WHY STAY, AND  
YOU SHALL SEE.  
HERE IS A BOOK  
WHEREIN EACH  
ONE SHALL DRAW  
A FORTUNE, AND  
THEREBY THEIR  
LUCK SHALL BE  
CONJECTURED.'





# REHEARSALS

We have had a wonderful time working with this amazing cast of primarily Northern actors and invite you to share this process with us - photographs below are from *Love's Victory* rehearsals based at Lancaster University.





# SHAKESPEARE AND HIS SISTERS

Shakespeare and His Sisters is a AHRC-funded research project run by Professor Alison Findlay based at Lancaster University. The project looks at the parallels between plays by Shakespeare and by women dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth century: including two women writers of the Sidney household, the Countess of Pembroke and her niece, Lady Mary Wroth.

#PenshurstLit #ShakeSisters

Ⓜ <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/shakespeare-and-his-sisters/>

f @penshurstlit    t @shakesisters



## CONTACT US

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Rebecca Halliwell

Rebecca Halliwell is a MA student at Lancaster University. She is the Early Career Academic for 'The Sidneys of Penshurst and Beyond: Contexts, Connections, Collaborations'. Email: [r.l.halliwell@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:r.l.halliwell@lancaster.ac.uk).





Programme designed by  
Rebecca Halliwell & Imogen Felstead