

# Shakespeare teaching vital lessons on language

## Class taps into works to build verbal muscle

By [Nina Garin](#), UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

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Howard Lipin / Union-Tribune

Actor Raymond Lynch was one of the participants in Jan Gist's "Speaking Shakespeare with Skill and Power" class.

**U-T Multimedia:** For a photo gallery of the Shakespeare class, go to [uniontrib.com/bard](http://uniontrib.com/bard).

**DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO** — Even though William Shakespeare was born more than 400 years ago and wrote in an English we rarely use now, professor Jan Gist thinks there are still plenty of lessons to be learned from the playwright.

Like how to speak with confidence. How to put power behind your words. Even how to argue with purpose.

So Gist, a University of San Diego instructor, created an intense workshop called "Speaking Shakespeare With Skill and Power" to help people better communicate in the world.

"In our digitalized world, our verbal skills are becoming much less civil," Gist said. "People talk loudly into their cell phones, but they still don't know how to debate or converse with skill. Shakespeare helps us express ourselves more convincingly and authentically."

Though the four-day workshop at downtown's Mo'olelo Theater was geared toward actors, the six students also included an elementary school principal, a former architect and a soon-to-be mother.

"I used to work as an actress in New York," said Lori Shearer, who is expecting her first child next month. "And Shakespeare has always been a part of my life, a passion. Even though I'm four weeks away from my due date, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to study with someone like Jan. She's a national treasure."

Gist, who also coaches vocals and dialect at the Old Globe Theatre and has taught this Shakespeare course around the world, had her students analyze the words of Romeo, [Julius Caesar](#) and Richard III. The group also recited soliloquies, tapped out rhythm on their fingers and even analyzed different ways to say the word "neither."

It was exactly the kind of experience actor Raymond Lynch was hoping to get from the \$200 class.

"For me, it's the most challenging work an actor can do," Lynch said. "If you can do Shakespeare, you can do anything."

Glenda Gerde, an actress who is also the principal at Loma Portal Elementary School in Point Loma, said the class not only improved her ability as an actor, but was helping her in times of crisis as well.

"Shakespeare helps me handle all the tragedy that happens around us, especially the [Chelsea King](#) and Amber Dubois murders," Gerde said. "The more I study him, the more it helps me understand the human condition."

The workshop, which concluded yesterday, isn't the only course that Mo'olelo offers. The community theater also hosts playwriting and auditioning workshops throughout the year, also for \$200 to \$250.

And while that may sound like a lot of money, Mo'olelo's artistic director, Seema Sueko, feels otherwise.

"I feel like the Walmartization of our society has had an impact on the arts," Sueko said. "We're all in this together and I think we vote with our dollar what kind of world we live in."

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