GENERAL INFORMATION

I. A witty, smart, fast-moving, hilarious play about the “authorship question” of William Shakespeare.

II. Proposal submitted by
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III. Project description
   - Beard of Avon, by Amy Freed
   - comedy
   - 8m, 2F
   - Stuck in a barn in Elizabethan England, a lowly bumpkin known as “Will Shakspere” longs to be an artist. Continuously thwarted by his hilariously chore-giving, homebound wife, Anne, Will takes off for London to pursue his dreams. Did the stage-struck Will then become a mere front-man for the likes of Sir Francis Bacon, the Earl of Oxford, and even Queen Elizabeth, all too proud to admit they scribbled plays for the unwashed masses? So the stage is set for The Beard of Avon, Amy Freed’s deliciously witty and farcical play that brilliantly fashions the longstanding debate over who really penned the Bard’s canon into an examination of the mortality of artists and the immortality of their legacy. As Will comically struggles to become an artist in his own right, Freed, with a gleefully winking awareness of the intervening centuries, keenly reflects on artistic inspiration, the struggle to become an artistic master, and the very meaning of creativity.

IV. Director (not required)
   - no director recommended at this time

DETAILED INFORMATION

I. Reasons for the proposed show
   - Hilarious, great ensemble cast with a few main roles, very very smart – the Caltech audience would “get” the Shakespeare allusions and have a rollicking good time.

II. Technical Aspects
   - This show would be delightful outside.
   - Minimal set but fabulous Renaissance costuming required!

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Quotes from Reviews:

Ever since Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare, pundits have asked, "Did Shakespeare really write Shakespeare?" Could a boy from the provinces turned-London actor really produce the greatest plays in the English language? Or was he really a noble too embarrassed to be thought of as associating with common theatrical folk? Amy Freed contemplates these possibilities in her latest comedy, *The Beard of Avon*.

*The Beard of Avon* proposes that Shakespeare, the actor (here spelled Shakspere, in homage to a man who rarely spelled his last name the same way twice) was a "beard" or cover up for a more genteel writer. Perhaps this mysterious person is the Earl of Oxford or Sir Francis Bacon or even Queen Elizabeth. – Playbill June 2001

Freed’s humor operates at several levels. The more Shakespeare the viewer knows, the more likely to pick up on the allusions and quotations sprinkled throughout. But Freed also – in best Elizabethan tradition – is not beyond flagrant punning, sexual waggery, and outright slapstick. Some of her best mots are based on anachronism: “the crisis of their middle years,” “Thou are in water most enormously hot” or, when forced to admit his inadequate literacy, Shakespeare refers to “a most pernicious deficit of my attention’s disordering.” Even the lowest gag works here, due to the lightness of approach – Henry says, “Oh Edward! Look at the time. We’re late” as he holds up an hour glass. It’s all great tongue-in-cheek fun, laced with both intelligence and an obvious love for the subject matter on Freed’s part. – Culture Vulture, January 2002, American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco

Freed garners many laughs by placing modern-day rehearsal concerns into the mouths of her Elizabethan characters, including Queen Elizabeth. "How now! Assaulteth me with dramaturgy?" she says, upon hearing advice from Shakespeare.

Here’s one more Freed gag on Elizabethan tradition: When Anne Hathaway decides to follow her truant hubby to London, she looks over the life that the so-called theatricals live and sighs, "Had I only been a man, I might have been an actress."

Extravagantly produced entertainment that presents Will Shakespeare as the warm-hearted collaborating front man ("beard") for the jaded intellectual Edward de Vere. Superbly written examination of a conspiracy theory, as well as a reflection on playwriting talent, both embedded within a spectacular and colorful period comedy. Stunning performances and outstanding direction.