

Appalachian State University's Office of Arts and Cultural Programs presents

# APPlause!

## K-12 Performing Arts Series

American Shakespeare Center's  
"A Midsummer Night's Dream"

October 5 - October 11, 2020

RECOMMENDED FOR: 9th-12th Grades

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: Classic Literature, Plot and Character Development, Shakespearean Drama





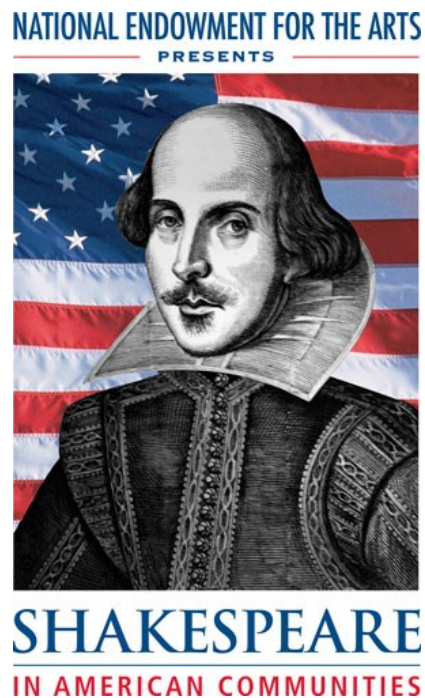
The following materials were compiled by the Education and Research Department of the American Shakespeare Center, 2015.

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Unless otherwise noted, all selections from *Much Ado about Nothing* in this study guide use the stage directions as found in the 1623 Folio.

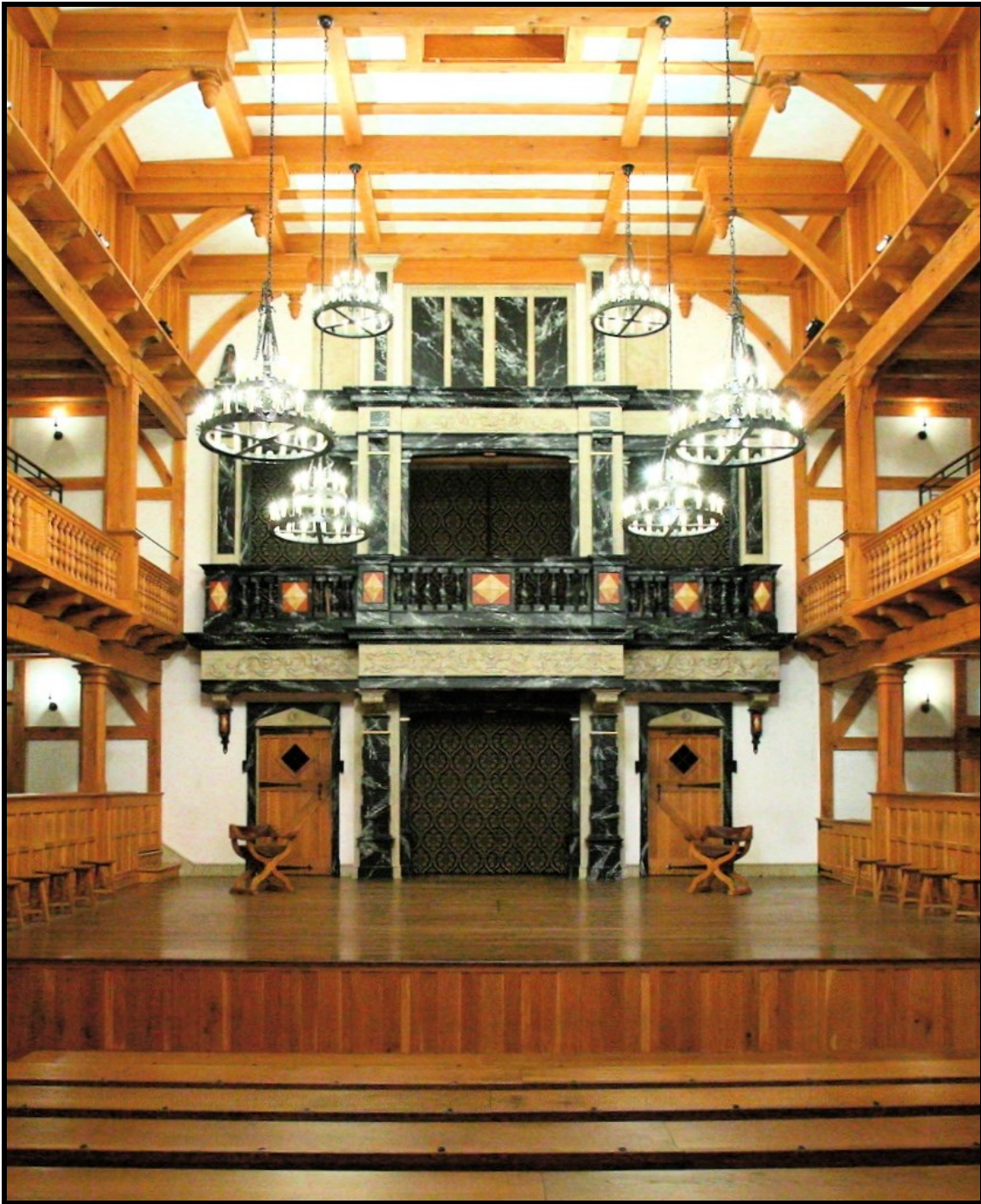
All line counts come from the Norton Shakespeare, edited by Stephen Greenblatt *et al*, 1997.

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VIRGINIA  
COMMISSION  
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In 1596, three years before the Lord Chamberlain's Men constructed the Globe, James Burbage purchased the Blackfriars Theatre for £600 and converted it into a space suitable for his purposes by building a stage, a *frons scenae*, and a three tiered gallery. In 1608, the company, now the King's Men, took possession of the theatre from the children's companies who had been playing there and began performing the works of the greatest writers of the day – including William Shakespeare.

Situated in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley in historic Staunton, Virginia, the 300-seat Blackfriars Playhouse -- the world's only re-creation of Shakespeare's original indoor theatre -- opened its doors in September 2001 and has already delighted tens of thousands of enthusiastic audience members from around the world. The product of years of research, this unique, historically accurate performance space provides the perfect backdrop for the ASC's staging practices.

## SHAKESPEARE TIMELINE

- 1558 Elizabeth I ascends to the throne and becomes the Queen of England. Shakespeare lived most of his life during the reign of a strong woman and many of his plays feature strong, powerful women. Note the strong and powerful women in Shakespeare's plays.
- April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1564 According to baptismal records, William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. Growing up in the English countryside, Shakespeare encountered farmers, peasants, merchants, and minor officials. How many of Shakespeare's plays feature a country character or are set in the country?
- 1576 James Burbage builds The Theatre, London's first open-air playhouse. The open-air playhouse's daytime performances made the audience visible to the performers. Look for moments in the play in which Shakespeare is clearly writing with a visible audience in mind.
- 1582 Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway. Many scholars say that the marriages in Shakespeare's plays reveal his feelings about marriage. How would you say Shakespeare felt about marriage?
- 1583 Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, is born.
- 1585 Shakespeare's twin children, Judith and Hamnet, are born. Consider the child characters in plays like *The Winter's Tale* and *Macbeth*. What might Shakespeare's feelings toward youth might have been?
- By 1590 Shakespeare lives in London while his family remains in Stratford.
- 1592 First recorded production of a Shakespeare play, *1 Henry VI* at the Rose Theatre. London theatres close due to plague outbreak. Did you know that almost all of Shakespeare's plays contain plot material borrowed from earlier sources? *1 Henry VI* comes from the *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* by Raphael Holinshed.
- 1594 William Shakespeare becomes a prominent member of The Lord Chamberlain's Men. Did you know that Players (actors) could be arrested as "vagrants" unless they were under the patronship of the nobility?
- 1595 First recorded performances of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Can you find the scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that makes fun of *Romeo and Juliet*?
- 1596 Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, dies at age 11. Did you know that *Hamlet* may have been a response to his death?  
James Burbage purchases the Blackfriars Playhouse, which had been used previously as a playhouse, but only as a hall with benches set out. Tickets at the new playhouse would cost up to 10 times(!) as much as at the outdoor playhouses.
- 1598 First recorded performance of *Much Ado about Nothing*. *Much Ado about Nothing* is almost all prose; why might Shakespeare have made this choice?
- 1599 The Lord's Chamberlain's Men tear down The Theatre and use its boards to construct the Globe Theatre. Shakespeare wrote most of his 38 extant plays specifically for the Globe.

- 1600 First recorded performance of *Hamlet*.
- 1603 Queen Elizabeth dies and King James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England.  
Shakespeare's company receives royal patronage, becoming 'The King's Men'. What in Shakespeare's plays might reflect the change from a virginal female monarch to a king with an established family?
- 1605 First recorded performance of *Macbeth*. Did you know that King James had a huge interest in witches, and that he even wrote a book about them?
- 1609 The King's Men begin performing in the Blackfriars Playhouse. Between 1596 and 1609, the Burbages leased the playhouse to boys' companies for performances. Can you find a reference to them in *Hamlet*?
- 1611 First recorded performance of *The Tempest*. Some scholars say that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's autobiographical play. Can you deduce which character Shakespeare may have modeled on himself?  
Shakespeare retires to Stratford-upon-Avon, ending his tenure as a resident writer and actor with the company he helped form.
- 1613 The Globe Theatre burns down during a performance of *Henry VIII* when the company used a real cannon in order to create a sound effect, setting the thatched roof on fire.
- 1614 The King's Men rebuild The Globe, with a few improvements, including a tile roof.
- April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1616 William Shakespeare dies on his birthday at age 52.
- 1623 Henry Condell and John Heminges publish The Complete Works of William Shakespeare in Folio. Considering that Folio editions were large and expensive to print, what does this printing, seven years after Shakespeare's death, indicate about enduring interest in his works?
- ... 365 YEARS PASS
- 1988 Ralph Alan Cohen and Jim Warren found Shenandoah Shakespeare Express.
- 2001 The world's only recreation of the Blackfriars Playhouse opens in Staunton, VA.

## Shakespeare's Staging Conditions (and How Well He Used Them)

### **Universal Lighting**

Shakespeare's actors could see their audience; ASC actors can see you. When actors can see an audience, they can engage with an audience. And audience members can play the roles that Shakespeare wrote for them — Cleopatra's court, Henry V's army, or simply the butt of innumerable jokes. Leaving an audience in the dark can literally obscure a vital part of the drama as Shakespeare designed it.

### **Doubling**

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has more than forty parts; Shakespeare's traveling troupe may have had fewer than fifteen actors. With a troupe of fifteen or fewer actors, the ASC doubles parts, with one actor playing as many as seven roles in a single show.

### **Gender**

Because women didn't take to the English stage until after the Restoration (1660), all the women in Shakespeare's plays were originally played by boys. Shakespeare had a great deal of fun with this convention. In a performance of *As You Like It* in 1600, a boy would have played Rosalind, who disguises herself as a boy, then pretends to be a woman. Let's review: that's a boy playing a woman disguised as a boy pretending to be a woman. Because we are committed to the idea that Shakespeare is about everyone — male and female — The ASC is not an all-male company, but we try to re-create some of the fun of gender confusions by casting women as men and men as women.

### **Length**

We cannot know the precise running time of a Shakespeare play in the Renaissance, but the Chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* promises "two hours' traffic of our stage." The ASC tries to fulfill this promise through brisk pacing and a continuous flow of dramatic action.

### **Sets**

Shakespeare's company performed on a large wooden platform unadorned by fixed sets or scenery. A few large pieces — thrones, tombs, tables — were occasionally used to ornament a scene. Like Shakespeare, we rely on the audience's imagination to "piece out our imperfections."

### **Costuming**

Costuming was important to the theatre companies of Shakespeare's day for three reasons. First, the frequently lavish costumes provided fresh color and design for the theatres. Second, costumes made it easy to use one actor in a variety of roles. Third, as they do now, costumes helped an audience "read" the play quickly by showing them at a glance who was rich or poor, royalty or peasantry, priest or cobbler, ready for bed or ready to party. Costumes are important to the ASC in the same way. But costumes were *not* important to Shakespeare and his fellows as a way of showing what life used to be like in a particular historical period. They probably performed *Titus Andronicus*, for example, in primarily Elizabethan garb with Roman-style pieces thrown on top. Sometimes we'll use contemporary costumes, sometimes Elizabethan, and sometimes a mix of everything in between.

### **Music**

Shakespeare had a soundtrack. Above the stage, musicians played an assortment of string, wind, and percussion instruments before, during, and after the play. The plays are sprinkled with songs for which lyrics but not much of the music survives. The ASC sets many of these songs in contemporary style. The result is emblematic of our approach: a commitment to Shakespeare's text and to the mission of connecting that text to modern audiences.

## STUFF THAT HAPPENS

- Theseus, Duke of Athens, plans his marriage to Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons.
- Egeus interrupts to complain that his daughter Hermia has fallen in love with Lysander. Theseus orders Hermia to obey her father and marry Demetrius; otherwise, she will be killed or sent to a nunnery.
- Hermia and Lysander plan to escape to the woods, get married, and live off money from Lysander's rich aunt.
- Hermia's friend Helena, who loves Demetrius, reveals the plan to him. Demetrius chases Hermia and Lysander into the woods. Helena chases Demetrius into the woods.
- In the woods, Oberon, the fairy king, and Titania, his queen, quarrel over the possession of a changeling boy.
- Oberon sends Puck to put a spell on Titania, so that she will fall in love with the first creature she sees when she awakes.
- Nick Bottom and his fellow workmen ("rude mechanicals") come into the woods to rehearse a play for Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding celebration.
- Puck places an ass's head upon Bottom. Titania wakes and promptly falls in love.
- Oberon commands Puck to put a spell on Demetrius so that he falls in love with Helena; Puck, however, mistakes Lysander for Demetrius.
- Confusions, corrections, coupling, and play-going ensue.



## WHO'S WHO

When directors cast actors for a Shakespeare play, the only information they have is the text that Shakespeare wrote. Unlike in many modern shows, the dramatis personae of a Shakespearean play does not include the ages of characters, their relationships to each other, or descriptions of what they look like. All of that information must come from within the play itself. What the characters say about themselves and what other characters say about them define what they look like, where they come from, and how they behave. What information can you get from the character quotations below?

\*Keep in mind that the character commenting may have ulterior motives which influence their word choice.

**Theseus**— “Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!” (Egeus, 1.1)

**Hippolyta**— “The bouncing Amazon, your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love.”  
(Titania, 2.1)

**Philostrate**— “Here, mighty Theseus.” (Philostrate, 5.1)

**Egeus**— “Full of vexation come I, with complaint against my child.” (Egeus, 1.1)

**Helena**— “I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius, the more you beat me, I will fawn on you.”  
(Helena, 2.1)

**Hermia**— “She was a vixen when she went to school; And though she be but little, she is fierce.” (Helena, 3.2)

**Lysander**— “What love could press Lysander from my side?” (Hermia, 3.2)

**Demetrius**— “You have her father's love, Demetrius; let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.” (Lysander, 1.1)

**Oberon**— “What, jealous Oberon!” (Titania, 2.1)

**Titania**— “Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.” (Oberon, 4.1)

**Puck**— “You are that shrewd and knavish sprite call'd Robin Goodfellow.” (Fairy, 2.1)

**Nick Bottom**— “You can play no part but Pyramus.” (Quince, 1.2)

**Peter Quince**— “I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream.” (Bottom, 4.1)

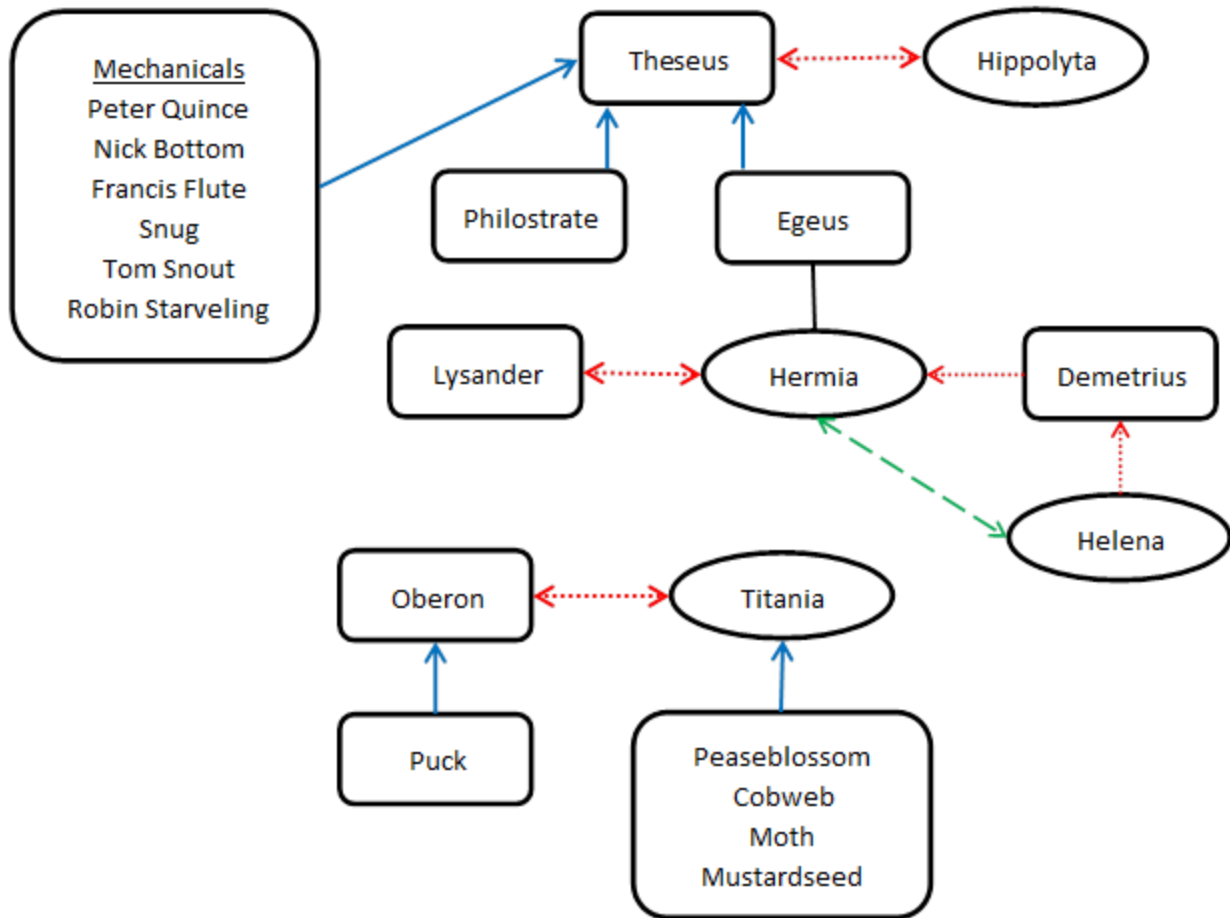
**Francis Flute**— “Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.” (Flute, 1.2)

**Snug**— “I am slow of study.” (Snug, 1.2)

**Tom Snout**— “In this same interlude it doth befall that I, one Snout by name, present a wall.” (Snout, 5.1)

**Robin Starveling**— “Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.” (Starveling, 5.1)

## CHARACTER CONNECTIONS



Key	
Love/Marriage	↔
Blood	—
Fealty/Employment	→
Friendship	- - - - -

## DISCOVERY SPACE SCAVENGER HUNT

**Discovery Space** [di-skuhv-uh-ree speys], *n.* **1.**  
The curtained area at the upstage center portion of an Elizabethan stage where something is revealed to or discovered by characters or audiences.

**Instructions to Teacher:** In your final class meeting before attending the performance of *Much Ado about Nothing*, assign each student one question from the following list. Each student should hear *all* of the questions as you assign them. Your students will discover the answers to their own questions, and probably everyone else's as well, as they watch the production.

1. What does the costume of the first person on stage tell you about that character and the world of the play?
2. What indications do the costumes provide the audience about the characters' status? Can you find textual justification for the costumes?
3. Describe the physical interactions of Lysander and Demetrius in the first scene.
4. How do the costumes of the Mechanicals relate to one another?
5. How do Nick Bottom and Peter Quince physically attempt to assert power over each other in their first scene?
6. When does the first music during the play occur? What is the reason you imagine for the music?
7. How do Puck and the First Fairy know that Oberon and Titania are coming?
8. Describe how the fairies' costumes are different than the Athenians'.
9. Describe how the fairies' physical motions are different than the Athenians'.
10. What does the physicality between Oberon and Puck tell you about their relationship?
11. How is Titania's bower staged?
12. How do Oberon and Puck, when they see Hermia and Demetrius argue, become "invisible"?
13. What does Lysander give to Helena?
14. How do Lysander and Demetrius respond non-verbally during Helena's "O spite" monologue?
15. How do Lysander and Demetrius prevent Hermia from reaching Helena during the catfight?
16. Describe the action Puck takes to put the lovers to sleep.
17. Describe the stage picture (who is positioned where) when Theseus and Hippolyta find the lovers.
18. Where do Theseus, Hippolyta, Lysander, Hermia, Demetrius, and Helena position themselves to watch "Pyramus and Thisbe"?
19. Describe Pyramus's death.
20. Describe how Titania and Oberon's physical relationship is different in the last scene than it was in their first.

# APPlause!

## K-12 Performing Arts Series

Enriching lives, sparking imaginations, and inspiring a love of learning through the arts!

Arts education and outreach programming at Appalachian is committed to connecting university arts resources to a diverse audience of community arts patrons, teachers and learners in the campus community, and in the public, private and home school network across our region. In doing so, the series strives to broaden and deepen arts experiences for audiences of all ages, while ensuring access to the arts for young audiences, building future audiences for the arts, and inspiring a love of learning through the arts.

Every season, affordable music, dance, film, and theatre events are offered to students and their teachers from K-12 classrooms across the region. Students experience everything from high-energy acrobatics and Appalachian music to international dance and literary classics brought to life through theatrical productions. In recent seasons, more than 8,000 students across our region have attended APPlause Series events.

This academic year, the APPlause! Series will be completely virtual and completely free, offering compelling programming to connect to K-12 classrooms, thanks in large part to generous donors who believe in supplying educators with arts programming that will spark creativity and inspire a love of learning.

*Chuck  
and Anna  
Eyer*

**PEAK**  
GROUP.INSURE

*Steve  
and Sue  
Chase*

