excess mostly leads to trouble; pretty good advice for actors, too.)

Now some specific thoughts about specific plays:

LOVE'S LABOURS LOST:
Absolutely delightful! mostly because of the consistent sense of joyful discovery among the characters. This play has become a bit glum and cynical in recent years, but your youthful exuberance kept the spirits high throughout (though I think the ending was a bit too ebullient: for me, the song about the owl and the cuckoo plus Armado's comment about "the words of Mercury..." give the play a melancholy ending which plays against all the merry-making earlier). I thought the Rosaline-Berowne relationship was very well defined: pointed, competitive, yet still full of secret longings. Berowne's speech about "women's eyes" was excellent--it had all the same sense of fun and discovery as Costard's speech about "remuneration." Also, I thought the "hammy" denials Berowne makes to his three buddies was very funny and true: really underscored his hypocrisy...whether this was the work of a very gifted actor or a very raw one whose inexperience prompted the hamminess doesn't matter: it worked very well. Holofernes and Nathaniel were delightful send ups of us academic types--though Holofernes could go even farther to show off his knowledge (I'm not sure he can ever be "too pompous"); lost some of Nathaniel's word play because of excess energy. The Pageant of the Nine Worthies was a delight, mostly because it wasn't loaded up with a lot of experienced actors tricks, but because it was played by inexperienced actors who were indeed bumbling their way through a first performance. And special bravos to Dull: your drollness made Dull as funny as I've ever seen him played.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
I saw a production of MM at Houston's Alley Theatre last year that was top heavy with special effects and punk gesturing among the low lifes. While it was spectacular and provocative to watch, I'm not sure that many who saw it have the foggiest idea what the story was about. You clearly told the story and made each character, especially the minor ones, bold and well defined (esp. Abhorson, Barnabas, Overdone, etc...and oh yes: Froth!...maybe a bit much, but truly memorable!). I was quite taken by Isabella's move from innocence to knowledge--it was refreshing to see an Isabella so clearly naive and youthful at the outset. Angelo looked so right for this role, yet still showed enough humanity under that external villainy that the play didn't topple into melodrama. The Duke was indeed benevolent and kindly--though I think he, too, learns a lot about life's darker sides as does Isabella; he might want to make a few more "discoveries" along the way. Seems to me he's basically a good guy for whom things go out of control--I never quite saw the sense of danger/urgency threatening him. I'm still moved by the Isabella-Claudio reunion (though it was so powerful I'm not sure that she would so readily accept the Duke's proposal of marriage--she was very forgiving very quickly). I think I'll remember the Lucio most from this production: having a woman "send up" male boorishness was a nice gloss on Shakespeare's satire. Glad to see Lucio was not self-conscious about the bawdry: you ended up showing just how tasteless his humor is.
WINTERS TALE

I found the first half of this play very compelling, largely because of the strongly felt passions of Leontes, Heroine, Polixines, and Paulina (but see note above about using mostly anger as your attack weapon). The court scene in particular was well done and genuinely moving. I don't know that I've ever seen a production of WT where the rustics scenes work completely for me: they always start off great, full of color and energy, but quickly lose their appeal...mostly, I think, because there is relatively little dramatic action advancing the plot. Yours was certainly a lively, colorful Act IV, but ultimately it, too, succumbed to what may be some excesses in the script. As painful as it is to cut WS, I'm not sure that chunks of Act IV couldn't be trimmed. The ending was very moving, though I wonder why you didn't use the "discovery space" curtain to mask the statue (height and sight lines??). Watching Heroine step into place diminished the magic a bit. (Might a couple of actors carrying a curtain mask her on the loft platform while she gets into position?) Some really fine charaterizations in the lesser roles, esp. the Old Farmer and his son. As good as Autolycus was (esp. in the masked scenes: wonderfully staged!), I must say that I've declared war on British accents in Texas (every company I saw this summer at some time lapsed into Brit accents): we're not British, nor were meant to be, and using British accents perpetuates the myth that WS is strictly a British cultural artefact. You (and your colleagues around the state) are doing a very good job of making WS accessible for everyone, so there's no need to fall back on pseudo-British. Esp. when playing a rustic in the heart of rustic America (though I heard more than a few dropped "R's" from many at Winedale and around the state). Sorry, to pontificate, but we've got a great chance to make WS truly our own. Besides, virtually every British actor with whom I've discussed the matter stresses that Americans are better equipped to speak Shakespeare than British because our native accents are probably closer to the Elizabethan than theirs at this time.

Please take these comments for what they're worth: one man's musings on a wonderful weekend in Winedale. Those that are useful: use...those that aren't, chuck!

I look forward to returning to Winedale often in the future. I wish each of you the best of luck in future endeavors. And I must say that I envy you enormously: you are spending the greatest summer of your lives at Winedale doing what you love best...and doing it very well.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Greenwald
Associate Professor