Scene 1

Charles, a court wrestler, arrives as Orlando and Adam leave. Oliver affirms that Charles is wrestling before the new duke the following day. Charles reveals that he heard Orlando will try to disguise himself and challenge him. Charles informs Oliver that he will wrestle for the sake of his reputation tomorrow, and will be ruthless with all challengers. Oliver thanks Charles for letting him know, but tells him that he would as soon as have Charles break Orlando’s neck as his finger. When Charles departs, Oliver reveals that he does not understand why he hates his brother so much; Orlando is gentle, intelligent, and noble even though he has never been educated. Orlando is loved by the people, and so Oliver feels undervalued. He hopes that the wrestling tomorrow will clear up any misconceptions the court has about his brother, and they will see how repulsive he is.

Scene 2a

Celia, but the duke allowed Rosalind to stay at the court because their bond was closer than that of the “natural bond of sisters.” Orlando resolves to flee the court, and Orlando must leave immediately. Orlando asks Hesperia which of the two ladies are the duke’s daughter, and Hesperia reveals that it is Rosalind and Touchstone, the court jester. Shortly thereafter, Hesperia, Celia’s gentlewoman, comes with news of good wrestling in the court. Hesperia reveals that Charles has wrestled three men, and has seriously injured all of them by breaking their ribs. Touchstone is surprised that Hesperia feels wrestling is a sport for ladies. Hesperia announces that the wrestlers will soon be approaching, and if the ladies stay where they are, they will be able to witness the rest of the event.

Scene 2b

Duke Frederick, several Lords, Orlando, Charles, and some Attendants arrive. Duke Frederick is surprised that his daughter and niece have come to see the wrestling. He urges them to dissuade Orlando, the next challenger, from wrestling Charles, as Orlando is too young and small. Celia and Rosalind call Orlando, and try to dissuade him from wrestling Charles. Orlando reveals that he will wrestle no matter what, as he has yet to earn a reputation, and nothing to lose should he be killed. Rosalind and Celia wish him well. Charles and Orlando egg each other on, and then begin to wrestle. Rosalind and Celia cheer on Orlando. Orlando manages to throw Charles, and knock him out. Duke Frederick is impressed, but when he finds out that Orlando is the son of Sir Rowland de Boys, he says he wishes that he had descended from another house and father. Sir Rowland was close friends with the Duchess, the Duke’s sister, who Frederick has recently exiled.

Scene 2c

Celia is ashamed that her father has reacted the way he did to Orlando’s victory, and feels he deserves more praise for his accomplishments. Orlando claims he is proud to be Sir Rowland’s son, even if it puts him out of the Duke’s favor. Celia and Rosalind pity Orlando, and go to congratulate him. Rosalind gives Orlando a chain from her neck to wear. Orlando is astounded by Rosalind’s beauty, and cannot suppress the courage to thank her. Rosalind goes back to him, but is shortly after called away by Celia. Orlando finds himself overtaken by his love for Rosalind, and still cannot speak to her. Hesperia re-enters, and recommends that Orlando leave the court immediately. She says that the duke misconstrues his victory as a threat against the court, and Orlando must leave immediately. Orlando asks Hesperia which of the two ladies are the duke’s daughter, and Hesperia reveals that it is Rosalind, but the duke allowed Rosalind to stay at the court because their bond was closer than that of the “natural bond of sisters.” Orlando resolves to flee the court.

Scene 3

Within a room in the palace, Rosalind confesses her love for Orlando to Celia, who tells her to get a hold of herself and “wrestle with her affections.” Rosalind also reveals that her father loved Orlando’s father, so it makes sense that she would love him too. However, Celia argues with this logic citing the fact that she should hate Orlando because her father hated his father, but she does not hate Orlando.

Scene 3a

Duke Frederick storms in with his lords. He banishes Rosalind from the court, claiming that she is a traitor because of her relation to her mother. Rosalind argues against this logic since “treason is not inherited.” Celia protests to her father as well, asking for the Duke to allow Rosalind to stay for her sake. The Duke tells Celia that she will benefit from Rosalind’s banishment; since Rosalind is beautiful and patient, the people pity her, and if she is banished, all of their affections will lie with Celia. Celia protests yet again, but the Duke calls her a fool and leaves.

Scene 3b

Celia and Rosalind lament Rosalind’s banishment, and Celia states that it is as if the Duke banished her as well. She vows to leave the court with Rosalind, and suggests that they go seek out the Duchess (Rosalind’s mother) in the Forest of Arden. Rosalind fears that their beauty will “provoketh thieves sooner than gold,” so Celia vows to disguise herself in “poor and mean attire,” and Rosalind chooses to dress like a man. Rosalind will go disguised as “ Ganymede,” and Celia as “Aliena.” Celia suggests they bring Touchstone, the court jester, along with them on their journey. They decide to pool their jewels and wealth and seek freedom in the forest.

Scene 4

Duke Frederick discovers that his daughter has disappeared. He asks his Lords if they saw her, and they relay that she was not in her bed this morning, and that Touchstone is also missing. They find out from Hesperia that they were praising the “parts and graces” of Orlando, and thus she deduces that he may very well be with them. The Duke charges his lords to find the runaways, and bring them back to the court.
Scene 5
Orlando returns to his brother's property. Adam comes and informs him that his brother Oliver heard about the praise Orlando received from the wrestling match, and so he plans to burn the building in which Orlando sleeps that night. Adam suggests that Orlando leave the court immediately. Orlando asks Adam where he should go, for he has nothing and will have to beg. Adam reveals that he has saved away some money from when he was Sir Rowland's servant, and asks for Orlando to let him accompany and serve Orlando. Orlando agrees, and they decide to leave for the forest.

ACT 2

Scene 1
In the Forest of Arden, the banished Duchess and her ladies and lords comment upon how life in the forest is much more pure and carefree than that of the court, in spite of the wintry weather. The Duchess remarks on what a shame it will be to have to hunt venison to survive, and to have to kill deer in their "native dwelling place." Lord Edward and Ladies Eleanor, Gwendolyn, and Margaret comment about how they saw Jaques weeping over a dead deer that had been killed by hunters. They relay the intense pity Jaques had for the deer, implying that the usurpation of the hunters is much worse than the actions taken by Duke Frederick against his sister. The Duchess requests that the ladies and lords take her to him immediately, because she enjoys conversing with him when he's in this state.

Scene 2
Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone finally arrive in the Forest of Arden, weary from travelling. Touchstone comments about how he would really rather be in the court, but will be content in the face of this situation. Two shepherds, Corin and Silvius, walk past. They are so engrossed in their conversation about love that they do not notice the three travelers. Silvius confesses his love for Phebe, and claims that nobody can possibly understand the depth of his love. Corin tries to advise him, but Silvius will not listen, and runs off calling his love's name.

Scene 2a
Rosalind is moved by Silvius' display of affection, and recalls her own feelings for Orlando. Touchstone also remembers a time when he was in love, but with less fondness. Celia suggests they ask Corin for food, since she is almost fainting from hunger. Corin reveals that his master is selling his flock and pasture, and that he would be glad to sell it to the travelers.

Scene 3
Amiens, Jaques, and others enter singing a song glorifying forest life. Though Amiens complains that his voice is ragged, Jaques urges him to keep singing because the song makes him melancholy and he likes feeling that way. They continue to sing.

Scene 4
Orlando and Adam are now in the forest, and Adam is weak, tired, and hungry. Orlando vows to find him some food.

Scene 5
Jaques finds the Duchess, ladies, and lords in the forest having a meal. He comments how he has just met a fool from the court in the forest (Touchstone), and reveals his desire to be a fool. He feels if he is a fool, he will be able to "cleanse the foul body of the infected world." The Duchess comments that she doesn't think Jaques would make a very good fool, because he would "infect" the world rather than cleanse it.

Scene 5a
Orlando enters the scene, and violently threatens the group in hopes of getting some of their food. He threatens them because he believes that all of the people that live in the forest are savages. Upon discovering their gentleness, he apologizes. The Duchess invites him to dine, and Orlando vows to return with Adam. Once Orlando leaves, Jaques launches into one of Shakespeare's most poetic speeches detailing the stages of human life.

Scene 5b
Orlando returns with Adam, and they are welcomed by the group. The ladies and lords sing a song about the winter weather being more kind than man's ingratitude. At the close of the song, the Duchess reveals to Orlando that she loved his father, Sir Rowland. She welcomes him and Adam into her cave, and vows to hear about their fortunes.

Scene 6
Back at the court, Duke Frederick demands that Oliver find his brother Orlando, and vows to take away his land and all of his possessions until he brings his brother back to the court. The Duke threatens that if Oliver doesn't find his brother within a year, he will be exiled forever. When Oliver tries to tell the Duke that he does not love his brother, the Duke is even more enraged, and throws him out of the court immediately.

INTERMISSION

ACT 3

Scene 1
In the Forest of Arden, Orlando is hanging love poems to Rosalind on the trees. As he leaves, he declares his love of her beauty and virtue.

Scene 2
Corin and Touchstone are engrossed in a conversation about the relative merits of court and country life. Corin argues that polite manners at court are of no consequence in the country. Touchstone apologizes. The Duchess invites him to dine, and Orlando vows to support this thesis and then challenges the shepherd's reasoning.

Scene 2a
Ganymede (Rosalind) arrives and shares with Corin and Touchstone that he has discovered the love poems written in honor of Rosalind. Touchstone mocks the rhyming verses by making up his own, less flattering poem about Rosalind. Aliena (Celia) arrives with another love poem about Rosalind and reads it aloud. Aliena asks Corin and Touchstone to give them some privacy, and they leave.

Scene 2b
Celia discovers that Rosalind does not know who it is who has been putting love poems on all the trees. After a failed attempt at teasing the answer out of Rosalind, Celia tells her that it is in fact Orlando, the young man who defeated Charles the wrestler at the court of Duke Frederick. Rosalind is thrilled that he remembers her, and inquires as to whether or not he knows that Rosalind is in the Forest of Arden pretending to be a boy, how he looks and how he got to the forest. Celia simply replies that she found him under a tree. When she tries to explain more, Rosalind continuously interrupts her because she is so excited about Orlando.
Scene 2c
Before they can discuss further, Orlando and Jaques enter and the ladies hide nearby to spy on them. Jaques tells Orlando that he is at fault for being in love, and Orlando expresses his wish to no longer see Jaques. Jaques leaves Orlando.

Scene 2d
Rosalind comes out of hiding dressed as Ganymede and asks Orlando for the time. Orlando replies that there is no clock in the forest, and Ganymede explains that no clock means there is no true lover in the forest since "sighing every minute and groaning every hour" would tell the time as well as a clock. They banter flirtatiously over the ways in which one can tell time with love. Orlando accuses Ganymede of having an accent of higher breeding than the peasants of the forest. Ganymede explains that he was brought up by his religious uncle who also taught him the ways of courtship. He continues to complain about a young man in the forest who won't stop writing love letters on trees, and Orlando confesses that it was him. Ganymede argues with Orlando about the marks of a lover, but he insists that he is in love with Rosalind. Ganymede then offers to cure Orlando of his love sickness by pretending to be Rosalind so that Orlando could woo her. He eventually agrees to the arrangement. Orlando, Celia as Aliena, and Rosalind as Ganymede, all return to their cottage.

Scene 3
Touchstone and Audrey converse while Jaques listens in unnoticed. Touchstone convinces Audrey to marry him, and it is revealed that Sir Oliver Martext, an old vicar, is already on his way to perform the rites.

Scene 3a
When Sir Oliver Martext arrives, it is explained that Touchstone and Audrey cannot be married unless there is another man present (typically the bride's father) to give her away. At this point Jaques steps forward and offers himself in this matter. Knowing that Touchstone's intentions are not honorable, Jaques takes Touchstone aside and convinces him to go to a church and be wed properly with a proper priest. Touchstone explains that he intended to be wed by an unredeemable priest so that he might get out of the marriage after it has been consummated, but he eventually concedes. Touchstone, Audrey and Jaques head off to find a proper church, leaving Sir Oliver Martext behind.

Scene 4
Rosalind, dressed as Ganymede, and Celia, dressed as Aliena, wait for Orlando to return as he had promised. Celia accuses Orlando of not actually being in love with Rosalind, but Rosalind is unable to answer the accusation because she is so enraptured with love for Orlando. Corin arrives to inform Ganymede and Aliena that Silvius and Phebe, the quarreling couple of shepherds who Corin had mentioned to Ganymede and Aliena earlier, are presently sparring. He invites them to come witness the argument, and Ganymede gladly accepts the offer, claiming that he will become a "busy actor in their play." The three leave to find the shepherds.

Scene 5
Phebe persistently resists Silvius' confessions of love, Ganymede intervenes while Aliena and Corin stand by. Ganymede attempts to convince Silvius that he can do better, while simultaneously attempting to convince Phebe that she is "not for all markets" and should accept the love of a good man like Silvius when she has the opportunity. During Ganymede's intervention, Phebe becomes smitten with the boy, not realizing that he is in fact Rosalind.

Scene 5a
Ganymede, Aliena and Corin leave the shepherds, leaving Phebe to reflect on her encounter with the young man. She plots to get back at Ganymede by writing a stern letter, which she commands Silvius to deliver.

ACT 4

Scene 1
Jaques and Ganymede are getting acquainted. Ganymede accuses Jaques of being melancholy and despite his attempt to explain his "most humorous sadness," Ganymede insists that he'd rather be merry than have experiences that would make him melancholy. Orlando finally arrives, later than expected, so Jaques excuses himself. Because Orlando was late, although he still arrives one hour within his promise, a flirtatious argument ensues over Orlando's true feelings about Rosalind. Ganymede insists that Orlando woo him as if he were Rosalind, which eventually leads to a mock wedding ceremony. Ganymede insists Aliena play the role of the priest, although at first she swears she "cannot say the words." Eventually Orlando informs Ganymede that he must go have dinner with the Duchess. He promises that he will return by 2 o'clock, and Ganymede threatens that he cannot be late, or else he will consider him unfaithful in love. Upon his departure, Celia finally speaks up and expresses her disapproval of Rosalind's game with Orlando. Rosalind ignores her accusation, insisting that she is so much in love that she cannot do anything but think of Orlando until he returns. Celia chooses to go to sleep.

Scene 2
Touchstone and Audrey, on their way to find a priest, run into Lord Amiens, Lady Margaret and some musicians. They sing "It Was a Lover and His Lass" while Touchstone and Audrey dance together.

Scene 3
It is past 2 o'clock, and Orlando has yet to arrive. Silvius arrives instead with the letter that Phebe demanded he deliver to Ganymede. Silvius apologizes for what he knows is the "angry tenor" of Phebe's letter, since he witnessed her anger as she was writing it. Ganymede reads the letter aloud to reveal that it was in fact a love letter, and Phebe lied to Silvius. Ganymede tells Silvius to go back to Phebe and tell her that Ganymede wants her to love Silvius instead.

Scene 3a
Silvius leaves as Oliver arrives. He explains that he comes for Orlando, and hands Ganymede and Aliena the bloody handkerchief as a sign that his story is true. He explains that Orlando bravely fought a lioness to defend a man who was lying helpless in the forest, only to discover it was his brother, Oliver. Having heard of the terrible way Oliver treated Orlando in the past, Ganymede and Aliena are taken aback at his sudden change of heart, even though they had never met before. Oliver explains that Orlando is recovering from his fight with the lion in the Duchesses' cave, and begged Oliver to come to the one he calls his Rosalind with his apologies. When Ganymede gets a good look at the bloody napkin, he faints instantly. Ganymede insists to Oliver that he did "counterfeit to swoon" and it was all part of his female act. Oliver remains unconvinced that the fainting was a fake. Oliver helps Ganymede up, and the three of them all return to the cottage. It is clear after this scene that Oliver and Aliena have taken a strong liking to each other.

ACT 5
Scene 1
Touchstone makes the accusation that there is another man in the forest named William lays claim to Audrey. Audrey insists that the other man means nothing to her, but Touchstone still sees him as competition. William arrives and they greet each other. Touchstone asks William if he loves Audrey, and he says he does. At hearing this, Touchstone claims that he will marry Audrey and William has no say in the matter. After physically threatening William, Audrey agrees that it is best that William leave them be, and he does. Corin arrives and tells Touchstone and Audrey that Ganymede and Aliena are looking for them, and they all head off to the cottage together.

Scene 2
Orlando and Oliver sit together, but rather than reconciling past events, they discuss the new found love that Oliver has for Aliena. Oliver says that if Orlando will support his marriage to Aliena, they will remain at the cottage in the forest, while all of Sir Rowland’s estate will be bestowed upon Orlando. Orlando consents, and announces that the wedding will be held tomorrow and that the Duchess and her attendants will be invited.

Scene 2a
Ganymede arrives as Oliver leaves to find Aliena. Ganymede is here to check on Orlando’s health, but also to make sure that Oliver told him that his fainting at the sight of his blood was fake. Orlando tells Ganymede that their siblings will be married tomorrow before the Duchess, and how it hurts his heart to see them so happy in love. Ganymede offers to play the role of Rosalind the following day to ease the pain, but Orlando says he doesn’t want to play this game any longer. At hearing this, Ganymede makes up a story about how he can make strange things happen because he’s known a magician since he was three years old and that he will make Rosalind appear the next day so that Orlando, too, can be married.

Scene 2b
Silvius and Phebe arrive. Phebe scolds Ganymede for sharing the letter that she wrote to him with Silvius. Ganymede ignores the accusation and tells Phebe not to love him, but to love the shepherd who loves her so dearly. At the request of Phebe, Silvius makes several statements describing how he feels about her. Phebe and Orlando agree about their unattainable loves, while Ganymede claims that he will “love no woman.” The ritual escalates until Ganymede concocts a plan for the following day. If Silvius shows up, he’ll get to marry Phebe; if Orlando shows up, he’ll get to marry Rosalind; if Phebe shows up and doesn’t want to marry Ganymede, she must agree to marry Silvius. All agree to meet the following day.

Scene 3
The following day, the Duchess, her followers, Jaques, Oliver, Aliena and Orlando arrive, discussing whether or not they believe that the boy Ganymede will be able to perform all the magic he promised. Ganymede then arrives with Silvius and Phebe, as promised. Ganymede confirms that everyone is still willing to keep the promises they made the previous day regarding the marriages. They agree and Ganymede and Aliena leave.

Scene 3a
Touchstone and Audrey arrive at the nuptials. Jaques reveals that this is the “motley fool” he’s so often met in the forest.

Scene 3b
Rosalind and Celia return with Hymen, the God of Marriage, without their disguises. Hymen asks that the Duchess receive her daughter. Rosalind comes forward and offers herself to both her mother and Orlando. They confirm that she is in fact Rosalind, and because she is a woman and not Ganymede at all, Phebe agrees to wed Silvius as promised. Hymen brings the four couples together to perform the marriage rites.

Scene 3c
Jacques de Boys, the second son of Sir Rowland de Boys arrives. He informs the Duchess and the wedding party that Duke Frederick, on his way into the Forest of Arden to find and kill his sister, met an old religious man who converted him. The Duke has given the throne back to his sister and restored all the lands of those who were exiled. The Duchess informs him not only that this information is well received, but that it is the wedding day of both of his brothers. Jaques steps forward to confirm that Duke Frederick has left the court and has “put on a religious life.” Jaques then decides that he will follow Frederick because he feels that there is much to be learned from him in his new state. Jaques wishes the lovers well and the Duchess begs that he stay. He refuses and leaves the festivities.

Scene 3d
The Duchess urges that the wedding commence. Everyone dances.

Epilogue
Rosalind steps forward and addresses the audience.