



**SHAKESPEARE'S
GLOBE**

 **VOCAL EYES**

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Welcome to this introduction to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* by John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, directed by Barrie Rutter. These introductory notes were written by Kate Taylor Davies and Tony McBride, and script edited by Louise Fryer.

A brief synopsis taken from the Globe's website asks us:

'How long is forever? When the imprisoned Palamon and Arcite vow eternal friendship, they don't expect that anything will come between them. But then from their cell window they see the beautiful Emilia, and their priorities take a sudden and violent turn. In this late romance, Fletcher and Shakespeare examine love in all its fluid and complex forms.'

The Globe theatre is a faithful reconstruction of the open-air theatre built in 1599, where many of Shakespeare's greatest plays were first performed. It has been constructed using as many Elizabethan building methods as possible. Opened officially in 1997, today's Globe is a twenty-sided wooden structure made of oak and lime-plaster – with the first thatched roof permitted in London since the Great Fire in 1666.

In the centre of the building is a space called the Yard, where people are permitted to stand – the Groundling area. Other members of the audience sit on wooden benches in one of the three galleries, which run around the circular auditorium – the upper gallery being some 10 metres above the yard. The theatre is open to the elements and performances continue whatever the weather – even during a thunderstorm. Thrusting out into the Yard is the large rectangular stage. This stands at shoulder height – so that the groundlings nearest to the stage can lean against it, and actors can stoop down to address members of the audience directly, face to face. During this production some members of the cast enter through the yard and access the stage via central steps.

Towards the front of the stage are two huge pillars, one on either side. Each pillar has been created from a complete oak tree. Although made of wood these pillars are ingeniously painted to look like polished marble. The deep base of each is octagonal and the column above is topped with an ornately carved Corinthian capital, gilded with real gold. The pillars support an overhanging roof – called the ‘heavens’. Its underside is divided into panels by gilded wooden ribs. Each panel is painted deep blue and decorated with stars, moons or signs of the zodiac.

The back wall is two stories high with a wood panelled minstrel’s gallery on the upper level. The middle of the gallery thrusts out four metres above the stage and is supported by pillars on the front two corners. There are three entrances at the rear of the stage – the main, central entrance is directly under the minstrel’s gallery with side entrances on either side. The entrances are each closed off with wood-panelled doors, the main entrance has double doors, and the outer entrances have arched doorways.

For this production, the on-stage pillar on the left is covered with green moss, and stands amongst a patch of grass that fills the front-left corner of the stage. More

moss grows around the panels either side of the main, central entrance, and there is a large patch of grass filling the front right corner of the stage. Six mounted stags heads are spaced equidistantly along the balcony in front of the minstrel's gallery. The stags, each with long antlers, stare out at us throughout. Above them, two strings of bunting stretch out from a central point at the back of the gallery, and are attached to the tops of the two on-stage pillars. The bunting is made from strips of plain, white material. As we enter the auditorium, there is a cat-walk carpet of white that leads from the front of the stage all the way back to the main entrance where, hanging on the central doors are two large, white wreaths.

There is a mixed heritage cast of 13, who wear costumes of the period, though some with a modern twist. The women wear dress with tight bodices, some with full skirts, and others with a more tailored, long straight skirt. The men wear doublet and hose, though some with trousers that have a more modern 'combat trouser' design.

We begin at the court of Theseus and Hippolyta, rulers of Athens on their wedding day. Theseus oozes regal charm, dressed in ruby fitted jacket with tiered shoulder-pads and a low waist that skims the hips then darts outward in a frill, just above the thighs. He wears wide satin pantaloons of the same vibrant shade, which finish at the knee, his legs covered with black patent riding boots. A leather holster is thrown over his left shoulder which is later exchanged for a shimmering gold, padded armoury band, sections overlapping and travelling down through his sleeve. A short crop of black hair on his head, he has a wide toothy grin and sparkling dark eyes that are frequently fixed in a gaze upon his Queen, Hippolyta.

When we first meet her, Hippolyta is an ethereal bride in a Grecian high-necked white gown, with bat wing sleeves and a hem that gently brushes her feet. Tall, elegant and slender, Hippolyta has an ebony cascade

of braids, half swept back from her face in a bun, with some loosely kissing her shoulders. She has large, dark eyes that twinkle playfully from her kind face, a dash of red across her lips. Later, she appears warrior-like in a scarlet red dress with full skirt, with a slit at the front that reveals red fishnet stockings and black knee length boots. A large brown leather-belt clutches her waist, three buckles at its centre fastening her in. A red leather armband is tied to her right bicep.

Theseus's right-hand man is Pirithous, an Athenian general. He has a shock of short black hair and serious dark eyes set in a pensive face with a light dusting of stubble. His garb is similar to Theseus, ruby and brown with a gold brooch at his throat and white floral ribbon attached to his sleeve.

Hippolyta and Theseus are visited by Three Queens, all dressed in long jet-black dresses, each with a muddied hem. In her 40s, the First Queen is the oldest, with silver hair pulled back into a long ponytail and dressed with black feathers. The Second Queen is in her 30s, with puffed sleeves and blonde hair also worn in a ponytail. The Third Queen is in her 20s and the tallest, she wears a leather shoulder bag and her dark hair is wrapped into a knot, from which falls her long ponytail. Later, they exchange their widow's weeds for bold dynamic colours, emerald-green, orange and red.

Palamon and Arcite are cousins, both in their mid-20s, handsome, with athletic bodies. Palamon is a little taller, with a chisel-featured face framed by curly brown hair. Arcite is rounder-faced with straight dark hair. When we first meet them, they both wear identical, though different coloured clothes – vests, that show off their toned physiques, and baggy, combat-style trousers. Palamon is in yellow and Arcite in blue. Both wear heavy black boots. Later, when preparing to fight, they wear blue trousers and white tops, with fronts embroidered with flowers, complete with red ruffs and sashes.

They both fall under the spell of Emilia, Queen Hippolyta's sister. Emilia has a delicate frame, her long, glossy raven tresses scooped back into a ponytail revealing dark, soft eyes peering out from an elfin face. She is a vision of purple velvet; a cropped padded lattice-backed jacket covers her shoulder, a fitted ball-gown beneath with full skirt that fans out from her waist, and a thin choker. At times, her skirt is hitched back to reveal wide-legged leather blue trousers and brown brogue boots and she adds a red velvet sash flung loosely over her shoulder.

Outside the Court, we meet a Jailer and his daughter. The Jailer is in his 50s, an amiable looking man who dresses plainly in a brown leather waistcoat, worn over a red top, and brown hose giving way to matching red tights. He has a red sash over one shoulder, on the end of which is a large bunch of keys. The jailer has a daughter who is a little person with a cheeky pink-lipped grin and bright green eyes. Long, crimped brown tresses brush her back, half swept away from her face and she moves with a giddy energy, jerking her head and arms wildly when engaging in song and dance. She wears simple beige overalls and a blue top beneath with $\frac{3}{4}$ length sleeves. A thin patent belt cups her waist and her dainty feet are thrust into boots.

The Jailer's daughter has an admirer, known as the Wooer. In his 30s the Wooer has a slight build and a narrow, wide-eyed face. He dresses all in mustard yellow, including a yellow cap, apart from a blue waistcoat.

Dance and music are prevalent themes within the world of Hippolyta and Theseus. There are five musicians who play live from the minstrel's gallery and sometimes in procession. They each wear purple doublet and hose, with a variety of caps.

Celebrations involving Morris dancing takes place and here, the attire is garish and bright coloured. A full-bodied patchwork cloak of bold colours is worn by the dancers, ribbons of different fabrics spill down around the whole-body plaid, green and polka dot pink to name but a few. A red and brown mask sits on the bridge of the nose covering the eyes and a large floral headdress with stag antlers sprouting either side. Large forest green pantaloons sway with each movement beneath the cloak, with a loose open tunic of the same shade. Wearing boots, and sometimes clogs they slam their thighs and wrists vigorously with sticks as the dance continues.

Other members of the company are in blue or brown ragged pantaloons, the hems stuffed into thick socks pulled to the knee, in a matching shade with a navy or green tunic. Over this, double-breasted gilets are buttoned to the neck, or alternatively flung open to reveal a long-sleeved ribbed vest beneath. Neckerchiefs are loosely thrown across the throat and they wear brogue boots.

As gladiators, a balaclava-like hat made of thick rope is worn, or wreaths of flowers are perched on temples.

CAST AND PRODUCTION CREDITS

Theseus – Jude Akuwudike

Hippolyta – Moyo Akande

Pirithous – Matt Henry

First Queen – Sue Devaney

Second Queen – Melissa James

Third Queen – Kat Rose-Martin

Palamon – Paul Stocker

Arcite – Bryan Dick

Emilia – Ellora Torchia

The Jailer – Andy Cryer

The Jailer's Daughter – Francesca Mills

Her Wooer – Jon Trenchard

A Schoolmaster is played by Jos Vantylor

Designer – Jessica Worrall
Composer – Eliza Carthy
Choreographer – Ewan Wardrop
Director – Barrie Rutter

The introductory notes were written by Kate Taylor Davies and Tony McBride, script edited by Louise Fryer, voiced by Eleanor Margolies and Di Langford, produced by Toby Davey, and recorded and edited by Gary Giles for VocalEyes.

An audio version of these notes can be found [here](#).

To contact VocalEyes, please email us on enquiries@vocaleyeyes.co.uk or visit vocaleyeyes.co.uk