



Such Stuff podcast
Season 5, Episode 7: The Shakespeare diaries: As You Like It

[Music plays]

Imogen Greenberg: Hello and welcome to another episode of Such Stuff, the podcast from Shakespeare's Globe.

This week, we're back with another episode of the Shakespeare Diaries. Every fortnight, actor and Shakespeare's Globe artistic director Michelle Terry sits down with actor Paul Ready to discuss a different Shakespeare play from isolation.

This week, Michelle and Paul chatted about As You Like It. If you've listened to the Shakespeare Diaries before you'll know the drill but the questions we put to Michelle and Paul come from you – our wonderful audiences. Thank you so much – as ever – for your imaginative and incisive questions. If you have any questions to put to Michelle and Paul for future episodes, don't forget to get in touch on social media!

Now, back to As You Like It... the audio quality on this episode isn't quite what we're used to offering you – Michelle and Paul's house seems to have gone through a small tunnel this week – but please do stay tuned to hear their thoughts on why Rosalind and Celia's relationship is so central to the play, why audiences seem to love Rosalind so much and why this bonkers play is one of their most beloved!

Over to Michelle and Paul...

Michelle Terry: My name's Michelle Terry.

Paul Ready: My name's Paul Ready.

MT: Welcome to Such Stuff and to the Shakespeare Diaries. This week we will be discussing the absolutely beautiful As You Like It



which, I don't know how you feel Paul, but I think it might be one of the most perfect plays?

PR: Are you asking me?

MT: I'm asking... do you think As You Like It is almost a perfect play?

PR: I don't know. Let's discuss it and find out.

MT: And why don't you know Paul?

PR: Well, I haven't studied it. I haven't been in it.

MT: Ask me how many times I've been in it.

PR: No.

MT: [Laughs]

PR: [Laughs] I've watched it a number of times. And I've watched you a number of times. In it. Within it.

MT: [Laughs] I don't know why but As You Like It and Love's Labour's Lost are the ones I seem to just... I think As You Like It I've done maybe four times.

PR: Four times.

MT: Four! That's quite a lot isn't it?

PR: That is a lot.

MT: And why is it that they still...

PR: Keep casting you in it!

[Laughter]



MT: How do I still keep getting work? Maybe this is it. Maybe this is the end. I think one of the questions we've been asked is... what's the one about why do audiences love Rosalind so much, is that one of the questions? Why are they...?

PR: Why do you think...? Michelle, why do you think audiences tend to find Rosalind so endearing?

MT: I think you go on this journey and maybe similar to Hamlet, maybe a little bit Helena in All's Well. There are these ones where they are the eponymous hero, so you know that you're on a journey with Hamlet, you know you're on the journey with Othello or Lear. But there's something about As You Like It which means that you... it is a little bit choose your own adventure, because you could pick any one of those characters to follow. Every time someone comes on stage, I go 'oh it's that, it's this person, it's...' You do fall in love with all the characters I think, but I do, I think the beating heart of the play is Rosalind and I think there is something liberated about that character. There is something about watching somebody in total free fall but also with such an open heart. It's such an act of generosity. Like I'm not sure, I'm not sure Hamlet is... there's not the generosity in Hamlet, I'm not sure Helena is generous. There's a... not a cynicism, but there's a... you see both sides of the coin with all of the other characters but something about Rosalind is so pure. And not without wit and not without intelligence and not without profound awareness of the darkness. But there's a purity to her that I think you just want to be in her company. I mean you've seen it and you do want to spend time with her don't you?

PR: Yeah you definitely do. You definitely do. Yeah and I think that's kind of the joy of life. Joie de vivre.

MT: Thank you Paul.

PR: The joy of life, Michelle.

MT: [Laughs]



PR: But that, I think that is something that's so, it just gets into you as you watch the play. Or it always does with me. And I think you're right about Hamlet, it's not generous. For example, Hamlet is not generous in that way. I wonder, I wonder if it is partly because they leave the court. One of the questions is about you know, leaving the court and going into the forest. What's the question? Shakespeare often has characters running away from the court environment to the forest. What is it about this setting that is so freeing to the characters? So I think, you know, it is going into the forest, leaving, leaving courtly life, leaving those kind of political battles behind, you're suddenly in a setting where you don't know the rules anymore and the ruler is nature.

MT: Yeah but that's interesting because now, it's making me think about lockdown and people that live in London and they're going to the countryside or where my mum and dad are in Weston Super Mare and that thing of going it's all well and good for those people that are seeking liberation to go and descend on nature. But actually, does nature want people there? And I think that does come up in the play, that it's all very well for the courtiers to land in the forest. But what about Corin, what about Silvius, what about Audrey? There are the people that till the land, live on the land, shepherd on the land and I think it's not inaccurate to say that there is a lot of talk at the moment about... the climate conversation! The fact that we're... it's not a new thing, of course it's not a new thing. When did it start? And there's this amazing book about Shakespeare and ecology talking about deforestation, talking about people usurping the land. And there's that amazing speech that the Lord has, I think, the First Lord when they get into the forest. He recounts a story of having found Jacques with the deer? The deer upon the brook and that this herd, the masses go by and completely ignore the deer and Jacques says: we're mere usurpers, tyrants. The beauty of nature, the purity of nature, the kind of stuff we're all rediscovering again now because we can hear the birds song again and we can smell the plants and the air is clear and we can see the trout in the rivers and the fish in Venice. But there is a price to pay if you try and take over that land.



MT: This is the moment where we finally meet Duke Senior and the Lords in the forest, the Duke has given his amazing speech to his co-mates and brothers in exile, the incredible speech where he talks about nature and the power of nature:

And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it.

And then immediately after that he turns to his Lords and says:

Come, shall we go and kill us venison?

Like, they're about to do what they always did in the city, which is go on the land and hunt stag, hunt deer and the Duke takes a moment to pause having suddenly realised the beauty of nature, takes a moment to consider what it is that they're about to do. And they go and kill the animals and the First Lord says that he's also just found Jacques grieving at that, philosophising about that particularly because he's just found a poor stag that has been hurt by a hunter and this stag is bleeding, is on the edge of a brook and is crying into a brook, he says to First Lord:

But what said Jaques?
Did he not moralise this spectacle?

PR: O, yes, into a thousand similes.
First, for his weeping into the needless stream:
'Poor deer,' quoth he 'thou mak'st a testament
As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more
To that which had too much.' Then, being there alone,
Left and abandoned of his velvet friends:
'Tis right'; quoth he 'thus misery doth part
The flux of company.' Anon, a careless herd,
Full of the pasture, jumps along by him
And never stays to greet him. 'Ay,' quoth Jaques
'Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;



'Tis just the fashion. Wherefore do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?'
Thus most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court,
Yea, and of this our life; swearing that we
Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,
To fright the animals, and to kill them up
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

MT: It's not an assumption or sorry it's not an imposition to be talking about climate and town and country, exactly as the question says, there is a liberation for some people that go into the forest.

PR: Would you say for Rosalind?

MT: Definitely. And I think there's a question about... what's the question about prose?

PR: What do you make of Rosalind's heavy use of prose? Is she hiding some of her feelings and thoughts? Does she have a plan all along or is she making it up as she goes?

MT: I don't think she's hiding at all. I think she's the most Rosalind she has ever been in the guise of Ganymede. So I think there is a liberation that happens, but I think there's a liberation of identity? I think she's figuring herself out through language, she's figuring herself out through speech because she just gets caught off guard, she has not time to plan anything. I think there is a possession that happens when you play her and again, like Hamlet, you almost wish there was no interval, because, well there wasn't an interval, the fact we impose an interval sort of breaks the flow of these human beings. Because in the folio there's barely any full stops. It's like she cannot contain... I mean Orlando can barely get a word in. And I think she's building herself with every word that comes, it's this one and this one and this one and this one. She's building the identity of Rosalind as she goes I think.

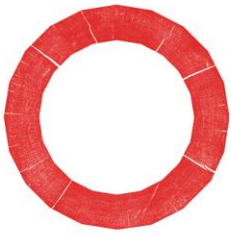


MT: So this next passage is an example of... often in editions, editors will often put in full stops to try and make sense, like cognitive sense of sentences. But when you go back to the folio you realise how few full stops there are, particularly when Rosalind speaks. I mean you could pick almost any of her speeches and there would be barely any full stops in what she says, particularly when she gets into the forest. And it just gives you a sense of a) just how possessed Shakespeare was by this character, that it just comes tumbling out of him. Which of course then translates into performance and equally it comes tumbling out of her. So I will try and only stop where there are full stops in the folio and give you a sense of just the the speed of thought, with which she's working.

Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do: and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too: yet I profess curing it by counsel.

PR: Did you ever cure any so?

MT: Yes, one, and in this manner. He was to imagine me his love, his mistress; and I set him every day to woo me. At which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles, for every passion something and for no passion truly any thing, as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this colour; would now like him, now loathe him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor from his mad humour of love to a living humour of madness; which was, to forswear the full stream of the world, and to live in a nook merely monastic: and thus I cured him; and this way will I take upon me to wash your liver as clean as a sound sheep's heart, that there shall not be one spot of love in't.



[Music plays]

PR: Disguise is interesting, I always find disguise interesting in the sense that, yeah I think that seems right what you say when I watch it. She's very much Rosalind, it's not like when she goes into disguise, she becomes somebody else really. But that idea that disguise, like the masks in Venice, you put on in order to release yourself. Or the idea of like Odysseus coming home, making the journey to home, whatever home is. Before it gets there, he has to go and disguise himself. In order to find, sometimes in order to find yourself you have to put a mask on.

MT: Yup.

PR: Which is what, you know...

MT: Exactly, exactly...

PR: And Shakespeare uses that a lot, right?

MT: Well the mask of Ganymede is the mask that liberates Rosalind for sure. When I was talking to Blanche McIntyre who directed the production that I did, and I was like I don't really, I'm not really sure... I'd played Beatrice, I felt like such an affinity, I felt such an affinity with Beatrice, I understood Beatrice's rage, I understood her, well we talked about it in the last episode, didn't we? I sort of didn't really get Rosalind, I was like what... there's no plot, there's no narrative, there's no like... As You Like It, if you unpick it is absolutely bonkers. Like do you remember when Homeland went on for a bit too long and you start to sort of go what the hell is going on and actually if you thought too hard about it you realise there was absolutely nothing going on. It is a little bit like that in...

PR: That's very harsh, Michelle.

MT: [Laughs] But there is no plot in As You Like It! And then there's this weird bit where they come in and they dance and they kill the deer and like on the face of it, I do not get the play. Then when you



watch it or as ever, as ever of course because they're meant to be experienced or they're meant to be played. It makes total sense why that deer scene is there! It makes total sense that there is this human being that finds freedom whether it be through love or through nature or just through emancipation. To liberty and not to banishment. Maybe that's the primal thing that was hard to find an affinity with, because how often do you think like that as a human being? How often do you think about the fact that you're trying to... you're constantly in seek of freedom and emancipation. But somehow he just tapped into something, like again maybe that's why people are so beguiled and in love with Rosalind, because she does something that most of us will never get a chance to do.

PR: I just want to say that I am constantly in search of freedom and emancipation.

MT: [Laughs] I know, I know, well we all are.

PR: Yeah, there is a question about playing Rosalind especially at the Globe where she has a connection with the audience. I was going to say while you were saying what you were saying there. And maybe that idea about freedom and emancipation or whatever it is, it seems to perfect at the Globe, this play. I don't know the history about it, I don't know where it was... was it written for the Globe?

MT: Completely.

PR: Yeah, because you can feel that as you're watching it, it feels like partly one of the things I find incredible about the Globe as a space is it's, it's ability to kind of house the epic but you really feel nature and the human beings bursting through that play and I feel like watching it at the Globe, I can't think of a better place to watch it. I've experienced it in a few places, a few different theatres, but I just... there. And maybe it is because it's outdoors.

MT: Yup. And you're surrounded by the oak. The oak tree that they talk about and...



PR: And it's in the, you know it feels so much about the world.

MT: Yup.

PR: And you're kind of embraced by the Globe.

MT: But that's what Jacques says isn't it? To call fools into a circle.

PR: Mmm.

MT: That's what, that's what, again it's a direct reference to the space. When we talk about the relationship that Rosalind has with the audience, I think it's completely imagined, that relationship. It's not actual in the same way that Hamlet or Benedick or Iago, these people have direct contact with the audience. Rosalind, I'm going to have to check that, but I'm pretty sure has no soliloquies, has no... it's not written explicitly or self referentially that she has dialogue with the audience. Apart from that epilogue, which she's not Rosalind anymore. What is it about casting the spell that maybe somehow, the minute you talk to the audience...? The transaction with the audience goes we're the same. I am like you, you are like me, to be or not to be, that is the question that we're all going to figure out together or you know, Iago's plotting, we all have the ability to plot. Whenever anyone talks to the audience, there's something about you're implicated in that bit of your own psyche. Whereas Rosalind slightly remains otherworldly? It's not direct or explicit like that. So maybe again there's a bit of wish fulfilment that she plays out, we wish we were like Rosalind but more often than not we probably are more like Hamlet or... Rosalind, there's not, Rosalind's, like maybe... there's not that many Rosalind's in the world, really.

PR: I think...

MT: [Laughs]

PR: That is actually the first interesting...



MT: [Laughs]

PR: No, that's interesting because I thought, even though I've seen it a number of times, I still thought she had those speeches with the audiences. That's... but you know as far as like going on the journey to find herself or free herself, then it kind of fits with the arc that the last thing is the epilogue, finally when everything can drop.

MT: Yup. Yes! Yes, exactly. But she's never without Celia. That's the thing, that Rosalind just cannot exist, Rosalind and Celia cannot exist without each other. Whereas Hamlet and Horatio absolutely can. Sometimes you could watch the play through the prism of Horatio, when Hamlet's going too far? You could watch the play through the prism of Horatio just to check, like Horatio is the sort of leveller. And I think Celia is a little bit. There's a reason why Celia is quiet for the second half of the play. There's not a question about that is there?

PR: How integral do you think Rosalind and Celia's friendship is to the play?

MT: It's impossible them without each other. Until, until Celia falls in love and then it becomes possible. Celia drives the whole thing, she initiates the going to the forest, she initiates, like she is the sounding board, it's unimaginable, it can't function without the two of them. And you could psychologise Celia's silence? I think I tried to when I was playing her, like why is she quiet? She's learning how to fall in love. I'm not sure, I think it's much more meta-theatrical than that, I think it's the audience... Rosalind may not be as pure and as wonderful if she was on her own. I think there's something about Celia being there that keeps it in check. Well we know it keeps it in check because the minute she does go too far, Celia says: you have simply misused our sex in your love-prate. And it's about having a gauge, a moral gauge or something that again, I think



that's partly why you're able to love Rosalind because she can hear it, she can take it. You love both of them somehow.

PR: What's Rosalind's, I can't remember what's Rosalind's reaction when Celia says that?

MT: She just says you couldn't possibly understand how fathoms deep my love is. And that is when, that's the only time they separate. She waits for Orlando: I'll go find a shadow and sigh till he come. And Celia says: And I'll sleep. They do finally separate.

PR: I was interested because I wanted to know why they separate at that point. So they have to separate at that point otherwise they wouldn't. So why does that happen? You know sometimes I think these characters are dealing with things that are kind of human but beyond human and I think that could be one of those moments where Rosalind is playing something so epic for all of us, and as you said, we can't play it in our life, she's playing it, she's doing it, that character is doing it for all of us. I was just interested, I was just wondering whether she was leaving the... taking a further step into the mythical.

MT: Well she does, that's right, because she says: I'll go find a shadow and sigh till he come. I mean that's so Jungian, that's where she goes and sits in the shadow side. And Celia says... I mean it's gone so far that one person goes and sits in the shadow and one person has to sleep. That's when that Bacchanalian like killing of the deer, quite devastating scene where they kill this deer. The metaphor is just like, something's got to die. And actually now you've said it of course there's something in...

PR: Will be sacrificed or offered up.

MT: Will be sacrificed, yeah. Yeah so this is what happens just before the sacrifice, the killing of the deer. So this is the section where there's a fracture occurring between Celia and Rosalind and even though it doesn't indicate at the end that they exit at separate times or in separate directions, there's definitely a division occurring



between them to the point that it ends with Rosalind going to find a shadow and she'll sigh in the shadow and Celia is just going to completely shut down and go to sleep. And it's immediately followed by the really primal, Bacchanalian killing of the deer.

PR: You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate: we must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head, and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest.

MT: O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love! But it cannot be sounded: my affection hath an unknown bottom, like the bay of Portugal.

PR: Or rather, bottomless, that as fast as you pour affection in, it runs out.

MT: No, that same wicked bastard of Venus that was begot of thought, conceived of spleen and born of madness, that blind rascally boy that abuses every one's eyes because his own are out, let him be judge how deep I am in love. I'll tell thee, Aliena, I cannot be out of the sight of Orlando: I'll go find a shadow and sigh till he come.

PR: And I'll sleep.

MT: Exactly, and just that fracture that we were talking about, you don't, Rosalind doesn't even call Celia Celia anymore, she calls her Aliena, Celia has even become an alien to Rosalind, it's just an example of how important their relationship is and how pivotal this moment is to that relationship.

[Music plays]

IG: That's it from us but we'll be back with another episode of the Shakespeare Diaries.



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