

Such Stuff podcast
Season 6, Episode 5: How do we decolonise Shakespeare

[Music plays]

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

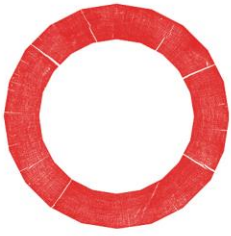
In the final episode of our series on **Shakespeare and Race** we'll be taking a closer look at the question that has underpinned our entire series, how do we decolonise the works of Shakespeare.

Throughout this exploration of racism and the predominance of whiteness in the way we study Shakespeare, in our education system and in our theatres, we've come back to this question again and again. Of course, like most of the questions we've posed in this series there is no one way to, no single solution, so we asked all of our contributors from this series for their thoughts on Shakespeare and decolonisation.

We'll also be sitting down again with the Globe's Head of Higher Education and Research Professor Farah Karim-Cooper, who originally conceived and curated our **Shakespeare and Race** festival back in 2018, and Artistic Director Michelle Terry who joined her as a co-curator for our 2020 digital festival. You heard from them right at the top of the series when we started this and here they reflect on the festival and look forward to the future.

[Music plays]

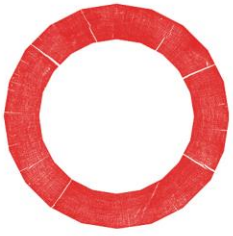
IG: So first up our wonderful season 6 contributors. What you are about to hear is their myriad suggestions, ideas and contributions to the question of Shakespeare and decolonisation all of course informed by their perspectives and their work. In order you'll hear from Kobna Holdbrook-Smith, Federay Holmes, Steven Kavuma, Nour El Gazzaz, a student from our Youth Theatre, Hassana Moosa, Shani Bans, Ambereen Dadabhoj and Ruben Espinosa. Here they are.



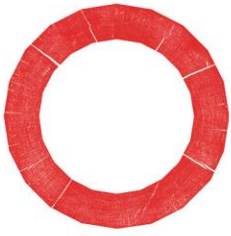
Kobna Holdbrook-Smith: If we make the distinction like antiracism, I think it's good to oppose and speak out against or to help educate or enhance ideas about what people think it means when a black person walks in the room, or what they think it means when someone East Asian is doing a sonnet or you know that's one thing. I think the decolonisation is to do with organisations structure and traditional modes of doing things, I get the sense that we do Shakespeare in certain ways because we've done Shakespeare in certain ways.

Federay Holmes: Ok decolonising Shakespeare, I'm gonna say there is a huge difference between making a piece of work look like it has been decolonised, by making sure you have a diversity of bodies and voices on stage and actually decolonising. So the effect of really decolonising is that there is nothing, there are no clichés, no tropes, no inherited readings in between that company of actors and the text, the way is clear. So Shakespeare has over time, over centuries been harnessed, hijacked and bridled by powerful groups, white guys basically, and if we are able to scrape away the barnacled centuries of associations that go with those voices, those tastes and really come to the text clean with our identity, our heritage, our voices, our tastes, that is a radical act of decolonisation. But what passes for decolonisation is a visible effort to diversify the cast, to use regional accents which might not even belong to the actor, to also communicate that the actor is that company that the director does know what they're doing by doing things in a recognizably, Shakespearey way, that's not decolonisation. The way between you, the audience and the play is clear of all association, you are seeing the play for the first time, that is when the play is freed from a colonial grip, that is when it is in itself speaking directly through those actors to that audience, then it is the creation of one moment. But it's so hard to achieve because these prejudices, these ideas about how it should sound how it should look run deep.

Steven Kavuma: I think we need to break it apart I think we need to completely start afresh or anew. I think the problem is that a lot of



these things, Chekhov, Shakespeare, The Globe, The Old Vic, The National, they've always seemed as if they belong to a certain group of people so even when you attempt to decolonise it those groups of people will be 'Oh my god, why are you doing that, that's mine' so then you have to make it in a way that sits or has to include them but actually I think you just need to break it all apart and start afresh and be like what is this, why are we doing this play what does this play represent, what does it mean? I've never seen Shakespeare as someone I can relate to and I'm a playwright and that's crazy, but because in terms of education, and secondary school, primary school and drama school, Shakespeare has always been told as it's something that belongs to white people. It's even the way we perform Shakespeare you know with RP and with people acting as if they're performing in front of the queen, and it's like what does this text mean? Like what is Shakespeare trying to say like? Why are we doing this play? What does it mean? What does it relate to us here? Rather than just doing it because I like it and I think it's gonna sell a lot of tickets if we put this famous actor in it, so I think we need to completely break it apart. I think with actor training I think we need to look at why we do Shakespeare in drama school, why is that necessary? And what does it do for the actor going out of drama school? Why are we training them? I think there needs to be a real like radical look at training and who it really kind of fits and suits, I think we sort of know those answers, we know it suits white people, we know it's catered for them because the way they perform it or the way it's been taught. You know when you look at The Globe, The Globe was sort of this space that was like you know working-class people, I mean it wasn't for the middle class the elite, you know Shakespeare didn't write like that. In a sense when you're doing Shakespeare like that and we're constantly being told this is who Shakespeare is, this is how Shakespeare should be performed, this is the history, we're constantly being told that Shakespeare is not for you, you know. So even decolonising it I don't think is a, I don't think it works really. I think we need to look at Shakespeare as if Shakespeare is an unknown playwright in order to do Shakespeare properly. The fact that this man sort of represents our culture is wrong, you know he doesn't.

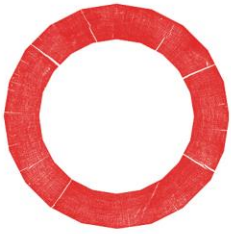


Nour El Gazzaz: How do you think we can decolonise the works of Shakespeare?

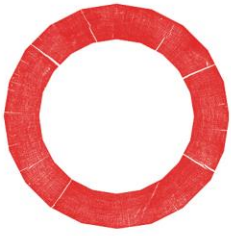
This is such an important question. We've reached a moment in history where streets are literally being decolonised, after the heinous murder of George Floyd and the global reckoning that followed, the Black Lives Matter movement and its worldwide allyship has outrightly stated no more lies in our history books. We know the majesty of our African history, we know the truth, and so the statues and monuments of slavers and colonisers have been pulled off of their plinths all over the world. So essentially how do we relocate this same sentiment into Shakespeare studies and I think there's a few things we can do. The first is more colour conscious casting in productions of Shakespeare, Ayanna Thompson talks so much about this in her research. Number two, publishing, promoting, teaching and siting scholars of colour, you know the work of Ambereen Dadabhoy, Kim Hall, Ayanna Thompson, Arthur Little, Leti Garcia, Ruben Espinosa, Dennis Britton, Farah Karim-Cooper, the list goes on and on and on, their work must be at the forefront of Shakespearean scholarship in and out of the classroom. Number three, more inclusive and diverse conferences, symposiums, lectures, networks. Finally, I think we need to normalise conversations about race, conversations about blackness, conversations about whiteness and everything in between, and to do that we must arm students at all levels with racial literacy and a racial vocabulary that these same scholars of colour have been talking about for decades essentially in order to be able to have these really heavy conversations about race.

Youth Theatre Student: I think that in schools and when you're learning about Shakespeare students should be asked to considerate on whether they see themselves represented in his works and if so do they view that representation as a fair portrayal.

Hasanna Moosa: I think the connotation, in general, has a lot to do with organisations of power and addressing imbalances of power in

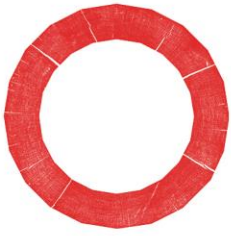


society and lingering privileges that exist in – in groups of society. We can re-read adaptations with attention to the way Shakespeare was performed and circulated in European colonies to think about how these texts work their way into these societies, who performed them, who read them, who dominated these narratives and who is interested in these texts and why, how these texts function in these groups, whether it was different for the coloniser and colonised? But I also think decolonising Shakespeare can become an important tool or means for setting in motion large scale decolonisation of English literature studies at large and eventually even the arts and humanities because when a cultural institution like Shakespeare is decolonised I think it sets the tone for decolonisation and I think the effects of this will reverberate into other aspects of knowledge-making in society so in a tangible way this can sort of take the form of organising and attending antiracist workshop among Shakespeare scholars and maybe re-evaluating the way Shakespeare's organised in course curriculums. So this could take the shape of positioning Shakespeare in concept based courses that centre around literature of empire or race rather than trying to slot race into a course on Shakespeare and I think these kinds of structural changes could be easily implemented into other aspects of English studies. I think Shakespeare scholars and readers and maybe even directors and performers might also find great benefit in working through its disciplinary channels to also come up creative educational solutions to make some of these histories and important concepts of colonialism slavery, racism, gender discrimination available to people where this material hasn't been made available before, so reading Shakespeare through this history might become an entry point for these conversations. Finally, I think it's really important to dissolve Shakespeare's high cultural identity as apart of this process and to think about how accessible Shakespeare is to people from various backgrounds, whether this happens through things like free festivals or setting up interactive performances or writing communities that maybe invite people to translate Shakespeare into their own dialects and lingo, things that make Shakespeare accessible and spread his ownership amongst people and I think this will lead to a renegotiation or a re-evaluation of



Shakespeare's relationship to power which ultimately needs to change in order for some kind of decolonisation to occur.

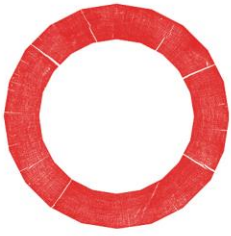
Shani Bans: I think it's a very difficult thing because I think we're all very eager to decolonise the works of Shakespeare. I think developing the tools to have difficult discussion on race with students, discussions that are uncomfortable, building that trust, and creating a safe space in which to have those conversations and then also on top of that having a sort of racial literacy in the classroom by which I mean you know people having read enough, or being taught about how to talk about race in a way that's not offensive but in a way that's also people aren't hesitant to speak because they fear they might offend, to be able to speak openly, comfortably, safely within the classroom. And I think one way to do that in part of the teaching is, and this is a huge part of how do we decolonise the works of Shakespeare, is we have to hire more scholars of colour, if a scholar of colour is in the room, if a teacher of colour is in the room with the students talking about these difficult discussions then that adds some kind of level of comfortability to the students of colour. And I think there's certain things that can be done or addressed, for example just a very simple one, the hiring process itself has questions sometimes in any field will this person be a fit for our department, and that question itself carries racial biases, I think every department should make a conscious effort to look at the questions that they ask their interviewee but to also have more people of colour in the room, in the interviewing stages, having a diverse panel will help. Lastly I think this issue comes down quite bluntly to the issue of money and funding, we're talking about pipelines and getting graduates into programmes that diversity will only come if there is an investment financially in students of colour pursuing further studies, pursuing MAs, MAs being funded, I worked four jobs during my masters to the point that I was very close to dropping out and I took a loan and so there's a lot of reasons why graduates won't apply to do Shakespeare or to do an MA, we have to think about how do we get students of colour into the discipline and into the room. And then when you do get your foot in the door I think waving registration fees at conferences, I think at the moment during the pandemic it's been quite interesting



because if most conferences and talks are virtual it's sort of evened out that playing field of being able to access and attend and be in the virtual spaces, the very predominantly white spaces have become virtual spaces which I think is a good thing.

Ambereen Dadabhoy: I don't know if we can decolonise Shakespeare because Shakespeare is, Shakespeare is at the centre of a colonising curriculum, right if we think about Macaulay and we think about the point of education in India for the British empire to turn these natives into civilised subjects, and the-the fact that we use Shakespeare or Shakespeare was used, I not that we, that fact that these people used Shakespeare to do that then it already is implicated in colonial and imperial methodologies and violences. I don't we can decolonise Shakespeare, I think we can again be attentive to the imperial histories and trajectories of Shakespeare and to be attentive in that way means that we recognise how Shakespeare has been used and how these texts are malleable in this way, and maybe use the logics of these own texts to challenge those relations of power and domination. Sort of those efforts come through again having a professori that is not all white, it comes through performance tradition that is attentive to race and colour conscious and really bringing through our histories of people who might have suffered under empire in how we interact with Shakespeare.

Ruben Espinosa: People of colour, certainly people, black and brown individuals feeling a sense of ownership over Shakespeare that he is part of their legacy, if — if — if they do feel that not only do they have access to Shakespeare but legitimate views of Shakespeare that have something meaningful to offer then that's half the battle, that's understanding the oppressive structures defined them and turning that and thinking about Shakespeare in a different way. And so many of my students have done that you know I have one assignment where I have them do iMovie productions, five minutes, an adaptation of any scene from Shakespeare that we study, the only caveat is that they have to speak to a contemporary preferably regional social issue, and in



those moments it's wonderful to allow the students to see like yes I not only can do this but understand it in a meaningful way and that in and of itself here I think creates hopefully opportunities for the students to see that this stems way beyond Shakespeare here right and – and way beyond that particular class into their everyday lived experiences. That for me to decentre Shakespeare from this kind of white academy, to decentre Shakespeare from you know what we've been told Shakespeare is, to question the gatekeeping of Shakespeare and as many have done before, but really allowing students to question that gatekeeping of Shakespeare too, that allows for us to think about all the ways gatekeeping works, and – and they arrive at these conclusions by themselves which is as – as good as it gets.

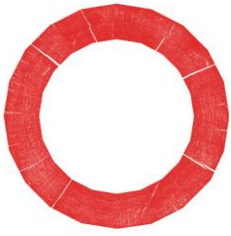
[Music plays]

IG: Of course we could talk for hours on the subject of Shakespeare, race and decolonisation but how do we put the ideas, the thoughts, the learnings from both this podcast series and our digital **Shakespeare and Race** festival into action.

Here's Michelle and Farah reflecting on the **Shakespeare and Race** festival and discussing what next for making decolonisation a reality at Shakespeare's Globe and beyond.

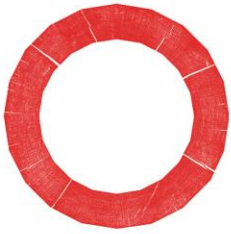
Michelle Terry: I mean maybe the first thing to ask is having done this work for such a long time, how was the festival for you? That's the first question, and then now I've said that sort of go, the second question, do you feel like the question is progressing in the time you've been doing this work? Do you feel like we're moving the conversation forward both in a society, in education, in our own organisation? Starter for ten [laughs].

Farah Karim-Cooper: [laughs] I think for me the festival, I was anxious about it because it was all online, as a creature that likes who likes to talk to people in person and to get a sense of how people are feeling in the room and when they're hearing



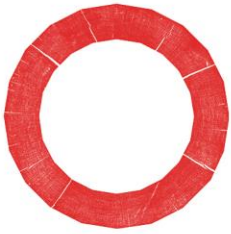
conversations that at first made me anxious but actually being able to reach a wider audience and being able to reach people in lots of different countries that makes a big difference, it feels like if we're just talking in a bubble in a room at Shakespeare's Globe how far-reaching is that conversation really? You know when we go back to onsite work it would be great to maintain that sort of digital connection so that we could keep those conversations up on a broader basis. In terms of the conversation, I think what's really exciting but scary is that we're having these conversations in a time of precarity because we don't know what the future for theatre is and you know we're hopeful about theatre and higher education and people of colour in those institutions are more at risk now than they have been ever before in some ways, so there's a lot of precarity around the conversation so it feels like we have to hold on even tighter and work even harder at this moment. What about you?

MT: I suppose that's the big thing for me now is exactly as you — how do we maintain reach with these conversations because it's happening within rooms and if the conversation doesn't extend beyond those rooms and we don't know that each other is having those conversations how are we joining up those dots? Throughout the series people have talked about societal change, cultural change, as you said if we're speaking in a vacuum if we're preaching to the converted where are those conversations going, so I think that is the big thing, this time has given us that is those conversations can extend beyond. There is huge comfort that in some of the things people are saying as an organisation we can hand on heart say we are doing that work, we are digging deeper, it's not just optics, it's not lip-service, it's not just a nice statement to say in solidarity with, there is huge rigour, we're in action with it, it's not just theoretical we are in action. The amount of people that don't know, and people don't know that we're doing this work, there are other organisations that are doing similar work, so how do we unite those conversations. And then the precarious nature of the time, I think in one of the podcasts maybe it was Steven Kavuma talking about, theatre will be alright, theatre's not going to go anywhere, it's just what happens when we come out of the other side of it, who is



making the theatre, who is having the conversations, who is leading the conversations, and one hand I think we all sort of recognise yes it is precarious, yes this is profoundly difficult but wherein there, and I don't mean opportunity in any glib way but this is — this is one of the greatest opportunities we've been given to reassess those power structures, where does the power sit? And how do you decentralise power? How do you create spaces where everybody walks into the room and feels like their voice will be heard? I think you said it will take decades, well it already has taken decades this is not the beginning of the conversation. Not only to give up power, and again I don't think it's necessarily people having to give up power, that's one way and then there's also another way where there is room for everybody but how do you make room for everybody and then also I say this to you as a woman of colour, I say this as a woman how do you take power when space is made for you? Like it's no good saying to people, oh you've got a voice now what have you got to say? If you're not used to speaking and then when you get those moments of being able to speak or moments of being able to shift the power, how do you hold on to that? Because the default, those hierarchical structures, those centralised white essentially male positions of superiority, they're recognisable at a time when nothing's recognisable and we're all frightened.

FK-C: Yeah, I think — I think you pose a really good question about how do you take the power and what do you do with it. I still don't feel I'm in a position where the door is being held open yet, and so I'm still kind of thinking well I have to keep using my voice and I'm gonna use the platforms that I've been given. That's my version of taking power because the power really just sits with being able to speak, and recognise that there are structural issues in your own organisation and your own industry and your sector, and I've been kind of shouting about those now and it could be with great risk to myself because people may not want to work with me after this [laughs] I'm hoping that's not the case, but taking power is still like a process and it's not that about like taking power, it's about just you know sitting in the rooms where decisions and policies are made, it



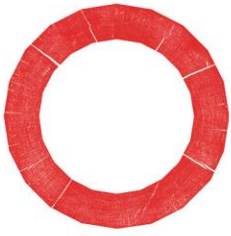
is really important to have representation in those rooms, and at the moment there are way too many of those rooms that are homogenous, and I just think that's unacceptable now and I can't — I can't work in a world in which we recover from this pandemic and we're still operating in those homogenous contexts. I've gotten to the age now where I feel I just don't want to work in that situation anymore, and I think everyone is starting to feel that way.

MT: Yeah, again one of the gifts of the time is the room can be really big now, the room doesn't have to be, oh we've only got six chairs to go around the table so that means the executive team can only be made up of six people, but you can have really big zoom rooms [laughs] like how can use — how do we use that to —

FK-C: — And also what about rotational structures of leadership where you know that like government or some governments we hope where you have a few years to do the work that you wanna do and then you rotate off and you create a structure where you still have a level of consistency and institutional knowledge that way you kind of ensure that there's gonna be representation at some point and hopefully sooner than later.

MT: Well then that's how long should a tenure be? What is enough time for someone to come in, hopefully, do good and then go again? But my fear is still who's applying? Because you can only give jobs to the people that apply, I still worry that we've not quite shifted the dial enough that people go that's absolutely somewhere a place, I mean we're talking specifically about leadership roles now aren't we, I suppose, like those people can actually that have the power to make change.

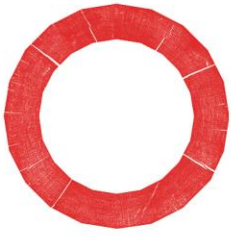
FK-C: There's still a lot of work to do in the pipeline though isn't there. I guess as an organisation as an iconic Shakespeare organisation I feel committed, I hope we will commit to influencing those pipelines right what work can we do in schools and universities and drama schools to sort of change the game so that in a decade you find we're just not having to have this conversation



anymore. That's part of the problem so it's not just the leadership is it, it's getting into the game in the first place and feeling like it's a space for you.

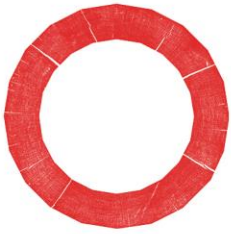
MT: Yes. I think the thing that was being thread through the series was this idea of decolonising Shakespeare and I think the more that I've listened and the more that we've discussed stuff, Shakespeare, like the words and I still say this with all the understanding that it comes of my own sort of legacy of this white supremacist view of it, I still think the art is miraculous because I think it will bend and flex to whoever is doing it, but my big fear is exactly who is in the room, who's is taking up space, who feels like it can be for them. So it's less about needing to decolonise Shakespeare, it's decolonising all the things that lead you to Shakespeare, decolonising the rooms, the rehearsal rooms, the lecture halls, the seminars, the pipeline, or the process, or whatever that is because if you have diversity in the room Shakespeare will bend and flex. How do we allow for that alchemy of the people in the room having autonomy, having power to make empowered choices, that speak to them rather than feeling like there's already a predestined answer? And then the big thing I suppose, I don't know whether this speaks to Higher Ed as well, there's this big mass that is our audience, I think in one of the podcasts someone says society is always reproducing itself, how do you change the conversation even around going to a play because if all you're doing actually regardless of what is happening on stage, regardless of the rigour in the room, regardless of the complexity of the conversations, the decolonising of the text, if society is only gonna reproduce itself you have an audience that is only gonna reproduce a white-centric narrative, so how are also taking our audience on a journey or our students on a journey?

FK-C: A lot of is the performance history of Shakespeare, 400 years of seeing Shakespeare performed in a particular way and granted there are so many different kinds of performance models but there's one that emerges most prominently particularly in this country which is that Shakespeare is that spoken with received pronunciation, it's cast in a way that makes sense to people [laughs] you know, and there is a kind of elitism that is attached to that that people struggle



with feeling like that belongs to them or that has anything to do with them. And the way some artists respond you know is well we're gonna do it this way and it's marvellous but I think it's still something that's intimidating so it's a kind of gatekeeping is that perception of what performance is and I suppose in a way it's taught at school, there's so many gatekeeping signals all the way through to university, to PhD, to early career researcher, to senior lecturer, where you know you can't get an article published because you've written about race and you look at the editorial board and it turns out there isn't a single person of colour on that editorial board, or if there is they haven't been consulted about that essay, and so it's breaking that down as well so that people actually recognise that Shakespeare is utterly capacious and elastic, and you know that and you've had to work elastically with the texts as a woman.

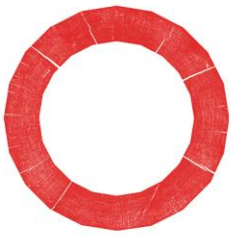
MT: You know we're in a supply and demand industry, so think about theatre, is our job to give people what we think they want, or can theatre also start to move into an arena where, it's not a new idea, but where the audience is in conversation with the material it doesn't necessarily have to think that the production is perfect or good or iconic or definitive, but again this is not new, this is what the Globe has given us. I think these groundlings were absolutely in conversation with the play. I feel like the plays have always been demanding more, conversation, imperfection, gaps, questions without answers absolutely infuse these plays and somehow the death of them is demanding them to provide answers, how do we redefine the terms of what is satisfying? How do we redefine the terms of what is successful? Like I think someone talked about you know this idea that the minute you see someone of colour on stage, or the minute you see a woman on stage somehow it's lesser but I also feel like we underestimate our audience. You know when you think about what people are consuming right now there is an insatiable desire for learning and for knowledge, people do want to understand. And what worries me is that when I think of how brave people have been during this festival and when I think about how brave artists have been doing the work on the front line of complexity, it's a really big ask of people to come and be that vulnerable as you've just said it's a risk for you saying what you say,



there's no guarantee that you're gonna come out of the other side of this and people will have understood what you're trying to do. We have a global platform we're called the Globe and to take that platform and trust that there will be compassion and understanding to realise that this is about moving a conversation on rather than feeling like your — the pressure of having an answer.

FK-C: I mean I completely agree I think there are some people who don't want to find themselves in that vulnerable position because they have before and have been seriously burned, and yes I think it is a risk, and how hard is it to come and do a panel on race when you are a person of colour and then go home with the thoughts that have been generated by that conversation knowing that that is your lived experience, and that there isn't a solution right around the corner and that the powers that be are just starting to have conversations that you have lived since you were a child. So there's a lot of, there's a lot of emotional labour that goes into this and that is being more and more recognised now, and I feel really positive actually about the conversations we're hosting because they come from a place where we are genuinely needing and wanting to change things. There's privilege there isn't there, you can engage with race if you want to if you have the bandwidth that day, and you wanna listen to some difficult conversations you can engage with it, but there are those of us who have to engage with it on a daily basis and we don't have a choice to just duck out.

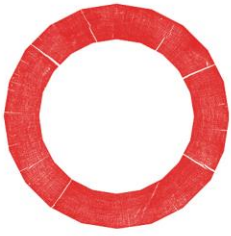
MT: Yeah. The work it will take to really change, and again like it's generational yes as we've talked about is the hope is that we leave behind policies that embed change into the organisation, but if we're to break that cycle of homogeneity that means for a while we're asking people to continue to put themselves at risk because we can't guarantee. There's great will but we can't guarantee yet that the work has been done. It's such a precarious time that if we're going to make true generational shift where when I jog on the hope is that people on that list are way more diverse than when it was when I applied two years ago, or that when you move on that this



work doesn't go with you, it can't be about people it has to be about policy, it's got to be beyond personal principles now.

FK-C: Do you think it scares people this notion of decolonising Shakespeare, that that is a very frightening concept because people don't necessarily understand what that means or they have a different understanding of what that means even though it's kind of flexible in terms of what that means. You know all of our contributors to the podcast that were asked that question all had a different response to the question which means that there are multiple angles. Decolonising Shakespeare does not mean denying people Shakespeare, it does not mean changing the words necessarily, or not telling the stories anymore, and I think that's what people fear they're scared that it's going to turn into something that they don't recognise which it might but it's still Shakespeare.

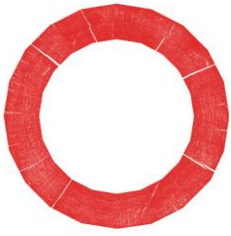
MT: I think everything scares people at the moment, but the idea that Shakespeare's not gonna be something that people recognise, Shakespeare is always unrecognisable, always. Like as someone that lives with these plays, have performed some of them three or four times, it's never the same play twice, because I'm never the same person twice, so somewhere in there it is about emancipation and liberation, it is liberating for everybody to not feel like there is a right or white way of seeing Shakespeare. But it does go back to that James Baldwin quote, that we're not responsible to the poet, poets are responsible to us, poets are responsible to the society, if this work is gonna live for another 400 years it's because he's always responsible to the people, it's just which people? You know it was lots of white men, then it sort of branched out a bit, then women found a place but it was predominately white women, now we're finding — it is diversifying but still it's really hard to break the lie or the myth that there is a right way of reading Shakespeare, and again you know better than me with the education system, but the idea that you could put a right answer in an essay, the idea that there's a sort of box Shakespeare up into something definitive that's the death knell of it, as opposed to going there is no definitive, we don't even know who Shakespeare is, doesn't matter who



Shakespeare is. When we say Shakespeare for all, he's so universal, that's a whitewashed idea of universal, that's the white male version, but it's idealised it has nothing to do with the work at all, that's the colonisation that we have to decolonise.

FK-C: I think what's interesting, I totally agree, I think what we were doing in *Behind Closed Doors*, for example, is really coming to grips with the language in Shakespeare that hurts that's harmful and how it feels as a person of colour to say some of those lines. That is a form of decolonising Shakespeare by saying look we've often ignored these or been ok with these for several hundred years now, we're not ok with this language anymore so let's try and work out why that is, and what is Shakespeare's part in sort of racist textures that we can see coming from the period. I think that's really valuable really hard work and directors and actors in a rehearsal room have so much talking to do about what those words can do for their production or what they take away from the actor's humanity, and I think you know enabling flexibility in rehearsal rooms like that is what decolonising Shakespeare means in some ways.

MT: It's also then making sure the actors have A) been empowered like there is a centralised power that usually sits with the director, how do you make sure the actors aren't empowered so that when those actors are out there as an audience you know those actors are not just doing what they've been told, or having to do things because conversations didn't happen, they are owned choices and that we endow those actors with that — with that power and that autonomy to make them. If you're coming to this work are you coming because it's a nice thing to do and that's great or are you coming as an activist, and if you're coming as an activist you have to know that too and there's work to that and there's a fall out to that, and as an organisation, we have to know what we're asking of people, so that we can put to use your word scaffolding around it because of course there is a place for people to just say nice words in nice costumes in nice weather during the summer, sure, I'm all for entertainment like great, and then there is something, I mean for me



Shakespeare's work is also always political like I think he's a political writer.

FK-C: Yeah because if there's people on stage that don't feel empowered then it's not entertainment anymore for everybody.

MT: Exactly, exactly. But somehow we have to have much more honest conversations about what is the transaction that we're asking all of us to engage in. Each project needs to be taken care of, whether that's a workshop, whether that's a lecture, whether that's the production, everything needs to be given its own time and its own space and its own bespoke needs. We have this conveyor belt of production and somehow, again I think it was Steven Kavuma who said how do you press pause on the whole thing and almost start again, I think it is about every single step that you make, A who is making the choices? Who is rocking the boat? Who's doing the leading? Where does power sit? And every time an invitation is made or a project is made how are you making sure that the scaffold is really bespoke to the needs of it, that's a huge amount of work.

FK-C: Well let's get on with it then.

MT: Yeah exactly.

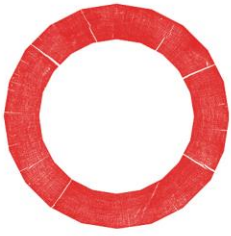
FK-C: [laughs] It is so much work but I think that we genuinely want to do it and the Globe has committed itself to doing that work now so we have to see how that works across the transition period from pandemic to post-pandemic.

MT: Onwards we go.

FK-C: [laughs]

[Music plays]

IG: To bring our **Shakespeare and Race** series to a fitting close we wanted to bring you something special, here is festival co-curator



Kobna Holdbrook-Smith reading James Baldwin's **Why I Stopped Hating Shakespeare**

Kobna Holdbrook-Smith: 'The greatest poet in the English language [Shakespeare] found his poetry where poetry is found: in the lives of the people. He could have done this only through love — by knowing, which is not the same thing as understanding, that whatever was happening to anyone was happening to him. It is said that his time was easier than ours, but I doubt it — no time can be easy if one is living through it. I think it is simply that he walked his streets and saw them, and tried not to lie about what he saw: his public streets and his private streets, which are always so mysteriously and inexorably connected; but he trusted that connection... Only, he saw, as I think we must, that the people who produce the poet are not responsible to him: he is responsible to them. That is why he is called a poet. And his responsibility, which is also his joy and his strength and his life, is to defeat all labels and complicate all battles by insisting on the human riddle, to bear witness, as long as breath is in him, to that mighty, unnameable, transfiguring force which lives in the soul of man, and to aspire to do his work so well that when the breath has left him, the people — all people! — who search in the rubble for a sign or a witness will be able to find him there'

[Music plays]

IG: That's it from us but we'll be back soon with another series of Such Stuff, keep an eye on social media as we announce what's coming your way.

You've been listening to Such Stuff with me Imogen Greenberg, Michelle Terry and Professor Farah Karim-Cooper.

To find out more about Shakespeare's Globe follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

We'll be back soon with more stories from Shakespeare's Globe so subscribe wherever you get this podcast from.

