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Rebekah Murrell

Shakespeare after the Plague
Bringing back The Dream

GLOBE
SUMMER 2021

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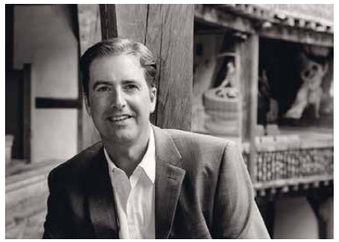
SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

The CEO's perspective



Neil Constable
Photo: Simon Kane

It is a joy to welcome you into the Spring 2021 issue of Globe magazine, with its array of features on upcoming, on-site performances and activities from us here at Shakespeare's Globe. There has been palpable excitement with the reopening of our doors once again for tours of our wooden "O", and some of our visitors have even had the added delight of watching socially distanced rehearsals on the stage in preparation for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

On 18 May, we will be welcoming audiences to enjoy live theatre again, after what has been an impossibly long time away. We are hoping to increase audience capacity as and when it is safe to do so, but for the start of the season, our groundlings will be seated in the Yard, watching our companies tread the boards. As we know not everyone will be able to get to us, we are live-streaming each production in the season for the first time to ensure we continue to reach our audiences globally. Running alongside these will be a variety of digital content to delve deeper into the context of Shakespeare's plays, including the much-loved Members' Drama Club, the ever-popular Telling Tales festival and In Conversation to name a few.

None of this work could happen without our audiences coming back to us, and of course the generous support of our members and donors. I'd like to take this moment to thank the *Twelfth Night* Production Circle, and the USA Patrons, Supporters and Friends supporting *Romeo & Juliet*. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is supported by Deutsche Bank as part of the Born to Be programme, marking 15 years of *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, which returns from 28 September. We have also received funding and critical support from the Garfield Weston Foundation and from the Government as part of the Culture Recovery Fund, proudly launched at the Globe in July last year.

Recently, we all heard the sad news that Prince Philip has passed away. As a royal patron for 40 years, we could not have asked for a more active or dedicated supporter. His Royal Highness was of course part of the generation of those who were at the very start of the Globe's life, long before ground was broken to create our beloved theatre. With his legacy in mind, we now look to the next generation to champion the Globe for our future, whatever it may hold!

We are excited to open and do so with awareness of the impact that this pandemic has had on us all, emotionally and financially. I look forward to seeing many of you this summer and hearing the roar of you – our supporters and audiences – in our great wooden "O" again for a season of love, life and catharsis, as we rediscover the joys and wonder of live theatre.

Neil Constable

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Remembering our Patron

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

We have been deeply saddened by the news that His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh passed away on Friday 9 April.

Prince Philip served as our Royal Patron for over 40 years. His friendship with our founder Sam Wanamaker was integral to building the Globe Theatre, and later, opening the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. His Royal Highness was, in the early 1990s, a patron of the founding US charity for the Globe, and his support ensured that North American donors made Sam's dream of a Globe Theatre into a reality.

His Royal Highness has always taken a huge interest in the craftsmanship of our beautiful theatres, particularly in the traditional materials and methods used. He very generously donated oaks from Windsor Great Park for the construction of the Globe Theatre, with additional timber given by the Forestry Commission from the New Forest and the Forest of Dean.

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip and Sam Wanamaker attend an event in Los Angeles. Photo: Leo Jarzomb

In 1987, Prince Philip presided over our groundbreaking ceremony for the Globe Theatre, driving in the first oak foundation post, with construction beginning in earnest in 1989. In 1989, he presented Sam with the Benjamin Franklin Medal, awarded to those who have made a significant contribution to global affairs through collaboration between the United Kingdom and the United States.

In the early days, Sam Wanamaker faced enormous challenges to get the Globe built, and Prince Philip's support for us at that time was integral to finishing building the theatre and opening in 1997 (just four years after Sam sadly died).

On 12 June 1997, His Royal Highness joined Her Majesty The Queen for the official opening of the Globe Theatre, for a special performance of *Triumphes and Mirth*.

Prince Philip remained greatly interested in all of our activities at the Globe. As well as greeting our 700-strong group of Volunteers and hosting receptions for our wonderful Patrons and Supporters, His Royal Highness also attended openings for our Sackler Studios in 2010 and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, which had its first theatre season in 2014.

The opening of our Sam Wanamaker Playhouse on 19 November 2013 saw Prince Philip join our Honorary President Zoë Wanamaker to unveil a plaque to commemorate the occasion, while also lighting the final beeswax candle.

Most recently, in 2016, Prince Philip joined us to attend a special service, *A Celebration of Shakespeare*, at Southwark Cathedral to commemorate the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's death, as part of the wider Shakespeare400 celebrations.

Royal Patronage is an honour and connects us to our Shakespearean history with the theatrical companies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. We are deeply grateful for His Royal Highness The Prince Philip's integral support for us since our very beginning. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Her Majesty The Queen and the Royal Family. He will be much missed.

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip attending the opening of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2014. Photo: Pete Le May

AROUND THE GLOBE

The grand tour

As Shakespeare's Globe reopens, it is not only the stage that is becoming a hive of new activity. Alongside the new bill of plays for the summer season, the Globe will once again be conducting its guided tours around the open-air theatre. The tours are suitable for all ages and explore not only the history of the original Globe and how it survived plague, political opposition and fire, but also the craft of the building and the story of how it came to be rebuilt through the tireless efforts of Sam Wanamaker. Each tour is led by an expert guide and booking is required. For more information and to book visit shakespearesglobe.com/whats-on. Members receive a complimentary ticket for each Globe Tour. To book, please visit our website and log in to your account.

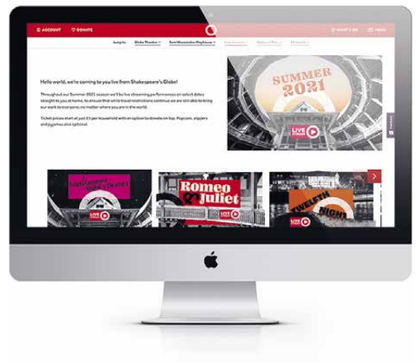
A guided tour from 2019. Photo: Clive Sherlock

Personal experiences

Following the success of last year's Shakespeare and Race event, the Globe is launching a new series of webinars on the relationship between race, social justice and Shakespeare. *Anti-racist Shakespeare: Perspectives on the Plays* will offer a live discussion over Zoom delivered by actors and scholars of colour. As part of each seminar there will be a Q&A where audience members can add their critical voice to the discussion. The first webinar will focus on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on 20 May at 6.00pm. The Globe will also offer a look into the context of each production through the rehearsal process with *Behind Closed Doors*, a series of online films. This will offer a direct personal insight into how the actors and directors have approached the plays and how the language affects both players and audiences today. Visit the website for more details.

Full stream ahead

For those of you unable to attend the productions in the theatre, the Globe will also be showing them via a live-streaming event so that you can enjoy this season's productions from your own home. For more details turn to page 68.



Live-streaming from Shakespeare's Globe

A ZOOM WITH A VIEW

Online workshops have inspired members to come together and find new perspectives on some of the Bard's most beloved plays, finds Amah-Rose Abrams

Chris Nayak on the Globe Theatre stage.
Photo: Suzie McCracken

Chris Nayak during a members' workshop. Photo: Suzie McCracken

Theatre and the internet came into their own in 2020, allowing us to enjoy performances at home in a new way. This, in turn, has created a global online community in support of keeping the creative spirit alive. It was in April 2020 that the Membership team at Shakespeare's Globe had the ingenious idea of bringing members from around the world together in an online drama club held safely from the theatre itself.

Actor Chris Nayak was devastated when theatres all over the world were shuttered. Like many theatrical professionals, he was at home facing the unknown. Then he received a call. "The Globe got in touch with me in the depths of lockdown when I was kind of inconsolable about theatre just having vanished," says Nayak over Zoom. "I had no idea, like lots of people, what the future of theatre was and didn't realise that the Globe was going to be as brilliant as they have been in making everything reopen."

The idea was that members would be invited to take part in a virtual drama group, led by Nayak, while theatres were closed and travel was forbidden. For the last 10 months, the club has held a regular workshop in which participants focus on scenes from Shakespeare's plays. Studying the characters and analysing the texts together not only gave members a taste of the theatre they were so missing, but it also gave them a chance to channel their lockdown experiences through the magic of Shakespeare.

"I think there's nothing better, is there?" says Nayak. "If you can't explore the world physically, to be able to explore the world through art, through reading a book or watching a film. But even better, to immerse yourself in one of these incredible characters."

There's nothing better – to be able to immerse yourself in one of these incredible characters

Over the past year, members have examined and performed scenes from plays including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In addition to reading the texts, they have looked at Shakespeare's characters with today's standards, considering the roles of women and applying historical context to the real-life figures in the texts.

"It's a little holiday – let's step into Hermia's shoes for an afternoon, let's see what that's like, let's go to Athens and see what's happening there," says Nayak. "Even though it is virtual, it does now feel like we're meeting in a room."

The hour-and-a-half session usually starts with a virtual tour of the theatre – which takes in the front-of-house and backstage – and then moves on to some physical warm-up exercises to get everyone feeling relaxed and limber. Members are sent scripts ahead of each session and those will be discussed by everyone before Nayak creates virtual breakout rooms for groups to read through their assigned scenes and report. There is an opportunity to perform for the group at the end for those who want to do so.

From contemporary interpretations to exploring classic texts from the time these plays were written, members have been getting to know their favourite plays all over again. Discussions in the group vary from women's rights to the writings of Ovid and, guided by Nayak, the members take a critical look at the parts they have been assigned.

"I feel as though we've all gone on a bit of a journey together," says Nayak. "They have helped me quite a lot, although I haven't really told them this... I feel that when we first began, I was so terrible at Zoom, I didn't know an unmute from a breakout room and they were very patient with me. It has meant that we've got to a really lovely place."

In addition to sharing a deepening understanding of Shakespeare, this international group of people have grown to know each other over time. Logging in from their homes every other week, they get the opportunity for escapism with a touch of intellectual rigour. Some attend every workshop while others drop in when they can and, in the middle of a pandemic, the group has helped enable self-care and provided a creative outlet for its members.

While Shakespeare's Globe is finally set to re-open this spring, this is not the end of the drama group. The workshops will continue on a monthly basis, continuing to connect members from across the world within our wooden "O".

Chris Nayak on Zoom during a members' workshop. Photo: Suzie McCracken

Amah-Rose Abrams is an arts writer based in London

For upcoming Members' Drama Club workshops, please see page 63

GETTING PLASTERED

The vital work of conserving the Globe's iconic exterior has continued apace during lockdown, future-proofing the theatre for many generations to come, finds Alex Morrison

These are traditional old-fashioned skills and materials: there's no new technology

Lockdown has been tough on countless institutions across the country, the Globe among them, but the theatre's head of building operations Deborah McGhee did find one significant silver lining to the closures. As soon as the building closed, she and a team of expert plasterers set about conserving and restoring the Globe's lime render walls in a way that is set to protect the institution long into the future. "This time last year there was me and socially distanced lime plasterers doing some of the best work I've ever overseen," she says. "And it was just amazing for the craftsmen to be able to focus, to be able to take the time without interruption."

The project began in 2019, when McGhee appointed heritage and bespoke plasterwork specialists Artisan Plastercraft Ltd to conduct a comprehensive condition survey of the Globe's lime plaster panels, of which there are almost 2000 – all of different shapes and sizes. The survey included an analysis of the materials used and the integrity and performance of the panels over the last 20 years. It identified a range of defects, including delamination, and the use and failure of non-traditional materials. McGhee was so impressed with Artisan's "attention to detail, skillset and their general training principles" that she didn't hesitate in taking them on for the next stage – a series of panel repairs in 2020.

One of the most appealing factors of Artisan's work was their deep understanding of traditional methods, and this has been employed in full force at the Globe. "These are traditional old-fashioned skills and materials: there's no new technology," McGhee says. The walls have been redone with a three-coat plaster, using laths – thin strips of wood onto which the plaster is applied – and horsehair mixed in on-site. These are methods that hark back to those used when constructing the first-ever regulated buildings in Britain, in the 12th and 13th century, and they tap into a timeless logic, too. "Lime plaster is great because it breathes, it allows the building to move," McGhee says. "Which is especially useful on London's clay soil."

Naturally, there have been some instances in which historical accuracy has come face to face with contemporary needs. "Horsehair naturally degrades, and when it does it can produce the bacteria responsible for anthrax", says McGhee. "As a result, the horsehair used today is washed and treated to mitigate the risk of bacteria growth." Unfortunately, this weakens the natural strength of the hair, therefore McGhee and her team have "added in additional micro-fibres that will enhance the integrity of the lime mix.

The work itself is meticulous and has to be split into several stages. "The first coat is the scratch coat, which provides a 'key' to improve the bond with the next coat," McGhee explains. "A further two coats are applied, each

All images: Plasterwork in progress. Photos: Deborah McGhee

getting slightly thinner as we go. Every coat requires time to cure. Once the third coat is fully cured and dried through, then limewash is added. This can take two to three to four coats, depending on the coverage and colour requirements. We've got a bright white, so it has taken a number of limewash coats to get to that whiteness that we wanted."

This painstaking process comes with distinct challenges, though, especially when the Globe is functioning as it usually would. "Under normal circumstances, we open from very early in the morning till the end of the night performance. We can host up to 2,000 people a day," McGhee says. "We had attempted to do some of the worst panels in the middle of *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, where we have no fewer than 1,500 school kids a day circulating that site. So our window of opportunity to undertake the work was either very, very early in the morning for a couple of hours or late at night – and it was proving to be hugely difficult. I will always cherish those two or three months during early lockdown, when we were on our own in the Globe doing this work."

Another hurdle is funding, an aspect that is especially pertinent in 2021, but McGhee is hoping that there will be an opportunity to complete the full scope of works, during a major piece of rethatching work. Pondering the significance of the project she says she hopes visitors will notice a freshness, but most important is the integrity the work has brought to the building. It has, she says, preserved the Globe not just for the near future but indefinitely. "As long as whoever the custodians of the building are in years to come continue with a good regime of maintenance, then really the plasterwork shouldn't have to be done again."

Lime plaster is great because it breathes – it allows the building to move

Alex Morrison is a writer and editor based in London

THE WORLD STAGE

The ecology of Shakespeare's texts and the role of theatre in sustainability will come under the spotlight at online symposium Globe 4 Globe, writes Will Tosh

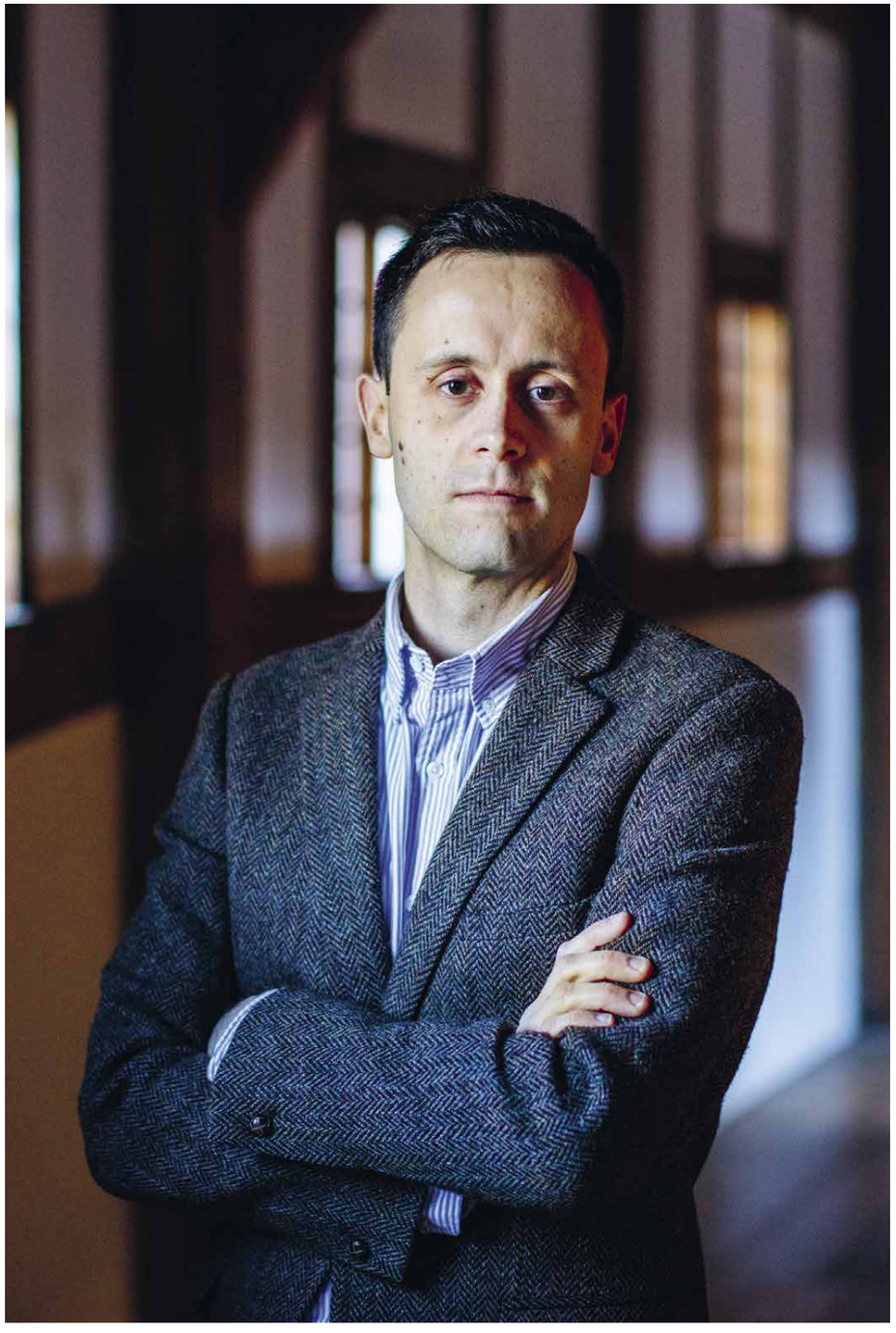
The summer of 2020 quickly evolved into the Globe season that never was. Within a few weeks, Shakespeare's Globe had closed its doors, and such activity as we could keep going had moved online.

Among the many lost projects of that needlessly hot and golden summer was a symposium, co-hosted by Globe Research and our colleagues Dr Katie Brokaw and Dr Paul Prescott of the University of California, on Shakespeare and the climate emergency. Snappily titled (and hashtagged) Globe 4 Globe, the two-day event was intended to bring together academics, artists and theatregoers in a vital exploration of the relationships between Shakespeare's works and the current climate crisis.

For some years now, ecocriticism has been one of the most dynamic and fruitful areas of literary research (an early winner of the Shakespeare's Globe Book Award, Gwilym Jones, made it his area of study with the wonderful *Shakespeare's Storms*). In the words of Randall Martin, a leader in the field, ecocriticism "reads Shakespeare's work through the double lens of modern ecology and environmentalism", applying a contemporary understanding of the natural world "to rediscover early modern ecologies and to use the playwright's narrative and poetic insights to illuminate present-day environmental issues".

The depredations visited on the planet as a result of the Anthropocene (the geological term for the age of humans we're currently living through) are certainly particular to now, but Shakespeare was not unfamiliar with environmental crisis. He would have experienced the economic shocks that resulted from the exhaustion of

"Earth I will befriend thee", *Titus Andronicus*, Act III, from the 2014 production. Photo: Simon Kane



Will Tosh. Photo: Shakespeare's Globe

It will map out ways in which Shakespearean theatres can achieve sustainable futures

pine and oak forests in England and the Baltic. And he was used to the choking smogs that covered London in wintertime as a result of the sharp rise in the burning of coal (or "sea-coal"), a valuable fuel mined along the Northumbrian coast and shipped in huge quantities to the capital.

Despite the Globe's enviably all-natural theatres, we haven't up till now platformed the work of scholars in the field of ecocriticism, or indeed given much thought to our own environmental footprint. We might score points for our wood, thatch, lime plaster and beeswax candles, but in many other respects we are as polluting and wasteful as any other large-scale theatre arts organisation. The symposium was a chance to learn from colleagues and friends in the world of theatre who do things differently, and who know how to stage the works of Shakespeare with a greater consideration of their impact on the planet.

Globe 4 Globe, planned for May 2020, was one of the first events to be definitively put on hold as the crisis of last March became clear (the rest of the season fell like dominoes thereafter). Mindful of our responsibility to reduce international travel, we had planned that Globe 4 Globe would be our first live-streamed conference to enable participants from beyond the UK to take part without flying to London. Little did we know how gruesomely familiar we would all become with the pleasures of Zoom and Crowdcast in the ensuing few months. But that initial planning, and all of our newfound expertise at organising and attending remote events, means that Globe 4 Globe's revived online life in 2021 has been given a head start.

Globe 4 Globe is back and – dare I say it – better than before. The online symposium will be held on 23 and 24 April, and our expert guests will explore ecological collapse and renewal in Shakespeare's texts, map out ways in which Shakespearean theatres and festivals can achieve sustainable and ethical futures, and reflect on the capacity of live theatre to change audience perception and behaviour. Without the need to staff an on-site event or support travel to the Globe, we can make the symposium entirely free to attend.

Participants will hear from Randall Martin and Solitaire Townsend, CEO of Futerra and one of the UK's leading sustainability consultants. Theatre companies from the UK, the US and the Caribbean including The Handlebards, The Willow Globe, Shakespeare in Paradise and Shakespeare in Yosemite will guide us in thinking sustainably about the production of Shakespeare. Leading scholars of ecocritically alert Shakespeare, including Chloe Preedy, Evelyn O'Malley and Gretchen Minton, will share their projects-in-progress. And, most excitingly, the next generation of early career scholars and thinkers will prompt us to think in new ways about Shakespeare and climate justice.

This promises to be a significant year for the UK in the fight to tackle the climate emergency. The G7 meeting in Carvis Bay, Cornwall scheduled for June has the need for a new green economy at the top of its agenda, and in November, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference takes place in Glasgow. This should be part of a climate-conscious fight-back that puts sustainability right at the heart of our post-Covid recovery.

Dr Will Tosh is a research fellow and lecturer at Shakespeare's Globe, and author of *Male Friendship and Testimonies of Love in Shakespeare's England* and *Playing Indoors*

Globe 4 Globe: Shakespeare and Climate Emergency, online, 23–24 April

Director Sean Holmes tells Rachel Potts why his revived *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and his belated *Twelfth Night* make for a perfect post-lockdown double bill

THE NIGHTS COMETH

A Midsummer Night's Dream, 2019. Photo: Tristram Kenton

Sean Holmes, the associate artistic director at Shakespeare's Globe, started talking about "radical optimism" as an idea early in 2019, as he was preparing for his first production at the Globe. He felt positivity was the most subversive position "when the world seems to be going to hell in a handcart, as it is at the moment." His version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that summer embraced riotous, technicolour design and a party atmosphere – it opened with music from the Hackney Colliery Band and Titania arrived through the standing pit in a golf cart. To call the staging upbeat is putting it mildly.

What happened next was that his follow-up production, a new staging of *Twelfth Night*, was halted like much else in 2020 by the coronavirus pandemic. How does he feel about optimism now? "Well, it's hard, after a year of having it kicked out of you," he says. "But I think one has to be, and actually I found the experience of having the vaccination very optimistic, and sort of rather moving, the other day. Maybe it was just being with a load of people you didn't know and everyone being quite friendly. But it does feel there's a sort of glimmer of hope with that."

With cautious openings up ahead, Covid-permitting, Holmes' *Twelfth Night* will go on stage from this August instead, played by a company that will also perform the 2019 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alongside it, in an extended season from May to October. The choice to stage the two comedies in the Globe's first season for 18 months is more nuanced than it might first appear, though Holmes did think his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "might be something audiences will want to see given the time that we've had". It also seemed wise, while "trying to plan on sand", to stage a known quantity in uncertain times.

And though both plays end in marriages, they diverge in tone, with *Twelfth Night* having "a more complex narrative", says Holmes. "It's shot through with grief as a play, so there's a melancholy, a bittersweetness; there's acidity in some of the comedy. What's also interesting is, it begins with a society that is in limbo." Count Orsino is so distracted by love for Olivia, he's not focused on running the country, while Olivia is "stuck in grief" for the death of her father and brother. It's also set on the last night of Christmas – "the day before you go back to normal," says Holmes.

I think we can embrace the Covid restrictions in a way that becomes part of the magic and chaos of the production

Rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Sean Holmes, 2019. Photo: Tristram Kenton

Won't that feel really sort of transgressive and exciting, to have two people kissing on a stage?

"The idea of a society where every day is the same as the day before, and that feeling of excess and exhaustion and repetition, feels good as a way into the play. I don't think people need reminding about the last year, but it is interesting how that feels very accurate to us."

Twelfth Night's conclusion may now resonate in a way that it would not have before Covid. As with most of the comedies, "it's a weird ending," says Holmes. "A lot of the relationships are questionable at best. But it still seems to have an energy, the flicker of optimism." This is what we lacked during months of lockdown, and something that Holmes noticed most living in a city where in normal times, even on a night in at home, you are aware of the thousands of other possibilities that exist. As *Twelfth Night* ends, he says, "you have that sense of life and its complexity flowing back into Illyria."

The remounting of his existing production will have some complexity flowed into it, given restrictions that mean actors will have to stay two metres apart at all times, in rehearsal and on stage. This is an interactive production – an audience member joined the stage each night to play a Mechanical; children were invited to bash a pinata on stage – but also the intimacy that might seem crucial in plays about love won't be allowed. Holmes' response to this is almost wilfully optimistic: "I think we can embrace it in a way that becomes part of the magic and chaos of the production."

The key to this attitude is his collaborative spirit and being open to the "energies" of his cast – the actors in 2019 swapped the role of Puck between them during the play. "What's great about [this way of working] is rather than just the Mechanicals feeling this pressure – 'Oh, shit, we've got to be really funny' – what ended up in the production was a synthesis of the best three or four ideas from everyone," says Holmes. He thinks that when actors feel this ownership over a show, especially on a stage like the Globe's, audiences respond ("I whooped on more than one occasion" admitted one critic). And because only 50% of the original actors will be back for the 2021 staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, new cast members will be able to inject something fresh into it.

The company will however retain its diversity. "The instincts are still the same," says Holmes. For *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the first time around, "it felt like London was on stage and it felt like these people, even though they might be in bonkers costumes, they could have come to the Globe on the tube with you." Most traditionally male parts went to women, including most of the Rude Mechanicals. This time, Sophie Russell, who played Richard III in the Globe's 2019/20 season, will play Bottom alongside Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, while Nadine Higgin will return as Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and take on Belch in the latter play. "Whether they're playing, for all intents and purposes, men, or whether they're women adopting masculine behaviours to succeed in a patriarchal world or whether they play the characters as women is all still to be decided."

The new company will also tackle how to handle troubling aspects of Shakespeare's language; for example, the moment when Lysander calls Hermia

A Midsummer Night's Dream, 2019. Photo: Tristram Kenton

"an Ethiope" was treated in a specific way in 2019 with Black actors, Ekow Quartey and Faith Omole, playing those parts. Holmes thinks these discussions are easier with a group used to working together. "Whether you cut it, which is sometimes the right thing to do, or whether there's a way to own it and use it in an interesting way that provokes discussion or a moment of theatre, the crucial thing is that you acknowledge it and make a decision collectively."

Joining the debates for *Twelfth Night* will be the Globe's artistic director, Michelle Terry, as Viola. Holmes calls her "born to play that play space, and I think her swiftness of thought and mercurialness will be absolutely great for the part. I'm also sure she's going to bite lumps out of it because, you know, she's spent a year sitting on Zoom."

She probably won't be the only actor with some creative energy to spare, and perhaps the Globe stage is especially conducive to post-Covid positivity. Before directing here, he says, "I don't think I quite understood the magic of it. When we opened to press [with a matinee and an evening show], there was something about seeing on one day, 3,000 people, from all over the world, mostly appearing to have a really good time watching a play that was 400 years old, with a cast who were really representative of the city we live in – the democracy of that that was thrilling."

If *Twelfth Night* hints at new possibilities, what sets *A Midsummer Night's Dream* apart as a Shakespeare comedy is that the weddings are not the end; the Mechanicals finish with their play within a play. Holmes felt his 2019 cast for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seized on the "sense of communion and transcendence" this can engender: "There's something about the Mechanicals' attempt to do the best they possibly can in the most difficult circumstances that can't help but be uplifting."

He also hopes that changes in restrictions may mean bigger audiences through the season's run, starting at 400 when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opens in May and going up to 1,000 by the start of *Twelfth Night*'s run in August. And, "crossing all my fingers, the shows might be able to evolve," he says. "Won't that feel really sort of transgressive and exciting, to have two people kissing on a stage? I'd love that to happen."

Rachel Potts is a writer and editor based in London

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Globe Theatre, 19 May to 30 October
Twelfth Night, Globe Theatre, 29 July to 30 October

A Midsummer Night's Dream is supported by Deutsche Bank as part of the Born to Be programme

Twelfth Night is supported by the Twelfth Night Production Circle

Rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Sean Holmes, 2019. Photo: Tristram Kenton

Edward Behrens talks to the Globe's new Juliet, Rebekah Murrell, about taking on her first-ever Shakespeare character – a role that's been over a year in the making

WAITING FOR ROMEO

Rebekah Murrell.
Photo: Theo Lowenstein

When *Romeo and Juliet* opens at Shakespeare's Globe on 26 June, it might turn out to be one of the longest-gestating productions of a Shakespeare play – thanks to the small matter of the Covid lockdowns. Rebekah Murrell, who is playing Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* has been thinking about this role for over a year and a half. This has not made things easier. "The tension is *high*," she says. "It's mad, isn't it? You hear about all those great directors having 16-week rehearsal periods. Stanislavski could never do this."

It hasn't, of course, been a period of constant work and reflection. The first lockdown came in the middle of rehearsals and while Murrell had begun to form her character, nothing was fixed. "I've been holding onto my notes and holding it in my mind and marvelling at it." And the global situation will certainly affect some things. "Given what's happened this year, we can't not speak to it in some way," she says, over a Zoom call from her mother's house where she's been riding out lockdown.

While we are talking, Murrell is busy doing her sister's hair and she mentions how her siblings are shaping the way she is thinking of Juliet. "I have been living with this one, and the other two of my younger siblings are teenagers," she says. "*Romeo and Juliet* is a play about teenagers and the hugeness of their experience and the perilousness of adolescence, so I've been thinking about that and observing them." It's just one of the ways that being Juliet has been "in the back of my mind the whole time".

The version of adolescence that Murrell conjures when talking about Juliet is a very particular sort. "I see Juliet as a quiet rock star, really – unassuming but just relentlessly herself," she says. This version of Juliet is born of observation of her sister. "She's 16, she's been locked in her house for a year, at least, when she should be out there having fun but the world outside is dangerous. All I'm hearing is Juliet." But the teenagers we see in the public eye, teenagers such as Willow Smith, seem to Murrell to be possessed by an amazing quality. "You just think, wow, you know yourself, you know what you want. But I feel the world isn't that kind to people who are strong-willed and know their path from the outset."

For Murrell, "it's very hard to wrap your head around how much the world has changed since a year ago." It's been over a year since she was last on stage, at the Royal Court in Miriam Battye's *Scenes with Girls*. "It's mad to think we were out there just, like, sweating away." In the time since rehearsals for *Romeo and Juliet* came to a close, the focus has been screen work, including a film with Reggie Yates and some work for BBC Three. But Murrell describes herself as a "theatre baby" and it's clear that theatre is where her heart lies, which has led her to the hybrid digital theatre that sprung up in 2020 – including a production of *Fifteen Heroines* with *Bridgerton* star and Globe stalwart Adjoa Andoh at the Jermyn Street Theatre. Not content with simply acting, Murrell has also been exercising her directing skills in the new play *Jouvert* by Yasmin Joseph.

Directing has, she says, "helped me understand an actor's place in the world of a play," but is an entirely distinct process. "When I'm accessing something as a character, I'm there to look after Juliet and to bring her out into the world." The Juliet she is bringing into the world will be her first Shakespeare character – Murrell is best known for her work in modern writing, so taking on a classic of this sort is a new direction. Prior to this part, Murrell characterises her interactions with Shakespeare as "pretty turgid", but perhaps this is to be expected when you meet him over a GCSE textbook. The works that offered more latitude seemed more exciting. "I was always intrigued by the Dark Lady of the sonnets," she says, but the idea of working on a Shakespeare production raised certain, perhaps more obvious, barriers – namely, "Can you make a production of Shakespeare at the Globe that feels like it does speak to the modern age?" This wasn't enough to put Murrell off but she was "a bit sceptical, to be honest."

This all changed when she arrived on the Globe stage. "It feels like the perfect place to encounter Shakespeare," she says. "It's so embedded in the building." But for Murrell, it goes beyond the building. "Think of the scholars coming in to talk to us and contextualising what life was like for people living in those times, and understanding the parallels." There is an army of people – that Murrell name-checks – bringing each play to life alongside the director and set designers and actors: people such as voice coach Tess Dignan and Giles Block, master of the words. And then there is the stage itself, which Murrell calls "the instrument of the theatre". Murrell had to confront the stage when she auditioned for the piece. Director Ola Ince made her perform the "Gallop apace" speech on the Globe stage, but it wasn't conducted in the privacy one normally associates with auditions. "There were all these tourists on a guided tour taking pictures," she recalls. Luckily, Murrell found this amusing rather than off-putting and, quickly, the space took over. "It's an incredible space; every beam, texture, spacing, everything is designed to make the voice sing and to make the stories ring out – it feels very tied to ancient ritual, earthy, powerful."

All this combined to create the sense of a "gift of a place to explore Shakespeare for the first time". This changed

Actor Rebekah Murrell, taking part in *Behind Closed Doors: Romeo and Juliet*

"I SEE JULIET AS A QUIET ROCK STAR, REALLY – UNASSUMING BUT JUST RELENTLESSLY HERSELF"

Rebekah Murrell.
Photos: Theo Lowenstein

Murrell's relationship with the text quite dramatically. "At first I was like, yeah, cut it, cut it, cut it, but now, whenever I reread it I think, no you can't cut any of it. Let us say all the words. I've gone absolute purist now."

This level of engagement with the text was most recently enacted during the Globe's *Shakespeare and Race* digital festival. It was the first time Murrell had been back to the theatre with Ince and her co-star, Alfred Enoch. "I loved it," says Murrell. "I'm such a geek. I remember that day so clearly. I was just over the moon. I kept making sounds of delight because I was just so thrilled to be there." Returning to the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse to wrangle with the text and unknot questions around race and *Romeo and Juliet* felt like "coming home". But more than that, Murrell says, "I remembered that I love my job. When work stopped it was such an interruption. It felt like it made everyone question everything about their lives." Being in a room with people, talking about a play and discussing ideas for her character was a moment of pure affirmation for Murrell as she was back in her "element".

When *Romeo and Juliet* opens, Murrell will have the opportunity to be back in her element more permanently. She has, she says, "missed being on stage so much." But coming back to the stage is not just about pleasure. "It feels like a huge responsibility," she says – a responsibility to be "really careful about the stories we're telling and why we're telling them. It will feel like a massive responsibility. And also it will be just great."

Edward Behrens is the editor of *Globe* magazine.

Romeo & Juliet, Globe Theatre, 26 June to 17 October

Romeo & Juliet is supported by the USA Patrons, Supporters and Friends

The events of the past 12 months have had a transformative effect on the Globe's new adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Greg Morrison talks to the writers and co-director about the show's evolution

CHANGE OF SCENE

The Fall of Phaeton, Peter Paul Rubens, circa 1605. Image: Peter Barritt / Alamy

The inaugural Scriptorium residency – the first time that the Globe has had resident writers in 400 years – started in the winter of 2019. Originally intended to last a year, the three playwrights involved in the initiative – Laura Lomas, Sami Ibrahim and Sabrina Mahfouz – have for the past year-and-a-half been working with directors Holly Race Roughan and Sean Holmes on an adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. With the play originally intended to run from 4 September to 3 October 2020, the first national lockdown began just as rehearsals were due to start. Shifting from 12 actors to four, moving from the Globe theatre to the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, and at one point being considered for a digital iteration, the show has undergone immense changes over the past year. "I think there's an irony, and it is not lost on any of us, that the heart of *Metamorphoses* is transformation," says Race Roughan. "To be on a project that is constantly being reimagined and reconfigured in response to what's going on globally has been at times deeply frustrating, liberating and kind of bonkers."

Written by one of Rome's great poets, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a single poem comprising 15 books. Drawing upon the Greek and Roman literary traditions, the work – written in Latin hexameter – is considered an epic in terms of form and rhythm. Over the course of the *Metamorphoses,* the poet recounts 250 stories from the creation story through to Ovid's contemporary moment. "Even though the texts are so ancient, I think there's something very human that is kind of eternal," says Lomas.

Unparalleled in his influence over European art, echoes of the great poet can be heard in the work of the great bard. The stories range widely in tone and subject matter, from the retribution of a father who repeatedly sells his shapeshifting daughter as a cow, to the genesis of the Theban people after Cadmus plants the teeth of a serpent he has slain in the ground. It is a challenging subject matter both in terms of size and variety. "I'm excited for a live performance that tells stories more surreal than our last year has been," says Mahfouz.

The initial plan to develop the show was to have a group of actors improvising to stimuli, which the writers would watch and then respond to in workshops. The pandemic necessitated a rethink. "We had to flip the process," says Race Roughan. Scheduling check-ins every couple of weeks with the writers, Race Roughan and Holmes would send out bi-weekly provocations for the writers to respond to. One week, for example, the prompts focused upon pop culture – "stuff like which story might best explore this music video, or which story may best explore this meme," Race Roughan explains.

Sabrina Mahfouz. Photo: Greg Morrison

To be on a project that is constantly being reimagined has been at times deeply frustrating, liberating and kind of bonkers

Laura Lomas. Photo: Greg Morrison

With Race Roughan and Holmes acting, as she puts it, "as provocateurs more than directors", the writers found the experience invigorating. "For me, that felt quite liberating; instead of trying to fill it with something that felt polished and precise, it was like we all had permission to just to go and write quickly and instinctively," says Lomas. "It's been brilliant to see how everyone adapts and interprets completely differently," Mahfouz adds.

Through this process the team collated several hours of materials that could then be "taken into workshops and gradually distilled", says Ibrahim, something he found useful in accessing a text that he found to be dense at first – a sentiment shared by Mahfouz. Two workshops were able to go ahead at the Globe, one in September and one in November – an experience that Mahfouz describes as "unexpectedly emotional". "That's what you're writing for, whatever medium it is; you're writing to get to the bit where actors are speaking the words and you can see images and worlds being created," says Ibrahim.

It's a dynamic that could be intimidating for the writers. However, the atmosphere was, according to Lomas, supportive. "There was a generosity of spirit," she says. "It felt quite fun, actually, and just quite freeing at a moment where we were all just in our private spaces." The mix of styles presented by the different writers gels with the source text. "The original text shifts tones and styles so much that it feels right to have three writers who are quite different," says Ibrahim, with Lomas describing it as an "alchemy that kind of just works".

Workshopping the material with actors, the directors and writers began sifting through what had been written. "We threw those drafts against the wall, like spaghetti, to see what was sticking," says Race Roughan. The process helped to shape the tone of the piece as well as the scope, with 15 or so stories becoming the focus. "Our first drafts were all quite arch and a bit glib; they were all a bit self-aware," says Ibrahim. "We realised all the stuff that referred to 2020 was kind of detracting from the stories themselves. And bit by bit we stripped that away and got to the emotional heart of the story."

Having established that "the most straightforward and straight-up versions of the stories were what was working best," the team gained a new appreciation for the power of Ovid's narratives, says Race Roughan. "There's something deeply contemporary, actually, about the things that he's writing about," adds Lomas. "You don't have to angle it into a thing. You can just let it speak for itself." Ibrahim highlighted the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, whose family rivalries mean their love is forbidden. This story – a significant source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – has what he terms "an emotional knottiness".

Another tale is the myth of Phoebus, the sun god, and his son Phaeton, something Lomas explored. Phaeton, seeking proof of his divine lineage, asks to drive the chariot of the sun for a day. Phoebus tries to convince his son that it is mortally dangerous as the horses who pull the chariot are too unruly. Unable to dissuade his son from trying, he watches Phaeton lose control of the chariot and fall to his death in the river Eridanos, scorching the Earth in the process. Phaeton's epitaph, according to Ovid, read: "Here Phaeton lies who in the sun-god's / chariot fared. And though greatly he failed, more greatly he dared." It's a story that captures that "emotional knottiness". It could be read as "a story referring to climate change", says Lomas. "But it also feels like he's talking about a really tender story about a foolish boy and his dad."

I'm excited for a live performance that tells stories more surreal than our last year has been

(From top) Holly Race Roughan; Sami Ibrahim. Photos: Holly Race Roughan; Richard Davenport

Pyramus and Thisbe depicted by Gysbrecht Thys. Image: Wikimedia Commons

Over the course of the two workshops, certain themes began to recur. "The whole text constantly feels like it's about power," says Race Roughan. "Who has it, who hasn't got it? Who's got a right to speak? Who's spoken and then silenced? Whose words are dangerous? Whose words aren't heard?" References to power, agency and the chaos that can unfold in its upheaval are woven throughout the text. In a 12-month period that has seen a global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter protests and the drama of President Donald Trump's final weeks in power, these themes resonate. "I think that in some ways where the chaos comes from is a lack of a moral code that we can understand," says Lomas. "We don't always hold 'the powers that be' accountable for their actions. There is a kind of chaos in that."

Though the development process has been invigorating in its novelty, it has presented its challenges. Writing from his graffiti-laden teenage desk at his parent's house over the first lockdown was – as well as being "a weird flashback to GCSEs" – complicated for Ibrahim. "It was weird at first trying to imagine a point sometime in the future when plays were going on, and trying to write for that. There was an odd disconnect," he says, finding a world without theatre "quite sad. I've really missed it." It's a sentiment echoed by Lomas, who outlined how difficult it is to create in the lockdown vacuum of live, in-person performances. "I think the big thing that I've missed is being fed by the experience of watching live arts – you need input as well as output," she says. "It makes everything a little bit sludgier" is how Ibrahim puts it. "You go to the theatre to practice empathy," says Lomas. "Not going has been doubly isolating because you're not relating to the world through stories in the same way."

Though trying at times, working on a project such as this through the pandemic has had some positives. "I've felt incredibly lucky to be able to have it and structure my days around it," says Lomas. This time has also given space to "percolate", says Race Roughan. "Being able to sit with an original source text like that over such a long period of time is invaluable." And ultimately, there's an excitement to share the work with new audiences. "I love Ovid's work, but I didn't feel able to access it until my 20s, so I'm excited about teenagers and young adults watching this show and feeling inspired to explore his work and other Latin classics," says Mahfouz. Race Roughan adds: "[Artistic director] Michelle Terry has been so clear and kind of wonderful about going, 'This is a new work, it's responding to now, it's responding to the past, we're going to make this happen come what may.'"

> The whole text constantly feels like it's about power – who has it, and who hasn't got it

Greg Morrison is a writer and editor based in London

Metamorphoses, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, 30 September to 30 October

SHINE COMFORTS FROM THE EAST

Every year, for the past 10 years, MA/MFA Acting (International) students from East 15 Acting School have come to the Globe for an intensive training course with the Higher Education team. The most recent course was originally scheduled for October 2020; it was postponed three times before the Globe could open their doors to them in March. The first meeting with East 15 took place exactly one year on from the day the theatre closed. Twenty-nine students from the USA, Poland, Hong Kong, Thailand, Finland, Canada, France, China, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, Cyprus, Denmark and Taiwan worked intensively with our Higher Education Faculty in acting, voice, movement and text classes, lectures and seminars, all building towards a presentation in the Globe Theatre of scenes from *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. In the words of one student, "It was inspiring, exciting, challenging and some of the best weeks of my life."

Photographs by Pete LeMay


FIRE EXIT


FIRE
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AFTER *THE* PLAGUE

Covid-19 isn't the first pandemic the Globe has survived – the Plague hit London hard in the early 1600s. But, as Paul Yachnin finds, Shakespeare is good medicine for bad times

Shakespeare's theatre had to struggle through the bad times of bubonic plague. We know that a few months after Shakespeare was born in 1564, plague killed a fifth of the people in his home town. Things got no better when he, as a grown man, was earning his livelihood as an actor, playwright, and entertainment entrepreneur. Plague swept across the country in 1592–93, 1603–04, 1606, and 1608–09. London was always hardest hit. When plague deaths exceeded 30 per week in the city, the authorities closed the playhouses. Through the first decade of the new century, the playhouses were likely closed as often as they were open. Plague might have come into his Stratford home, too. His son Hamnet, dead at the age of 11 in 1596, might have been its victim; a third of all children under 12 in Elizabethan England were killed by plague.

So Shakespeare understood pandemic disease feelingly. Plague is featured in the plot of only *Romeo and Juliet* (more about that play in a moment), but plays like *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens* (co-written with Thomas Middleton) and *Cymbeline* represent devastated worlds, as if in them the usual ways of relating with other people had mutated into toxic forms of contagion. The plays, even at their darkest, also did valuable social and psychological repair work. Emma Smith has said that Shakespeare's plays were "a narrative vaccine" against how plague jumbled people together into a common grave. Loaded like timber onto what pamphleteer and playwright Thomas Dekker called "the pest-cart," the dead lost every mark of individuality. They became faceless. Shakespeare responded by creating a theatre of faces – the vital, distinctive faces of Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Hamlet, and many others. His theatre was brilliant entertainment, but it was always also a form of therapy.

Angelica

Shakespearean therapy lived in the characters, themes, and in the very words of the plays. Consider the single word "angelica". It appears in *Romeo and Juliet*, a play written in the wake of the 1592–93 plague that killed at least 15,000 people within the city of London. In the play, the Capulet household is up very early preparing for the wedding of Juliet and Count Paris. They do not know that their daughter has already married Romeo, scion of the enemy Montague family. They do not know that in a moment they are going to find her as if dead (they will think she is dead). At this moment, the household is all bustle and happy expectation.

Lady Capulet and Nurse come on stage. Lady Capulet says to Nurse, "Hold, take these keys and fetch more spices, Nurse." "They call for dates and quinces in the pastry," says Nurse. Lord Capulet enters in a whirlwind of busyness:

> Come, stir, stir, stir,
> the second cock hath crowed.
> The curfew bell hath rung, tis
> three a' clock:
> Look to the baked meats,
> good *Angelica,*
> Spare not for cost.

The lines as given here are from the 1599 quarto (I've modernised the spelling). All modern editions say that the word "Angelica" is the name of Lady Capulet or, more likely, the name of Nurse. They might be right, but let us look more closely. It happens that angelica, known as "the root of the holy ghost," was a valued medicinal herb in Shakespeare's time. *A New Herball, or Historie of Plants* (1595) tells us that "the roots of Angelica are contrary to all poison, the pestilence, and all naughty corruption, of evil or infected air." So Capulet might be calling for "good," or cultivated, angelica, valued as a garnish with meats, as a candied delicacy, and as a health-giving comestible, particularly to be prized in the heat of the summer when plague, as we learn three scenes later, is already killing people in Verona.

Of course, the plague in Verona is a plot device. The civic health officers lock Friar John up in quarantine and cause him to fail to deliver to Romeo the crucial information that Juliet is not really dead. Romeo, believing his beloved is dead, kills himself just before she wakes from her drug-induced coma. She, finding her Romeo dead, bereft and desperate, kills herself with his dagger.

For London playgoers in around 1595, still cleaning up and still healing from the two-year-old pestilence, plague, even transparently serving as a plot device, would have had considerable emotional force. In 2021, after more than a year of pandemic disease and with 3,000,000 dead worldwide – we now understand something of the force of this plot device too.

Ecological violence

The devastation wrought by Covid can enable us also to see how plague in Verona connects with the play's remarkable anticipation of what we now know about zoonotic diseases – how our exploitative push into natural habitats has brought animal-born pathogens like the present coronavirus to the human species.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries were uncertain about the causes of plague. They blamed what the *New Herball* calls "evil or infected air," but generally, they thought that plague was a punishment from God for human sinfulness. Friar Lawrence does not contest such a providentialist view, but he brings forward a new understanding of

SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE

had to struggle through the bad times

OF

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epidemic disease by grafting grace and transgression onto a natural ecology. When we constrain the healing grace and impede the proper operation of natural things, we summon the violence of nature into the human world:

> O, mickle is the powerful
> grace that lies
> In plants, herbs, stones, and
> their true qualities;
> For nought so vile, that on the
> earth doth live,
> But to the earth some special
> good doth give;
> Nor aught so good
> but, strain'd from
> that faire use,
> Revolts from true
> birth, stumbling on abuse.

In the play, angelica, a naturopathic remedy against pandemic disease, is balanced by the poisonous mandrake plant named by the terrified Juliet in the previous scene. And it is not merely that there are good plants and bad plants. Mandrake, or mandragora, is poisonous but in controlled dosages can be used for pain relief or as an anaesthetic. Friar Lawrence, an expert herbalist, recognises the contrary properties that exist in both plants and people, and he theorises how the human exercise of "rude will," the graceless push for power, domination, and sexual conquest, releases the poison within and kills the plant or the person:

> Within the infant rind of
> this weak flower
> Poison hath residence and
> medicine power:
> . . .
> Two such opposed kings
> encamp them still,
> In man as well as herbs, grace
> and rude will;
> And where the worser is
> predominant,
> Full soon the canker death
> eats up that plant.

Is it any wonder that the impoverished apothecary who provides the poison for Romeo's suicide resides in a shop that houses nothing but bits and pieces of a dead and desiccated nature?

> And in his needy shop a
> tortoise hung,
> An alligator stuff'd,
> and other skins
> Of ill-shap'd fishes, and about
> his shelves,
> A beggarly account of
> empty boxes,
> Green earthen pots,
> bladders, and musty seeds,
> Remnants of packthread, and
> old cakes of roses
> Were thinly scattered, to
> make up a show.

Poor sacrifices

The natural ecology abused by the apothecary in Mantua and by humankind in the 21st century is of a piece with the tragic violation of a human generational ecology in the play. The young lovers Romeo and Juliet are full of sexual passion that could issue in beautiful offspring – a new generation that would grace the earth and repair a city torn by their warring families. But the Montagues and the Capulets, led by the two old feuding patriarchs, deform the natural flowering of young love so that it is marked by death almost from the instant of its conception. At their first meeting, the lovers play effortlessly with each other. They actually weave a love sonnet out of the lines they speak. Their love is no *Leibestod* at its inception. Death comes from the outside – from the exclusionary fear and hatred that has wracked their families and spilled blood on the streets of Verona for many years. So when Romeo learns that the woman he has just fallen in love with is a Capulet, he feels the hand of death reaching out to touch him. "Is she a Capulet?" he says, "My life is my foe's debt." Juliet's response to the news that Romeo is a Montague is even darker. She speaks about her new love as if it were a monstrous birth:

> My only love sprung from
> my only hate!
> Too early seen unknown, and
> known too late!
> Prodigious birth of
> love it is to me
> That I must love a
> loathed enemy.

In spite of their passion, intelligence and vitality, their love ends with their broken-hearted suicides. Romeo's mother dies that same night from grief for her banished son. Lady Capulet, in her late twenties at the start of the play, has suddenly become an old woman at the edge of the grave. The two old patriarchs agree to make peace and volunteer to express their remorse by promising to build statues of the two lovers made of pure gold. But it all comes too late. Their children are gone and the old are left alone to await the end of things. Romeo and Juliet, the "poor sacrifices", have lost their lives under the unrelenting pressure of their families' mutual hatred. Their deaths have brought peace to Verona, but there will be no new generation able to grow up in the embrace of that peace.

To work with the play *Romeo and Juliet* along the lines I am sketching here is to begin to see how Shakespearean medicine – his plays themselves are a kind of angelica – can join with us on the long path back to health. The therapy we follow under his care will require our participation in the "powerful grace" of all living things and our commitment to tear down the barriers of fear and hate that stand in the way of love among the young, no matter the colour or sex or religion of those who are moved by love to give birth to a new world.

Paul Yachnin is Tomlinson Professor of Shakespeare Studies at McGill University

What's on

Globe Theatre

A Midsummer Night's Dream
19 May–30 October

As You Like It
8 June–29 August

The Tempest
11 June–29 August

Romeo & Juliet
26 June–17 October

Audience Choice
18 July–28 August

Twelfth Night
29 July–30 October

Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

Metamorphoses
30 September–30 October

Live Streams

Throughout our Summer 2021 season we'll be live-streaming performances on select dates straight to you at home, to ensure that while travel restrictions continue we are still able to bring our work to everyone, no matter where you are in the world.

Ticket prices start at just £5 per household with an option to donate on top. Visit shakespearesglobe.com/seasons/summer-2021/#live-streams for more information or to book tickets.

A Midsummer Night's Dream
5 June and 25 September

Romeo & Juliet
10 July and 7 August

Twelfth Night
4 September and 23 October

Metamorphoses
27–30 October

Members' events

Members' Drama Club

Sunday 9 May
2.00pm–3.30pm

Sunday 6 June
2.00pm–3.30pm

Sunday 4 July
3.30pm–5.00pm

Sunday 8 August
3.30pm–5.00pm

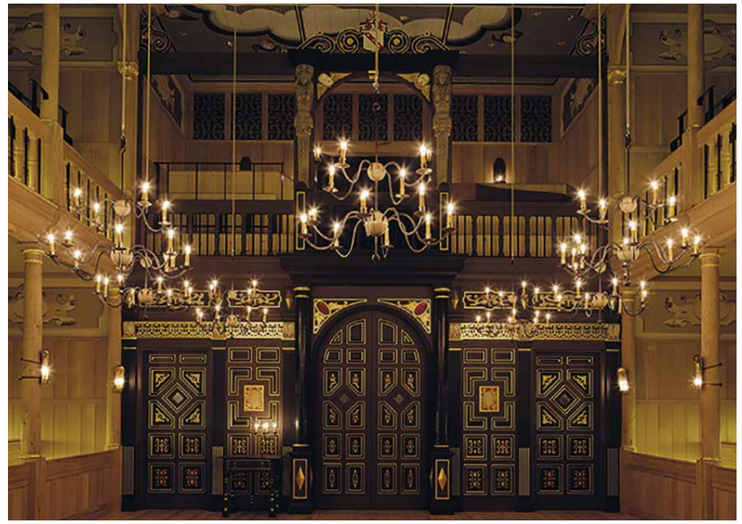
Sunday 5 September
2.00pm–3.30pm

Sunday 3 October
2.00pm–3.30pm

Tickets for all of these events can be booked via the Membership Office on 020 7902 5970 or the Box Office on 020 7401 9919.

Guided tour

Enjoy a complimentary tour of the Globe Theatre with your Membership. Our family friendly guided tours offer the opportunity to explore one of the most iconic theatres in the world. Log in to your account to book your tour, and your complimentary ticket will automatically be applied at the checkout.



My Shakespeare

The Globe's Director of Communications, Marketing and Audiences, Becky Wootton, talks about the magic of reopening and making Shakespeare accessible for all

What do you do at the Globe?
I'm Director of Marketing, Communications and Audiences. I get to work with the brilliant teams who look after marketing, design, press, digital, social, ticketing and sales, retail, guided tours and visitor operations at the Globe.

What do you do when you're not at the Globe?
In normal times I'm out most nights watching shows, gigs, talks, comedy, or trying new restaurants and bars – or travelling to new places across the globe. This past year has been much quieter: growing veggies in my little yard, long walks to the river and camping trips with mates. I've missed the thrill of coming together to discover a new way of seeing the world through live performance.

Why is the Globe a special place for you?
I love the magic of watching a show, chin resting on the front of the stage, getting lost in a story centuries old.

What brought you to the Globe?
This exciting new role, the people, and the potential of this awesome organisation. I feel very lucky to be part of the team that will help the Globe recover and rebuild even stronger.

What has been your favourite production? Why?
Probably Lucy Bailey's bloody *Titus Andronicus* for the sheer drama of it all (and the audience reactions!). I also loved being transported by the international productions in Globe to Globe. And more recently, *Emilia* – the joy of that story being told by those women.

What does Shakespeare mean to you?
Shakespeare means stories. Stories that help us understand who we are, each other and the world. Stories that can transport us, lift us up, crush our hearts and make us cry with laughter. Shakespeare should be for everyone, and for that to be true we must keep our doors open, and work harder to remove the barriers that stop people from feeling able to connect with his work.

What has been your favourite moment at the Globe?
Having rehearsals begin and opening the site to visitors for guided tours for the first time in a long time – having the building back doing what she does best.

What will be your most memorable day at the Globe?
After one of the most isolating times in history, I'm looking forward to the first day we can welcome audiences back to see *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – and to do so safely for all.

Why do you think the Globe is special?
Our audiences and supporters make the Globe really special. The Globe unites together the magic of a democratic space, where you can go back in time, but also see the world right now in a new piercing light. The way it works with young people is amazing, as is the way the Guides capture the hidden narratives of the building when people visit for the first time. But even more, it is the passion from everyone to make Shakespeare for all – and to pursue social justice in decolonising, being anti-racist and sustainable in this pursuit.

What do you want to do at the Globe that you haven't yet achieved?
Everything! I feel like I've only just started.

What's your dream job?
Right now, it's this one.

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