

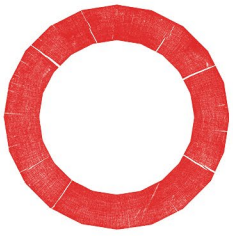
We've loved working on this *Lost In The Cedar Wood* performance for The Globe over recent months. The show weaves stories together with songs from the album, to create a dream-journey from ancient Mesopotamia through to our fragile present moment, and on into the unknown future.

The thread that runs through the evening, as through the album, is the *Epic of Gilgamesh* — the oldest known written story in the world. It was first set down as text on clay tablets, in the early writing system known as cuneiform, around 2100 BC. You can [see an image of the Eleventh Tablet here](#), which tells a version of the Flood Story, long before the biblical version recounted in Genesis was written down. Such a beautiful, delicate, intricate object.

The *Epic* tells of a ruthless god-king called Gilgamesh, and his friend the wild man Enkidu. After Gilgamesh and Enkidu cut down the Sacred Cedar Wood, the Gods kill Enkidu, and Gilgamesh wanders the world in grief, seeking the secret of immortality. The central themes of the story are those that still preoccupy us today: ecocide, bad governance, and the nature of friendship, love and death.

Our stories and songs follow the tellings and re-tellings of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* across thousands of years, and speak of the people who are drawn into its orbit. The *Epic* was stored in Ashurbanipal's great Library at Nineveh, then buried under the dunes for two millennia after the Library's sacking, then re-discovered in the mid-nineteenth century by the Assyrian archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam, then translated in the 1870s by a working-class Londoner called George Smith, and then told and re-told countless times since — including now by us.

A recurring motif of the show is how we turn to ancient stories



for guidance in times of trouble: how they can be means of navigating uncertain ground, but also how we fail to heed their warnings.

So: we hope that our re-telling of the tellings of this most ancient of stories, in the candle-lit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, might feel true both to our troubled present, and to one of the oldest human impulses: to sing songs and tell stories around the light of flames, in the winter darkness.

Rob & Johnny