GLOBE

Winter 2023

Birthday candles

10 years of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

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SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

Photo: Sarah Lee

Welcome

Welcome to this wintry edition of Globe magazine. I am also delighted to be introducing myself as the Globe's new chief executive! My very first interview is opening this issue – being appointed to lead the Globe is hugely exciting because this is much more than a theatre or Shakespeare's workplace. It is an extraordinary meeting of the past and the future, held together with storytelling that questions what it means to be human – flaws, triumphs, failure, ambitions and hope. I am thrilled to be building on the extraordinary foundation Neil Constable as chief executive has put in place in the pursuit of Shakespeare for all.

It is a particular joy to join the Globe at the 10th anniversary of the unique Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Illuminated by over 100 beeswax candles, the Playhouse is an archetype of the Jacobean indoor theatre for which plays like Shakespeare's *Othello* and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* were written and performed. Upcoming productions of both plays are explored further in the articles ahead – watch out for Joe Hill-Gibbins on bringing the first Ibsen to the Playhouse.

Following striking images from across the decade of this jewel-box of a theatre, our head of music James Maloney explores all things music in the Playhouse, and our very own Professor Farah Karim-Cooper reveals more from her fascinating and important new book *The Great White Bard*.

The Globe is perhaps best-known for our open-air theatre, and in recent years we have thrown open the wooden doors to audiences to enjoy a production over the festive period – as the nights draw in and the days get shorter, it will be wonderful to welcome you to enjoy our *Hansel and Gretel* with a hot drink under the wintry night sky. Bake-off superstar Steven Carter-Bailey will reveal just how he made the Globe into a cake for us – perhaps one for the keen bakers among you to try at home? And last but not least, director of education Lucy Cuthbertson discusses our upcoming Playing Shakespeare production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

So read on, and I hope to welcome you to the Globe soon for our special anniversary, celebrating 10 years of our most remarkable and unique Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

Stella Kanu
Chief Executive

Contents

AROUND THE GLOBE

One night only

In a unique experiment, a group of leading actors performed *Twelfth Night* – with no rehearsal and only a cue script for support!

In Shakespeare's times, often actors had no access to the whole play script. Instead, they were given their lines on a scroll or a roll of paper (literally, their 'role'), with a few words that would be their cue: hence 'cue script'. Lacking the weeks of rehearsal that take place for today's productions, each actor would learn their lines and cues, then turn up at the theatre ready to go.

In honour of the 400th anniversary of the First Folio, the Globe Theatre gathered a stellar cast – including Paul Chahidi, Stephen Mangan, Rebekah Murrell, Paul Ready, Sirine Saba and artistic director Michelle Terry – for a unique experiment, recreating

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* for one night only. Directed by Blanche McIntyre, the actors had to learn their lines by themselves and then step courageously into the unknown for a night that was nerve-wrackingly spontaneous and wonderfully celebratory.

Paul Chahidi, who played Feste, called the evening 'without doubt, one of the most terrifying, thrilling, life-affirming, *joyous* things I've ever been involved with. Unforgettable.'

Unforgettable: (previous page) Paul Chahidi as Feste; (top to bottom) Michelle Terry (Olivia) and Stephen Mangan (Malvolio); Rebekah Murrell (Viola); Paul Ready (Aguecheek), Jacoba Williams (Fabian) and Richard Katz (Belch). Photos: Marc Brenner

Sign stories
A Night in Sign on 16 October was a BSL-led cabaret event of music, dance, comedy and more. It gathered some of the UK's leading and emerging deaf and hard of hearing talent under candlelight in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Its producers (Chris Fonseca, Nadeem Islam and Harry Jardine) aimed to create an event that bridged the gap between the hearing and deaf communities, and celebrated the beauty of deaf culture.

Right: Adrian Schiller and Ben Caplan in *The Merchant of Venice*. Photo: Tristram Kenton

Merchant in New York
A film of Abigail Graham's challenging production of *The Merchant of Venice*, seen at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse last winter, was shown at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York on 12 October. This screening was followed by a discussion about the play and its contemporary context of antisemitism and racism with a panel of experts.

Ghost whisperers
Ghosts will be our first production of one of Henrik Ibsen's plays (see our interview on page 24), but the cast includes some familiar faces. Hattie Morahan (pictured) starred in *The Changeling* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, while Paul Hilton appeared in *Dr Faustus*, *As You Like It* and *A Mad World My Masters* at the Globe, and Sarah Slimani was recently in *The Winter's Tale* and *Hakawatis: Women of the Arabian Nights*. The cast also features Greg Hicks and Stuart Thompson.

SWEET DREAMS

How did Steven Carter-Bailey turn the Globe into a tempting gingerbread cottage for the *Hansel and Gretel* poster? *The Great British Bake Off* star shares his sticky secrets

Steven Carter-Bailey relates to the witch in *Hansel and Gretel*. Not the bit about cooking unwary children, obviously. But anyone who can construct a lifesize gingerbread cottage, decorated with irresistible sweeties, must be quite the baker. 'I can relate to the idea of living in an edible house in the woods and being left alone,' he muses. 'It's my idea of heaven.'

Fortunately, Carter-Bailey puts his sticky talents to more wholesome ends. Since finishing as the runner-up of TV's *The Great British Bake Off* in 2017, he has pursued a career in kitchen craft: teaching, broadcasting and baking to commission. Take his replica of Shakespeare's Globe, for instance (pictured), created to tempt sweet-toothed audiences to Simon Armitage's version of *Hansel and Gretel* this winter.

There it sits on the poster: snow-dusted with icing sugar; the building's familiar curved panels and thatch recreated in baked beauty. Eyes shining with greed, I ask if the cake is edible. 'Absolutely, it's edible!' Carter-Bailey responds. 'For me, it is part of my creativity and my art. I have to be able to eat them or they just become sculptures. If you can see that it is edible, it makes it even more appealing as a piece of art.'

Not only is the Globe cake edible, it sounds delicious. Carter-Bailey rejected the idea of white chocolate – not right for a spooky tale. Instead, the base is a dark chocolate Guinness cake ('a tried-and-tested recipe I created for family and friends'), while the toffee-like beams pooling at the base were made from leftover caramel that was sitting in a squeezy bottle. As for the thatch, that's actual gingerbread.

'The gingerbread thatch makes the image iconic, and not just another round cake,' Carter-Bailey explains. Gingerbread is a pleasingly sculptural material – 'It sets and you can stick it together with whatever you want, it's a lot of fun' – but the roof was a painstaking construction. 'Intricately placed gingerbread squares were stuck together with boiling sugar, then hand-painted with dark chocolate and marked with an etching tool. That took longer than the entire main cake,' he says.

Carter-Bailey is no stranger to unusual commissions. He's modelled Russell Tovey's beloved French bulldog and surprised Ian McKellen on his 80th birthday with a blue and gold extravaganza. Perhaps his most complex bake was 'a working replica commissioned by Rubik's Cube for their 40th birthday.' The cake was set on a mechanical base designed by his brother – it swivelled and pivoted just like the original toy and 'weighed a ton'.

Hunger runs through *Hansel and Gretel* like a sweet seam of comfort – the dearth of treats is what makes the children's home so unhappy and the witch's cottage so appealing. What was young Steven's comfort food of choice? 'I was always on a diet as a child,' he recalls. 'I wasn't allowed sugar or E numbers. But my granny – my mother's mother – always seemed to know what I liked. Everything I wasn't supposed to have.' And what kind of child was he? 'Shy,' he says immediately. 'Terribly shy. Though I was nicknamed "Tasmanian Devil" by my family...' Kitchen comforts entered the picture soon afterwards. 'I can smell it now. Some of my most vivid memories are of cooking with my mum. It was over 30 years ago, but I felt very calm, settled and happy. My mother is utterly fearless in the kitchen – that's what I learned from her, to be utterly fearless in the face of a food challenge.'

For years, baking was a haven from his marketing career. 'I loved my work colleagues, but hated my job,' he says. 'My creativity was crushed. I needed an outlet, and *Bake Off* was the perfect opportunity.' He made three attempts to get onto the programme, and finally secured a place in 2017, when his skills shone through with elaborate bakes shaped like a handbag or chess set.

How did he cope with the competition and cameras? 'I learned to block out everything,' he says. 'I practised how to be filmed under pressure and time restraints. As soon as someone said: "Ready, steady, bake," something switched and I zoned out entirely.' Even so, he admits, 'the cameramen were invasive. They always wanted to film the oven, so I was often straddling a man. It was very intimate.'

Theatre, especially Shakespeare, has also long been part of Carter-Bailey's life. 'We lived in a rural part of Hertfordshire, so being taken to the theatre was a huge treat,' he recalls. 'The very first thing I saw was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I didn't understand what was going on or what they were saying, but I remember feeling fascinated.' His ex is an actor and introduced him to the Globe. 'I've now been countless times, I'm obsessed with the Globe,' he says. 'There's something about watching Shakespeare at the Globe and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse – you feel as if you're back in the 16th century.'

Final, and perhaps most crucial, question: what happened to the *Hansel* cake? 'This is going to sound awful,' Carter-Bailey says, 'but it went down the waste disposal. The reality is that it's what the French call "fondled food" – it's been touched too many times; a lot of prodding. It was still perfectly edible after the photoshoot, but it had had a day of hot lights and being touched.' Gone, but not forgotten – it's truly a theatre of dreams.

Ready, steady, bake: (left) Steven Carter-Bailey's *Hansel and Gretel* Globe; (below) Carter-Bailey with Ian McKellen; his Rubik's Cube cake. Photos: Elise Humphrey, courtesy Steven Carter-Bailey

'I have to be able to eat them or they're just sculptures'

– STEVEN CARTER-BAILEY

We know what you did last summer

Memories are made of this – looking back on the Globe's summer season

Fantasy and fun: (left) Michelle Terry as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; (below left) Danielle Phillips and cast in *The Comedy of Errors*. Photos: Helen Murray, Marc Brenner

Crowd sourcing: *As You Like It* and (below) Max Bennett in *Macbeth*. Photos: Ellie Kurttz, Johan Persson

SHAKESPEARE FOR ALL

The Globe's new chief executive is a woman on mission. Stella Kanu tells David Jays about risk, ambition and how theatre can be a beacon to the world

'I live in risk management,' declares Stella Kanu. Many would find that uncomfortable, but the new chief executive of Shakespeare's Globe thrives on the tightrope between creative ambition and financial challenge. As she takes up the role, she sounds impressively relaxed – our phone conversation is marked by her warm, generous laughter – but her commitment shines through. 'My career has been driven mostly by my values,' she tells me.

Kanu, 51, may describe herself as 'a non-traditional leader', but she's certainly an effective one, most recently as executive director at LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre). 'I think about the civic role of culture a lot,' she says. 'My early years tell me about its benefits, not just to individuals but to places and communities as a galvanising point for conversation. I've always had a massive passion for culture and cultural equity.' So she should feel at home at Shakespeare's Globe. 'There's something powerful about having your mission so clear in all of the work: Shakespeare for all – it's the "for all" bit that I really love.'

The Globe couldn't have sourced a more local chief executive. Kanu grew up barely three miles away, beside another cherished London theatre in Kennington. 'We would walk behind the flats, jump over a fence and we were in Ovalhouse [now Brixton House],' she says. 'We had a sense of ownership of that space – in my teenage years, theatre was a big deal.'

'I'm a child of immigrant parents,' she continues, noting that 'in immigrant families, the relationship to culture is really deep. My parents were open to cultural experiences: music, dance, performance – my childhood was full of it. My sisters were the same. We were latchkey children, it was kind of like the Wild West in the 1970s! You had your key on your chain, saw something you enjoyed and just got involved – maybe you told your parents what you did that day, maybe you didn't!' There's that huge laugh again.

She imagined pursuing a career in writing or performing, until her involvement in student politics heightened her sense of the way cultural experiences intersect with wider society. Over the next three decades, she took leadership roles at Ovalhouse, where it all began, Soundwave Cumbria, Harlem Stage in New York and Cardboard Citizens.

In 2019, she took the helm at LIFT. Again, risk management was a key skill. 'LIFT looks internationally at works we think are relevant and important to London and its communities,' she says. 'That's a thrill, but it is still a business.' Kanu helped LIFT recover from an artistically successful but financially damaging 2018 festival to posting its first surplus in more than 10 years in 2022. Last year's events included *Sun & Sea*, a 'climate opera' from Lithuania, which won the 2019 Golden Lion prize at the Venice Biennale.

All the while, the Globe was part of Kanu's life: as an audience member and as the location of the Women and Power Festival, at which she was a speaker, and a photoshoot for Black Womxn in Theatre, also organised by Kanu. 'I've had lots of professional contact with the Globe in bite-size chunks,' she says. The chief executive role intrigued her: 'I had a sense of great innovation happening. Michelle Terry's artistic direction

Stella Kanu (opposite) is the Globe's new chief executive, having previously worked at LIFT (above). Photos: Sarah Lee, Jalaikon Caro Gervay

Sun & Sea (above), Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė, Vaiva Grainytė and Lina Lapelytė, was part of LIFT 2022. Photo: Ellie Kurttz.
Kanu (right) wants the Globe to be a beacon around inclusion and diversity. Photo: Jalaikon Caro Gervay

‘We were latchkey children – you saw something you enjoyed and got involved’

shows a love and knowledge of Shakespeare, open to bringing in new and diverse actors and creatives across both spaces at New Globe Walk. Education was the team that reached out to me first – there is some deep work taking place to understand the relevance of Shakespeare in history, and of that history today. So I was… curious.’

The interview process was exhaustive – eight rounds of meetings, she estimates – but that only enhanced her curiosity. ‘There’s something exciting happening at Shakespeare’s Globe,’ says Kanu. ‘The mission of Shakespeare for all is real and alive and energising. I wanted to be part of that.’

And why does she think the panel responded to her? ‘Lots of cultural organisations are feeling around for authentic leadership that is about people but also has strong business acumen. I felt the trustees were engaged in the future I painted for Shakespeare’s Globe – realistic and a little bit ambitious.’ It’s a good combination, I say. ‘Now I’ve got to deliver it, David!’

As Neil Constable observed in his farewell interview for Globe magazine, the post-lockdown landscape is daunting for arts leaders. ‘I 100% agree,’ Kanu says. ‘Everything has shifted. Who is delivering the work, the relationship between employers and employees – it has all changed. One of the things that I developed as a quick go-to in my head during the interview process was: we want pre-Covid income levels, but we want new business practices that are of 2024 and beyond. That’s the challenge for most organisations – the ground has shifted around us. Recovery is not just about survival.’

‘My personal perception,’ she adds, ‘is that the Globe’s recovery, financially, links to the unique relationship and sense of ownership that people feel about it.’ No group feels that more closely than the Globe members – Kanu looks forward to engaging with them. ‘It’s so interesting how many different points of view are invested in Shakespeare.’ Will she be a bridge between members and the theatre’s artistic choices? ‘A bridge suggests two opposite sides, and I don’t believe that’s the picture,’ she counters, offering a different metaphor. ‘It is about understanding all the different materials that make up the patchwork quilt.’

Sitting in the chief executive’s chair means facing hard questions, and there’s none harder than this: what is her favourite Globe show? ‘Just one?’ she protests. ‘That *is* tough. The first time I went to the Globe, I was sitting next to Germaine Greer. I could barely concentrate! I’ve got all these different associations with that space.’ Having just seen the Globe’s award-winning *Midsummer Mechanicals*, she enthuses about ‘an electric energy in that audience, which was mainly under 12. But also I loved *Emilia*, and the first show I saw after lockdown was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – I remember being tearful because I was back watching theatre. That’s the beauty of what Shakespeare’s Globe can do – we make connections with things happening in our lives.’

More tough questions lie ahead. ‘We are still in some challenging environments, but I want to make things happen,’ Kanu says. ‘I enjoy the challenge of pressurised environments where you have to make a decision. I am trained to see the big picture and understand the risks – I thrive in those kinds of environments.’

Let’s look into the future: how might Stella’s Globe feel? ‘I’m hoping that we can build on what is already happening,’ Kanu suggests. ‘A sense of Shakespeare’s Globe as a beacon around inclusion and diversity, both in terms of who accesses Shakespeare and who proclaims a sense of ownership over his works. I would hope that we have a team who love working here, and audiences who buy into an artistic direction that is ever-transforming what Shakespeare is. I hope that the Globe can be an example to other organisations about what it means to be a custodian of works that are vital but transformed for the 21st century. That we are still a significant player in both London’s cultural sector and on an international stage. These are big things – but I think it’s possible.’

DIAMOND IN THE DARK

Nightmare, horror show or feminist drama? Ten years after *The Duchess of Malfi* opened the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, it returns in a new production by Rachel Bagshaw. Kate Wyver explores the tragedy's dark appeal

James Garnon in *The Duchess of Malfi* in 2014. Photo: Mark Douet

Rachel Bagshaw (right) is directing the latest production of *The Duchess of Malfi*. David Dawson and Gemma Arterton (below left) in the 2014 production, which opened the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Photos: Mark Douet, Annabel Moeller

'I have to approach it as a new play,' Rachel Bagshaw says of *The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster's drama that she is reviving and rewiring for the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. The director imagines giving the 400-year-old author dramaturgical feedback. 'Actually, new playwright Webster,' she raises her eyebrows sternly. 'Your Act Three is a bit long.'

Handed down from one cast to the next over several centuries, this rapidly paced, blood-soaked play has the ability to morph to suit our changing world. Each time it is performed, this old text becomes new. 'They aren't museum pieces,' Dame Harriet Walter says firmly about the early modern canon. 'The smell of the world through the language is different, but the humanity of them doesn't change. That's why we keep doing them.'

Walter performed Webster's Duchess in 1989 for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). More than three decades on, the heft of the character has stayed with her; one might say she is the Duchess of Malfi still. 'It's in a league with Cleopatra in terms of emotional range and physical demand,' Walter considers. 'If I think about the parts that really stretch you, that take you to the edge, this is one of them.'

As an audience member watching Webster's play, you are experiencing a nightmare speedily unfold. As soon as the widowed Duchess refuses her brothers' control and remarries in secret, events hurtle into chaos and bloodshed. A spy sits at every turn, death at every door. 'Everybody dies,' Bagshaw says bluntly, 'horribly.'

When *The Duchess of Malfi* was first performed by an all-male cast around 1614, it was to an audience at the Blackfriars Theatre. The backstabbing drama would have been understood to be a bloody-nosed nod to the corruption of the court of James I. In the 400 years since, it has stretched to fit new audiences' views about the world around them. It's said that when Peggy Ashcroft took the leading role in 1945, the play had a new seriousness; the violence that had seeped into the world during the war, with the performance taking place soon after the release of the first images of German death camps, altered perception of the brutality on stage.

As time moves on, so do our interpretations. Walter remembers her 1989 production as 'looking through a more consciously feminist lens', working to remove the title character from judgement for her actions. 'It's extraordinary that Webster was writing so obviously sympathetically,' she says, imagining how the original production might have been received. 'I don't like to think it was a cautionary tale to women. His male characters are either bonkers or corrupt, so he can't be favouring them. He must be saying: look what you've done to destroy someone who was just a wife and mother. That was her only transgression, that she married outside the rules of her class.'

The compact, smoke-filled playhouse of the Blackfriars

‘Everybody dies – horribly’

– RACHEL BAGSHAW

Theatre where *The Duchess of Malfi* first began was the winter home to Shakespeare’s King’s Men. With its candlelit intimacy, the theatre heavily inspired the design of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, and when the Playhouse opened in 2014, it was Webster’s tragedy that welcomed audiences to the new space. ‘We knew the building was going to be as much the star of the show as the actual show,’ remembers James Garnon, who played the Duchess’s controlling brother, the Cardinal. ‘It was unbelievably special to open the new-old space.’

This idea of the classical and modern sitting next to each other filters through all work at the Wanamaker. The opening production – directed by Dominic Dromgoole and with Gemma Arterton in the title role – was a playground for experimentation. ‘I remember a lot of practical exploration of how to light ourselves,’ Garnon says, ‘to get away from the associations we have of candles feeling magical and sexy.’ Instead, the company learnt how to use the candles to control the darkness that stems from the Jacobean tragedy.

‘Watching the performance is like reading by candlelight,’ wrote critic Stewart Pringle at the time, ‘eyes almost watering as you trace the action.’ The candles brought other logistical surprises. ‘The beeswax candles dripped a lot,’ Garnon laughs, ‘and they stung your eyes because the air got really thick.’ The theatre now uses a mixture of paraffin and beeswax; putting historical drama on its feet allows for playfulness and revelation anew.

With a decade of learning from playing in the Wanamaker to build on, the tragedy now returns to the candlelit stage. ‘The Wanamaker very much has its own personality,’ says Bagshaw, ‘and its own set of rules. Those rules are there to be useful until the point at which they’re not, and they can be broken.’

The Playhouse is perhaps *The Duchess of Malfi*’s natural modern home, but that doesn’t mean the space should be accepted entirely without challenge. ‘The play was made for a space like the Wanamaker,’ Bagshaw says. ‘But what do our contemporary eyes need to challenge about that? For me as a disabled artist, that’s a lot about access in a space that is pretty inaccessible.’ She is interested in the physical space, the geography of the story on stage, and the way we cast each role. ‘What does it mean,’ she asks, ‘for the play to look like how I want the world to look?’

New physical interrogations of a text keep it alive. With a play repeatedly studied and staged like *The Duchess of Malfi*, we can easily be overwhelmed by historical and critical analysis. ‘An awful lot of baggage accrues over time,’ says Garnon. ‘I approach everything as if it’s a new play. The actor’s job is to say the words and mean them in the moment, now, for the first time.’

Bagshaw agrees with this approach. She first learnt about the play because of her mum’s love for it; having not been to see much theatre growing up, her mum saw an RSC production as a teenager and found it transformational. Bagshaw hopes her production might do the same for new audiences. ‘The bones of it still speak to us,’ she says of Webster’s story, ‘but some of the thinking, or the way in which the rules work, don’t.’ Through directing numerous hour-long Shakespeare plays for younger audiences, she has honed the skill of slimming a text down to its ‘absolute kernels’, balancing old and new while making its essence clear to a contemporary audience.

While there are inevitable complexities in a new staging, this is not a story that struggles to get off the page. It is bubbling with blood, with violence and lies, quick wit and severed limbs. TS Elliot famously said that Webster was ‘much possessed by death’, and in this play that preoccupation is very much centre stage. ‘If you’re really immersed in the part,’ says Walter of playing the Duchess, ‘you are rehearsing your own death.’

The play’s brutality is so extreme that its latter scenes of violence can tip into hilarity. ‘The balance between comedy and evil or villainy in Renaissance plays is so different to what we would expect,’ says Garnon, ‘because they are there to be laughed at as well as to be frightening.’ Where the Cardinal carefully plans his cruelties, Ferdinand, the third sibling, is far wilder, falling from incestuous obsession to total contempt of his sister, and finally into terrifying insanity. Bagshaw is interested in grappling with Ferdinand’s madness. ‘How do we watch someone experiencing that?’ she asks. ‘This is a human fear that the play taps into: what makes people behave like this?’

Where the outright violence is frightening, what Bagshaw finds more disturbing are the deeply moral challenges Webster raises. ‘We’re living in a morally complex world today,’ she says, one that echoes much of the wildness of the 17th-century play, ‘and we are perennially fascinated by morally complex characters. Our contemporary life makes that sing for me, but it’s all there in the text.’ Hers will be a production that investigates the systems at play; the rules of the world that enable and allow such brutal behaviour.

This new interpretation will add another life to this ever-extending story. When Walter first performed the role of the Duchess, she wondered when the part would begin to look like her, rather than like an outline of Helen Mirren or Peggy Ashcroft or any of the other performers who had famously taken the part. Over time, the stories we tell alter, and now her name is among the defining performances of this complex, powerful character.

As Bagshaw’s production takes to the stage, the stories will shift again. For a while after performing the show, Walter found watching a new production of a play she knew so deeply to be an uncomfortable experience. ‘You’re an unfair audience,’ she admits. ‘You have committed to a certain reading of the play, and it’s quite hard to be open to new ones.’ Enough time has passed now; the story still runs through her, but she can revel in new interpretations. ‘In fact,’ she says, ‘I very much look forward to the next one.’

The Damnable Life and Death of Stubbe Peeter, a Werewolf (left) inspired Webster’s play. Harriet Walters (below) played the Duchess in 1989 and still carries the character with her. Photos: British Library Board, Donald Cooper/Alamy

Kate Wyver is a theatre critic and features writer, primarily writing for *The Guardian* and *The Stage*. She loves queer stories, experimental fringe theatre and anything involving puppets

The Duchess of Malfi, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, 17 February to 14 April 2024

HOME COMFORTS

Ghosts will be the Globe's first Ibsen. But how do you stage a 19th-century tragedy without frocks or furniture? Joe Hill-Gibbins and Rosanna Vize tell Fergus Morgan about their questing approach to classic texts

Secrets and lies: Hattie Morahan and Stuart Thompson in rehearsal for *Ghosts*. Photo: Marc Brenner

‘I’M NOT PROVOCATIVE – THOSE EARLY-MODERN PLAYS ARE TOTALLY OUT THERE’

– JOE HILL-GIBBINS

It is wise to expect the unexpected with Joe Hill-Gibbins shows. Over the past two decades, the 45-year-old director has earned an international reputation for cutting to the quick of classic plays in stripped-back, sometimes shocking productions that pay scant regard to traditional staging.

There was his 2015 staging of *Measure For Measure* at the Young Vic, which transplanted Duke Vincentio from Vienna into a sea of inflatable sex dolls. And his 2017 staging of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, also at the Young Vic, which reimagined the fairy-filled woodlands outside Athens as a field of knee-deep mud resembling the messy last day of a music festival. And his 2018 staging of *Richard II* with Simon Russell Beale at the Almeida Theatre, which played out on fast-forward inside a featureless box.

Joe Hill-Gibbins (right) extracts the metaphors buried in classical plays, such as *Edward II* (below left) and *Richard II* (far right). Photos: Marc Brenner, Johan Persson

‘Joe Hill-Gibbins is the horny mad scientist of the theatre world,’ wrote *Time Out* theatre critic Andrzej Lukowski in his review of *Measure for Measure*. ‘He takes classic plays, smashes them to smithereens, smears them in smut, then rebuilds them in fantastical, hysterical forms.’

A mad scientist maybe, but Hill-Gibbins’ approach to directing plays is far from iconoclastic. On the contrary, his bold stagings are born of something he discovers within the works themselves. And he sees his job as to excavate and expose that something as powerfully as possible.

That is the approach the Surrey-born director has honed since graduating from the University of Manchester in 1999 and winning the 2002 JMK Award for young directors, through spells working at the Royal Court Theatre under Ian Rickson and at the Young Vic under David Lan, as well as a staging of Marlowe’s *Edward II* at the National Theatre that the *Financial Times* called ‘a wild ride – it’s young, it’s vivid and it’s raw.’ And that is what he will be doing with his next production: his own adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts* in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

‘I’m not provocative,’ says Hill-Gibbins. ‘I think it is the plays that are provocative. If that production of *Measure for Measure* was provocative, it is because *Measure For Measure* is a provocative play. I find those early modern plays pretty wild, as well as nuanced and complex. They are totally out there. All I do with my productions is try to reflect what I see in the plays themselves.’

When it comes to directing a play, then, Hill-Gibbins begins by attempting to understand exactly what is going on inside it. And that, he explains, is actually an extremely collaborative process. ‘It all comes out of conversation,’ he says.

‘I work closely with a designer, an assistant director, an associate director and a whole bunch of people. We sit down and read the play together and talk about it. We really try to understand what the play is. That is the first question. It is not: “How can I stage this play?” It is: “What is this play? Who are its characters? What is its form?”’

With *Richard II*, for example, Hill-Gibbins seized on Richard’s last-act soliloquy, delivered when he is imprisoned alone, awaiting execution. In it, Richard populates his cell with his febrile thoughts:

I have been studying how
I may compare
This prison where I live unto
the world,
And for because the world
is populous
And here is not a creature
but myself,
I cannot do it. Yet I’ll hammer
it out.

One of the longest soliloquies in all of Shakespeare, it provided Hill-Gibbins with the key to the entire play. It was so significant that he lifted it from Act Five and pasted it at the top of the play. 'You can understand the play as a formal journey into Richard's mind,' Hill-Gibbins explains. 'As the play progresses, as Richard's power is stripped from him, we see deeper and deeper into his mind, until it is just him, alone in a cell with his thoughts. We had the theatrical idea of all the other characters of the play springing from his memory and his imagination there. That was our plan to release the power of the metaphor at the heart of the play. That is what I am always trying to do.'

If Hill-Gibbins' *Richard II* was a reflection of the inner workings of its protagonist's mind, and his muddy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a theatrical expression of the mess and misogyny that lurk inside Shakespeare's comedy, what does he plan to do with *Ghosts*? How will he 'release the power of the metaphor' at the heart of Ibsen's 19th-century drama?

Ghosts centres on Helen Alving, the widow of an adulterous man; her son Oswald, who suffers from inherited syphilis; and her maid Regina, who Oswald ardently loves, but who is actually revealed to be an illegitimate daughter of Helen's late husband, and hence Oswald's half-sister.

'The play explores when family relationships are complicated with sexuality, when the domestic setting overlaps with something sexual,' Hill-Gibbins says. 'It asks some really interesting questions about parent-child relationships: what do we inherit from our parents? To what extent are we able to carve our own destinies? To what extent are we bound by our genetics and our upbringing?

'Ibsen's plays, rightly or wrongly, are often referred to as "frocks and furniture" plays,' he continues. 'We want to do *Ghosts* without the frocks or the furniture. We want to put the focus on Ibsen's ideas and look at the play without the baggage that comes with it. We want to strip away as much of that as we can. We want to stage things simply, so we can get at the heart of the play.'

Ghosts will be Hill-Gibbins' directorial debut at Shakespeare's Globe. He is used to working in more flexible theatres with more flexible auditoria – before *Ghosts*, he premiered a production of Arthur Miller's *A View From The Bridge* in Japan with the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre – but he is confident that he can still express himself in the stricter, candlelit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

'True, it is not like working at the Royal Court Theatre or wherever you can remodel the auditorium however you like, but it offers something else,' Hill-Gibbins says. 'The formal qualities of the space are so clear and strong. It is so intimate and intense and concentrated. I think it is perfect for *Ghosts*, which is a very rich, concentrated chamber piece. I think it works really well.'

The designer Hill-Gibbins is collaborating with on *Ghosts*, Rosanna Vize, also has a reputation for taking radical theatrical risks in the pursuit of pinning down a play's core power. Born in 1989, Vize grew up in Buckinghamshire and studied at Royal Holloway University and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, graduating in 2013. She was a finalist in that year's Linbury Prize for emerging stage designers.

Like many designers, Vize usually has several projects on the go – before *Ghosts*, she worked on an opera adaptation of *The Turn Of The Screw* in Copenhagen and a one-man version of *Uncle Vanya* with Andrew Scott in the West End – but her approach does share similarities with that of Hill-Gibbins. She designed Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* for the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff in 2021, and perhaps her best-known design was for Phoebe Eclair-Powell's one-woman play *Harm* at the Bush Theatre (also 2019): dominated by a giant stuffed bunny rabbit.

'My work never starts from a place of provocation,' she says. 'It starts with working out what is really amazing about a play, and going from there. With Ibsen, you can get sidetracked by the frocks and furniture and Victorian language. When you stop and actually look at what the story is, though, you realise how modern and disturbing it is. *Ghosts* is this big, psychosexual cesspit. It is about syphilis and incest and absurd impulses. Joe and I became interested in digging into that.'

Neither Vize nor Hill-Gibbins is giving away much about what audiences will actually see on stage – although Vize does intriguingly suggest that it will involve mirrors and carpets – but both are energised by the prospect of working with each other in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. This is the second time they have collaborated – an English National Opera production of *King Priam* they both worked on was slated for last year, but sadly shelved – and likely not the last.

'Already, in our development process, I could hear the play in a way that I have never heard it before,' Vize says. 'You get some amazing actors, you give them this text, you give them the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, you give them Joe Hill-Gibbins, and something extraordinary happens.'

Rosanna Vize (left) is known for her radical designs, such as her work on *Harm* at the Bush Theatre, 2021 (below left), in which a giant stuffed bunny rabbit dominated the stage. Photos: Mark Douet, Isha Shah

'WHEN YOU LOOK AT *GHOSTS*, YOU REALISE HOW MODERN IT IS'

– ROSANNA VIZE

Fergus Morgan is a freelance arts journalist, based in Edinburgh. He is *The Stage*'s Scotland correspondent, and contributes to the *Financial Times*, *Independent*, *Evening Standard* and publishes the theatre newsletter *The Crush Bar* on Substack

Ghosts, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, until 28 January 2024

‘I GUESS I AM AN ANARCHIST’

Ola Ince’s new production of *Othello* is set within the Metropolitan Police force. She tells Anya Ryan why it makes an all too credible world for Shakespeare’s tragedy

Ola Ince’s (above) 2021 production of *Is God Is* (left) at the Royal Court Theatre focused on power, race and injustice. Photos: Marc Brenner, Tristram Kenton

‘It is one of my favourite Shakespeare plays,’ says Ola Ince of *Othello*. Luckily for her, she’s getting the chance to direct it in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse this winter. ‘The space is so intense and intimate, it is the perfect fit for this play.’

Ince describes *Othello* as a ‘psychological thriller,’ in which the hero is targeted by Iago’s corrosive envy. ‘The thing I’m really interested in is Othello’s deterioration,’ she says, ‘I have to make sure that it is relatable to everyone. I’m constantly asking, who could be Othello? How many of us have the potential to become like him?’

When we speak, Ince hasn’t yet set foot in the rehearsal room. ‘We’re getting close to knowing what the play is going to look like,’ she says, ‘but who knows, it is all up for grabs’. What Ince does know is that she’s chosen to set *Othello* within the Metropolitan Police force. ‘I was trying to think of a space and a world that could successfully house misogyny and racism,’ she says. ‘And I think we all know now that the Met is definitely rife with that, don’t we?’

‘I WAS THINKING OF A WORLD THAT COULD HOUSE MISOGYNY AND RACISM, AND THE MET IS DEFINITELY RIFE WITH THAT’

— OLA INCE

She mentions the many casualties involving the Metropolitan Police in recent times: ‘It is terrible. We’ve heard the news reports about how unsafe it is to be a woman close to the Met. That’s a sweeping statement, but I think it is a believable setting for this play.’

Ince’s production follows Clint Dyer’s at the National Theatre last year. Dyer was the first Black director at the National to take on the play that has race and racism built into its centre. ‘I don’t feel like I’m inheriting anything,’ says Ince, ‘But *Othello* is a very contentious play. The more you study it, the more you battle with whether it is a racist or anti-racist play… my job is to make sure it lands on the side of anti-racism.’

Due to her own experience of living as a Black woman in Britain and having direct experience of racism, Ince believes she is ‘well suited’ to direct *Othello*. ‘Shakespeare probably didn’t have that same experience – I have a closer proximity to racism, but other than that I don’t think my race has anything to do with it,’ she says. ‘But I want my production to be accurate and honest and show what it is like to have felt racism in actuality’.

‘Of course the play can be directed by anyone, whatever their race, but they have to be responsible,’ she continues. ‘I think it can be quite a traumatic experience for the actor playing Othello if the director doesn’t have a proper understanding of racism or denies that the play is about racism.’

Ince’s production of *Othello* follows her *Romeo and Juliet*, which she directed in the Globe’s main space in 2021, reshaping the romance of the play to focus on ‘a society struggling with mental health’. It was another contentious choice, but fresh and involving. ‘Some people thought it was wild and really didn’t like that I’d broken the rules of a classic – in that way, I guess I am an anarchist.’ But while she is approaching her production in the same vein of wanting to challenge people, she sees it as ‘a standalone piece’.

Her *Othello* will be quite different to ones we may have seen in the past, she promises. ‘I’ve done a lot of editing of the script,’ she says. ‘In its current form, I think the play should be called *Iago*, not *Othello* – Iago is the lead protagonist. I’m working on a production where he isn’t.’

It is clear that Ince – whose recent productions range from new plays at the Royal Court and Donmar Warehouse to the musical *Once On This Island* at London’s Open Air Theatre – has a desire to push boundaries with her work and create theatre as ‘a form of protest’. And she sees the Globe – ‘a truly magical place’ – as the perfect venue to do so. ‘It has really affordable ticket prices and it is a freeing place to play in,’ she says. ‘As a director, you get to really have a relationship with the audience, which is great. People come from all across the world to experience the theatre; that’s really exciting.’

Shakespeare, she believes, is still a voice of our times. ‘Shakespeare can be for everyone and productions of his work can be really important for today,’ she says. ‘His work is interrogating now. When Shakespeare set his plays in Italy, it was a subtle way of saying: I’m kind of talking about you guys, but I’m not, so you can’t get too offended – and it is still like that. The great thing about Shakespeare is that you can draw useful parallels between what’s in his plays and now.’

In fact, she goes as far as wishing that Shakespeare ‘wasn’t as relevant’ for today’s audiences. ‘A play like *Othello* is unfortunately so relevant. I’m drawn to plays with problems in them because I want to fix them.’

So who does she hope will see it? ‘Everyone, of course,’ she jokes, ‘but especially the Met. And young people, because I think they are the change-makers. They already know the things we’re talking about in the play exist, but I hope seeing it can spur them into action and make them go: “Actually, this is not OK and we really need to do more.”’

Anya Ryan is a culture writer and journalist

Othello, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, 19 January to 13 April 2024

Ince directed Romeo and Juliet (below) at the Globe in 2021. Her *Othello* follows stagings including the 2018 production with Sheila Atim and Andre Holland (left). Photos: Marc Brenner, Simon Annand

A DECADE IN THE JEWEL BOX

As the Globe's treasured indoor theatre celebrates its 10th birthday, Will Tosh selects 10 memorable moments from the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse's first decade

What follows is most definitely not a Sam Wanamaker Playhouse Top 10. But as the 10th anniversary of the indoor theatre approaches, it seems right to reflect on a decade of performances, experiments, workshops and events in the UK's only candlelit archetypal Jacobean playhouse. It's been a privilege to watch this theatre evolve, a joyful near-impossibility to choose just 10 photos to represent its first 10 years, and it will be a pleasure to witness the Playhouse grow into its second decade.

Gemma Arterton as the Duchess (also previous page) with David Dawson. Photos: Mark Douet

1

Dominic Dromgoole's *The Duchess of Malfi* was in technical rehearsals as the final shreds of gold leaf were being added to the Playhouse's *frons scenae* (scenic facade) in January 2014. No theatre was ever better served by its premiere production: all the shadowy, glinting horror of John Webster's tragedy found unsettling expression in the freshly painted jewel box of a Jacobean interior.

2

The Playhouse's ability to surprise is just as characteristic as its candlelit beauty. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (2014 and 2015) by Francis Beaumont, directed by Adele Thomas, not only rescued this astonishing metatheatrical comedy from years of misunderstanding, but also demonstrated how perfect the indoor space is for uninhibited shared laughter.

David Tarkenter and Matthew Needham. Photo: Marc Brenner

3

From the start, the Playhouse has been a venue for new and classical music in a breathtakingly theatrical setting. *Vivaldi's The Four Seasons: A Reimagining* (2018) combined Max Richter's 'recomposition' of Vivaldi's concertos (in a new arrangement by the Globe's Bill Barclay) with the astonishing puppetry of Gyre & Gimble.

'The Playhouse's ability to surprise is as characteristic as its candlelit beauty'

4

Tom Stuart's *After Edward* (2019), directed by Brendan O'Hea, gets my pride of place among the new work written for the Playhouse. Stuart's story of queer self-discovery, spinning out of Marlowe's *Edward II* and featuring a galaxy of gay icons, was a tale of distant history, the recent past, and the brave, questioning, big-hearted present.

Richard Cant and Tom Stuart. Photos: Marc Brenner, Steve Tanner

Michelle Terry and Paul Ready as the Macbeths. Photo: Johan Persson

5

It seems appropriate for a space initially devoted to the non-Shakespearean canon to bring in our house playwright halfway through this list. Rob Hastie's *Macbeth* (2018), featuring artistic director Michelle Terry and her husband Paul Ready, brought this political supernatural chiller to its natural home. In pitch darkness, the witches' incantations – emanating seemingly from everywhere at once – made our 'firm nerves... tremble' and cheeks blanche with fear.

Ayesha Dharker, Adjoa Andoh and Leila Farzad. Photo: Ingrid Pollard

6

Richard II (2019), directed by Lynette Linton and Adjoa Andoh, marked a necessary change in the way the Globe enabled artists to think about race and identity. Preceded by our inaugural Shakespeare and Race Festival (2018), this was the first all-women of colour staging of a Shakespeare play in a major UK theatre. In a space decked with photographs of the company's global majority ancestors, Linton and Andoh helped us see the imperial legacies of this most 'English' history play.

7

‘It’s been a privilege to watch this theatre evolve’

Lucy Bailey – known for her iconoclastic interventions in the Globe – didn’t disappoint when she and adapter Patrick Barlow brought John Milton’s *Comus: A Masque in Honour of Chastity* (not a title borne out by the accompanying image) to the Playhouse in 2016. The wild re-imagining of a 17th-century court entertainment marked the theatre’s hospitality to creative reinventions of classic texts.

Phil Snowden, Theo Cowan, Andrew Bridgemont, Emma Curtis, Natasha Magigi, Rob Callender and Suzie Chard. Photo: Sheila Burnett

Sam Glen, Melody Brown, Kerry Frampton and Jamal Franklin. Photo: Manuel Harlan

8

Our indoor space finally got the family show it deserved when the anarchic *Midsummer Mechanicals*, a co-production with Splendid directed by Kerry Frampton and Globe director of education Lucy Cuthbertson, landed in 2022 and 2023. This sequel to the ‘rude mechanicals’ strand of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* garnered adoring press, a tour to Shakespeare North Playhouse and an Olivier Award nomination.

9

I could hardly complete this list without including our series of public scholarly workshops Research in Action, which, since 2014, have brought together academics, actors and theatregoers in learning and discovery. This photo captures a moment in 'Beds and Bedroom Scenes in the Indoor Playhouse' (2015), devised by me and Dr Elizabeth Sharrett, with scenes of bed-bound comedy, tragedy and horror directed by James Wallace.

Will Tosh with Beth Park and Oliver Bennett. Photo: Anne-Marie Bickerton

Cameras allowed the Globe to broadcast internationally from the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse during the pandemic. Photo: Claudia Conway

10

During the pandemic our lifeline was the small, enclosed indoor Playhouse. With a technical refit from video production company Karma, the theatre became a recording and broadcast studio for our audiences isolating at home. From filmed monologues to panel discussions; from music recitals to a rehearsed reading of *Macbeth*; the creative talents of all at Shakespeare's Globe were transmitted to the world from our candlelit stage.

Dr Will Tosh is head of research at Shakespeare's Globe, and author of *Playing Indoors: Staging Early Modern Drama in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse*. He reflects on the theatre's history in the public lecture 10 Years by Candlelight in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse on 8 January 2024

OPEN BOOK

Farah Karim-Cooper has published academic monographs, but a general book on Shakespeare is a different matter. She reflects on reviews, controversy and meeting her readers – overleaf, read an exclusive extract from *The Great White Bard*

Publishing *The Great White Bard: Shakespeare, Race and the Future* has been an adventure full of excitement, fear and even disappointment – but overall, it has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

Throughout my career, I have published books, collections of essays and articles for the academic market. My two single-authored books or 'monographs' were published by well-known academic presses. I didn't receive much input content-wise from my editor, whose main role was to commission and ensure its smooth publication; nor did I have much publicity or marketing support. Academic publishing offers no obvious tangible rewards for the author, but it is essential to forging an academic career and developing a reputation in your field, so we keep doing it.

The Great White Bard was a different experience entirely and motivated by different factors. I have spent most of my career at the Globe working as an academic and a curator of events: a public-facing role. In 2018, I curated the first Shakespeare and Race Festival, a series of events putting race into conversation with Shakespeare's works and the performance of his plays today. Three main realisations came from this: first, there were virtually no scholars of colour teaching and researching Shakespeare in the UK; secondly, the public were largely bewildered at what Shakespeare had to do with race; and third, the theatre industry – in particular, classical or Shakespearean theatre – was dominated by white perspectives, leaving actors and creatives of colour feeling marginalised and, at times, voiceless. The idea to write a book about Shakespeare and race for the general reader was rooted in these discoveries.

One of the best parts of publishing such a book is the dedication, time and effort that the publisher and lead editor put into it. Oneworld Publications took good care of this book, cared deeply for its reception and worked hard on publicity and promotion. I was booked into a number of literary festivals, sitting on platforms with other Shakespeare scholars,

Left: Farah Karim-Cooper. Right: Rebekah Murrell in *Romeo and Juliet*. Photos: Helen Murray, Marc Brenner

such as Emma Smith, famous for her books on the First Folio and *This is Shakespeare*. It was so much fun and I got to see parts of the country I had never visited before. I enjoyed the atmosphere – people love books! If anyone ever wondered if books might become obsolete in the digital age, they'd need only to attend a literary festival in Britain to have their minds changed. People would come to have their books signed, and I really enjoyed talking to A-level students, teachers, postgraduates and retired Shakespeare enthusiasts.

Because the book is so public, so are the reviews, and this is where it can get scary. It was clear that conservative news outlets would not look favourably upon a book about Shakespeare and race. I was grateful for a stellar *Guardian* review and being on its summer reading list. I was interviewed by various diversity podcasts and Monocle Radio, but my publishers and I were curious as to why no white mainstream journalists showed any interest in my book.

I did feel, on reflection, it had something to do with my identity (Pakistani *and* American – a double whammy) and a book that asks readers to set aside a Shakespeare falsely constructed in the 18th century as an icon of English supremacy. For me, the great disappointment was that, despite years as a prominent Shakespeare scholar and professor, some people were still unable to accept that my arguments were rooted in knowledge rather than a projection of my identity and the current 'trend' to talk about race.

However, the reception on an individual level – students, actors, teachers and enthusiasts – speaks for itself. I gave a lecture at an RSC summer school about the topic and signed books afterwards. A 90-year-old man who had been attending the school since 1960 said he couldn't wait to read it. This was my favourite reader interaction, reminding me that our minds can be open no matter our identity or age. It's never too late to learn.

America was a different story. Viking Books, an imprint of Penguin, were exceptional in their support and belief, and the reception was overwhelmingly positive. A dream of mine had come true: I had features in major newspapers, was on drivetime radio and received a glowing review in the *New York Times*, plus starred reviews from major trade publications. But I'm left wondering why America seemed more ready, more primed for this conversation than Britain. Our different histories of race and Shakespeare? Perhaps. Curiously, the sense of ownership of Shakespeare in Britain just isn't palpable in America.

Being Pakistani-American, perhaps I am treading on toes here. For what it's worth, I am grateful that my book (a reflection of the work we have been doing at the Globe) has started a conversation in the UK, one that has been a long time coming – and it proved to me that the national press need to get braver about having this conversation.

Farah Karim-Cooper is professor of Shakespeare studies, King's College London and co-director of education at Shakespeare's Globe

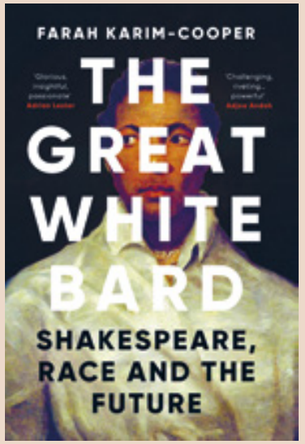
How to love Shakespeare

Farah Karim-Cooper on falling for Shakespeare – an extract from *The Great White Bard*

Can you remember meeting William Shakespeare for the first time?

My first encounter was in my English class as a 15-year-old. We read *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's most popular tragedy about sex, drugs and the whirligig of adolescence. The language was challenging and yet the story took hold of me because, in many ways, it felt Pakistani: a young girl in a patriarchal society is forced to marry someone she doesn't know, though she's desperate to follow her own heart. This is the archetypal South Asian teenage experience.

I did not grow up in a terribly religious or patriarchal household; my grandmother, born in pre-partition India, did, however, and her memories stirred my imagination. She described how her father kept her under lock and key and how scared she was on her wedding day because she was marrying a man she didn't know. But it was my mother's story of courage and rebellion that provided a direct link with Juliet's character. At the age of 22 she married my father, a divorced sea captain with four children. This was, of course, against her father's will, at least at first. But, like Juliet, she knew exactly what she wanted: the love of her life.



I have dedicated my career to the Bard. But if my ninth-grade English teacher hadn't played a VHS cassette of Franco Zeffirelli's 1960s film version, starring Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting (with whom I instantly fell in love), I probably wouldn't be a Shakespeare scholar today. Zeffirelli's film captured the thrill of teenage rebellion, fury and the passion that was entirely absent from the classroom. I would go on to read a Shakespeare play each year of high school, but no other story packed the same emotional punch as that of 'Juliet and her Romeo'.

Contemporary society's knee-jerk reaction when faced with the troublesome and oh-so-white legends of literature and art is to dismiss them. They are dinosaurs – racists, misogynists, classists, ignorant of the 'lived experience' of the majority of people today – therefore they have nothing left to teach us. As for Shakespeare, after centuries of reverence and acclaim, perhaps it's fine to say: time's up.

I feel this would be a mistake. Cancelling Shakespeare would put me out of work – but more importantly, I love him. I am a foreign, brown woman, and I feel seen and heard in Shakespeare's plays. To love Shakespeare means to know him. To love is to get to grips with the qualities in others and crucially in ourselves that need to be challenged. At some point, love demands that we reconcile ourselves with flaws and limitations. Only then can there be a deeper understanding and affinity with another.

I believe there is a far more exciting prospect than cancelling or fossilising the Bard: that is, to read him bravely. Jump inside the plays and dig. If we want to know Shakespeare's plays, and know them intimately, we need to ask: did 'race' exist in his time? Does his work engage with it? Why are Black and ethnic minority performers asked to erase their identities, while whiteness is rendered invisible in modern performance conventions? Shakespeare, on the page and the stage, is a limitless workhorse for such questions and finding ways to answer them is an endlessly thrilling endeavour.

Actors from all backgrounds have been performing Shakespeare for at least 200 years, but in most mainstream venues, white actors are still very much at an advantage, from the parts they get to play to their makeup and lighting. Yet there are more ethical and inclusive ways to cast Shakespeare productions that might release the multiple meanings of these ever-yielding plays. If Shakespeare is your favourite playwright, reading his plays through race will not threaten that. It may make you uncomfortable at times, but in the end, I believe you'll know him better, love him more and all the more enjoy the myriad ways he can be presented by actors of all backgrounds on the 21st-century stage.

This is an edited extract from *The Great White Bard: Shakespeare, Race and the Future*, published by Oneworld

STREET THEATRE

Thousands of school children discover the Globe each year through the Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank series. Alex McFadyen explores this year's show: a 21st-century *Romeo and Juliet*

The 2022 production of *Macbeth* (above) with the Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank programme delighted young audiences (left). Photos: Cesare De Giglio

Feuding gangs, masked teens running drugs, young lives lost to cycles of violence – this isn't a gritty new Netflix drama, but the world young people will encounter when they see *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe next year.

It is, of course, a play that can be taken in many directions. The Globe's new production is aimed at teenagers, and is the latest of the annual Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank series, which has been running since 2007. The most recent productions were *Macbeth* (2022) and *The Tempest* (2023). Abridged 90-minute versions are performed eight times a week, with up to 26,000 free tickets offered to state school pupils aged 11 to 16 in London and Birmingham (where Deutsche Bank has its offices). Schools with a high proportion of students receiving free school meals are prioritised.

Lucy Cuthbertson, director of education at the Globe, is in the early stages of developing the show when we speak in August, fresh from reviving *Midsummer Mechanicals*, nominated for Best Family Show at the Olivier Awards. 'It's probably the hardest directing job you can do,' she says of Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank, 'because [the young people] haven't asked to come. It has to be exciting, and it has to be a world they recognise so that they can better understand the language.'

This is crucial, because the project's educational goal is to prepare schoolchildren for being examined on Shakespeare's texts. The original language remains; however, the play's setting will be updated to a 21st-century city, with the warring Capulet and Montague families portrayed as modern-day gangs. Part of this will involve them having 'status within their communities, maybe because of violence' rather than aristocratic wealth.

Other aspects of the story lend themselves more readily to a modern setting. Friar Lawrence is a familiar figure in communities struggling with the cost of living, Cuthbertson notes, where religious leaders may be 'running the food bank or trying to do good.' What's vital is that the young audiences really engage with Romeo and Juliet as victims of a violent environment.

On stage, the violence will be gripping, she admits, but will be perpetrated by 'faceless' characters. A 'nasty' opening to the play will presage a tragic ending that explores the futility of conflict. 'The focus will very much be on knife crime,' she says. 'There's five young people who die in the play – in the space of 48 hours. I try not to present it as a romantic play. It's often got those taglines: the greatest love story, or they killed themselves for love. I don't think those phrases are helpful for young people.'

'If students go back with renewed interest and less daunted by the language, that's a big win'

– LUCY CUTHBERTSON

Fiston Barek (above) portrayed Macbeth last year. Lucy Cuthbertson (left), director of education at the Globe, directs this year's Playing Shakespeare production. Photos: Cesare De Giglio, Helen Murray

While the relevance of this message is undeniable, the ideal outcome is more prosaic. For GCSE students who 'may not have been enjoying aspects of Shakespeare, to go back with renewed interest and less daunted by the language – if we've moved that even a little bit, that's a big win,' says Cuthbertson. To this end, the performances go hand-in-hand with a professional development course on creative ways of teaching Shakespeare. For the students, workshops at their schools with Globe Educational Practitioners prepare them for their visit and explore the text through acting.

This year, the Globe introduced the Curtain Raiser Competition, inviting schools to devise a five-minute performance responding to *The Tempest*. Two groups were selected to open the show. 'The professional actors were watching them backstage and cheering when they finished,' Cuthbertson adds. Next year, three schools will respond to *Romeo and Juliet*. As well as performing on the Globe stage, students develop and rehearse their piece during five sessions, including two at the Globe, with travel expenses covered.

Seeing their peers interact with the story grabs the audience's attention. Another way to hold it is with humour. 'Sometimes people think the way to do tragedy is consistent tragedy,' Cuthbertson tells me. 'But no one can tolerate that for too long, especially kids. Shakespeare was really good at finding where the audience needs a release. So there will be a lot of humour, I hope.'

Some of this is written into Shakespeare's script, but she muses on other, more contemporary flourishes, too: 'When Romeo gets his drugs off the "apothecary", how are they delivered? Have we got someone on a stolen bike so you can hear the tick, tick, tick?' The actors will project their voices out into the city; Cuthbertson is bringing the city into the Globe.

Alex McFadyen is an arts and culture writer based in London

Teacher CPD sessions for *Romeo and Juliet* run in November and December, in-school workshops for students from January to March 2024 and schools' performances at the Globe from 29 February to 27 March 2024

Titus Andronicus in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Photo: Camilla Greenwell

SOUND AND STORY

Artists at the Globe make musical magic without technical wizardry. Head of music James Maloney describes how artists go big in the Globe and whisper in the Wanamaker

Music and drama make an unwieldy force and require a subtle alchemy. Noël Coward summed it up best when he wrote: 'It's extraordinary how potent cheap music is.'

All audiences know the visceral power of a musical set-piece within a play. Whether its function is to energise, refresh the palate, tell a story or simply give the punters a good time, the power of music and sound, front and centre, through song and dance, is well understood and undeniable.

But perhaps even more potent are the moments in which sound is less in your face. Something as simple as a single, droning note under dialogue has the undimmable capacity to colour the narrative: plainly put, it changes how the audience feels about what's going on, guiding our perception of tension, momentum, motivation and direction, whether wholly conscious or not.

And even more pressing: when does the droning note become silent? And how does it become silent? Suddenly or gradually? The instance that sound ceases to be will invariably form a dramatic moment in itself – intended or not, it's an intervention upon the story. Music and sound are powerful storytelling forces within theatre: they can enhance, diminish, guide and misguide, depending on the execution.

These are issues I grapple with in my work as head of music at Shakespeare's Globe, where I compose for shows and help other composers, directors and musicians realise their musical visions. My days vary wildly, straddling the intensely creative and the intensely technical, the administrative and managerial. When I'm not composing a show, it's a privilege to collaborate with creative teams as they find themselves in conversation

with the idiosyncratic playing conditions to which they submit themselves. I'm often asked by first-time Globe composers: 'What works and what doesn't?'

They tend to recognise that while the Globe in its current form is an acoustic space, music and sound have a paradoxically elevated function, and therefore need to be considered deeply. When there's no lighting design nor facility for elaborate set changes, no videography nor amplification, music and acoustic sound have a more integral role to play in awakening the audience's imagination. It adopts some of the roles of the contemporary theatrical forces unavailable within these spaces, nudging the storytelling in the arenas of mood, location, time and focus – creating worlds within the Globe and its sibling theatre, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

The journey of music and sound, from the point of a play's programming at the Globe to its final realised form, can be long and complicated. A musical invitation greets every creative team: let your musical run free and be as bold as you wish; but there are no microphones, no laptops, no volume controls available. What you have at your disposal are four or five brilliant musicians picked especially for this production; there are also birds, planes and rain, wind, heat and cold – all affecting acoustics in some way. This is the great challenge at the Globe, but it's also an opportunity. Thought through and executed well, the strange parameters can act as an engine for creativity and individualism.

Recently, I had the privilege of composing the score for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Elle While and featuring the Globe's artistic director Michelle Terry as a brilliant and beguiling Puck. Despite having been through the process several times before as a composer, the journey felt completely new, vulnerable and full of possibility, as it always does. There was an explicit notion that the production was to be as organic as possible – 'to come out of the rehearsal room'. In other words, to the extent that it's doable, Elle would rather I held my nerve and offer musical

Harry Nicoll (above), Ed Lyon, Rachel Kelly, Susanna Hurrell and Samuel Boden (above right) in *L'Ormido* in 2014. Elle While's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (bottom left) filled the Globe with colour and sound. Photos: Stephen Cummiskey, Helen Murray

'NO MICROPHONES, NO LAPTOPS, NO VOLUME CONTROLS – JUST BRILLIANT MUSICIANS'

‘THE TINIEST, MOST DELICATE NOISES CARRY AROUND, ALLOWING THE MOST MINUTE DETAIL TO FLOURISH’

James Maloney (right), head of music, helped the team behind *L’Ormindo* (left) make creative use of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse’s limited equipment. Photos: Camilla Greenwell, Stephen Cummiskey

ideas later in the rehearsal period than impose an aesthetic early on, which risks hemming the actors into a specific interpretation of the play. In other words, she understands Noël Coward’s dictum instinctively.

But when ideas did emerge from the room, they presented a challenge that is technical and creative. How do you make contemporary dance music with acoustic instruments only? And which instruments should they be? Can instruments that are loud enough to do this also be quiet enough to underscore swathes of important exposition? How do you make the sound of a mosquito? How can you make the sound of magic?

Blessed with stunning musicians who are willing to get their hands dirty, a collaboration begins and doesn’t stop over the course of a run. You find that rubbing rubber balls over sheets of steel creates an ethereal drone that bounces around wooden walls; large drums played quietly with soft sticks and tuba played with inimitable technique on the offbeats can sound like a club night is happening in the room behind the stage; hang a large metal spring and stroke it with a metal comb, and you have a sort of magic; take the mouthpiece of a saxophone and play it and you have a mosquito; have five players express themselves in a musical set-piece with good will, abandon and generosity, and you can create an almighty festival.

The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, celebrating its 10th anniversary, presents a related, if slightly different, opportunity to those making music. With its intimacy, its proximity to even the furthest audience member and its ceiling, sound behaves differently – if no less importantly. While the function of music is the same across the two theatres, the execution is often inverted: where the Globe likes ‘big’, the Playhouse rewards the smaller. To generalise, composers find themselves swapping bold colours for subtle detail; brass for strings; forcefulness for gentleness; shouts for whispers.

The great gift for composers in the Playhouse is its stunning acoustic: an idiosyncratic dry warmth, which makes it the envy of concert halls around Europe. The tiniest, most delicate noises carry around the space, allowing the most minute detail to flourish. And bigger waves of sound will envelope an audience in an all-consuming, immersive wash of resonance.

As such, it’s no surprise that the theatre has been the home of incredible concerts in its first 10 years. Artists from across the musical spectrum have found a home to express their work: from Shabaka Hutchings and Joanna MacGregor to Anoushka Shankar and Johnny Flynn, some of the greatest musical talents have transfixed us with their sound. And that’s not to speak of the creative, innovative and moving scores that have been made for the theatre’s many plays: scores that have enchanted, provoked, moved and lovingly held their audiences.

It never ceases to amaze that each production and creative team finds its own unique solutions to challenges that the space presents. So when I’m asked that question by new composers – ‘what works and what doesn’t?’ – I’ve learned that it’s best not to answer. Music is a strange and intangible thing. To pretend to know its rules would be to limit its possibilities, and its possibilities within theatre are infinite.

James Maloney is head of music at Shakespeare’s Globe.
This is an edited version of a feature that originally appeared in *The Stage* – the UK’s leading specialist theatre publication. Read many more articles about theatre and the performing arts at thestage.co.uk

What's on

Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

Ghosts
Until 28 January

Ghost Stories by Candlelight
23 November – 25 November

I, Malvolio
30 November – 9 December

Othello
19 January – 13 April

The Duchess of Malfi
17 February – 14 April

Sam Wanamaker Playhouse 10th anniversary research events

Shakespeare and Social Justice: Discussion Forum

7 December

Ten Years By Candlelight: Symposium*
8 January

Ten Years By Candlelight: Lecture*
8 January

Anti-Racist Shakespeare: Othello
22 February

Othello: Study Day*
9 March

Globe Theatre

Hansel and Gretel
8 December – 7 January

Events for the whole family

Playing Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet
Public performances
19 March – 13 April

*Members receive a 20% discount on selected education and family events.

Please check the Globe website for further details about all productions and events. Details are correct at the time of printing but may be subject to change.

Photos: Pete Le May

Members' events

Heaven to Hell

Our exclusive Member-only Heaven to Hell experience offers you the chance to tour backstage at Shakespeare's Globe. Beginning in the attics and ending through the trapdoors, this experience explores how our shows are staged by revealing the secrets that lie above and below our iconic wooden 'O', including views of our costume and props archive. Join us for a view of the Globe you won't see anywhere else.

Saturday 17 February – 3.00pm
Sunday 3 March – 11am
Thursday 14 March – 10.30am

Patrons' Performance: Othello and The Duchess of Malfi

We invite you to join us to celebrate 10 years of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse with two special Patron pre-show receptions for *Othello* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Meet fellow Patrons and Globe Directorate who will share insights on bringing the show to life in our intimate candlelit theatre.

Othello
6 February
Pre-show reception from 6.30pm

The Duchess of Malfi
27 March
Pre-show reception from 6.30pm

Tickets are available at £65 and include a top-category ticket, pre-show reception and a signed programme. If you would like to attend, please email us at friends@shakespearesglobe.com or call the Membership Office on 020 7902 5970.

Drama Club: Othello

Bringing Members together from around the world, Members' Drama Club has been a way to explore the magic of the Globe and our favourite Shakespeare plays. This season, Drama Club will be delving into the themes and characters of *Othello*.

Stepping into the shoes of some of Shakespeare's iconic characters, participants will consider historical context, contemporary interpretations and past Globe renditions of the plays as they read, discuss and even have a chance to perform together.

Saturday 27 January – 11am

Further Member events to be announced throughout the year. To keep up to date with our current Members' events, please visit the digital Members' Room.

My Shakespeare

The writer and performer Tim Crouch is making his Globe debut – what makes these theatres special for him?

What are you doing at the Globe?
I'm performing my solo: *I, Malvolio*. The show opened in 2010 and it's been around the world with me since, from Moscow to Mumbai to Beijing to New York – and a school hall in Brighton, where it began its journey. The play is me versus an audience. Or order versus chaos. Or an angry teacher versus a wayward class. Or a Puritan versus a tide of dissolution. Or it's Malvolio versus Toby Belch. It's furious and funny, and Malvolio gets his revenge in the end.

Why is the Globe a special place for you?
There's nowhere else I know where the actor-audience relationship is so direct and transformational. The Globe spaces repudiate fakery. They're lie detectors. Anything you add needs to have a very good reason for being there, because the spaces can manage just fine without.

What first brought you to the Globe?
The historical aspect of the Globe's building is less interesting to me than its offer to now. We don't live in the past. Anyone with an interest in community and storytelling needs to see the Globe at work. It stands as a corrective to the digital onslaught that seems to be overwhelming so much of our lives.

What has been your favourite production and why?
I don't do favourites. I've had many moments of entrancement here. A fair few have involved Mark Rylance and Michelle Terry – both seem to have a supernatural relationship with the audience and

Photo: Greg Goodale

the space. They embody more than the part, but a whole philosophy.

What does Shakespeare mean to you?
Continuum. Connection. Culture. The promise of radicalism, humanism, a brighter future. I feel that as long as we have Shakespeare, there's hope.

What has been your favourite moment at the Globe?
I remember my first visit to the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. The space so overwhelmed me that I have no memory of the play I saw. The space was the play!

What makes you smile at the Globe?
The people in the Yard. Such a brilliantly visible and vocal audience prepared for whatever the play or the weather throws at them. They're expeditioners: diverse, eccentric, alert. Sturdy-standers with open hearts. I love them!

What's your favourite Shakespeare character and why?
This year, I worked on a production of *As You Like It* at the Royal Shakespeare Company and was totally smitten by Rosalind. The sheer chutzpah of disguising herself as a man and then asking the man she loves to woo her as the woman she really is. And all this compounded by the fact that the actor playing Rosalind would have been a boy. It's audacious. It's mind-expanding!

Is there anything you'd still like to do at the Globe that you haven't yet achieved?
I stopped acting in other people's plays many years ago. But if anyone would like to offer me Iago or Angelo or...

Who would be your dream guest to a show at the Globe?
Sam Wanamaker, of course. He would burst with pride.

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