Such Stuff podcast
Episode 3: The Ensemble Experiment

[Music plays]

Imogen Greenberg: Hello and welcome to another episode of Such Stuff, the podcast from Shakespeare's Globe. This week, we'll be talking about the Globe Ensemble. All the way back in January, a group of actors and creatives got together to begin the Ensemble experiment. After eight glorious months, the Globe Ensemble has finished its run on the Globe stage. We'll be taking a look back at this remarkable theatrical experiment, going behind the scenes with the actors and creatives.

So what is the Globe Ensemble? Well, we know that Shakespeare wrote for a bespoke company of players for a specific theatre. The writing was hot off the press and the group shared all the work of a modern theatre ensemble between them. There was no director, no designer and no big concept behind the show, just a group of actors and a script. With that in mind, we put together our own Globe Ensemble to respond to the plays in just the same way, as if for the first time.

This season, the Ensemble performed *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. Here's Michelle [Terry] on why the Globe Ensemble was part of her first season.

Michelle Terry: I'm really keen to look at the model that was given to us 400 years ago, and our cause is a radical, theatrical...is part of being a radical, theatrical experiment. And we are still not as radical as they were and we know that these plays were created for people that knew each other and that feels a really important ingredient in how these work, the plays were constructed but also that relationship between the players and then consequently with the audience is a really authentic relationship which you can't fake with people that you've only just

met for six weeks. So it feels really important that we are creating a rep company, an ensemble of artists to produce the work in the way that it was originally made.

IG: So we cast aside all of our contemporary assumptions, about how we make theatre and how we tackle Shakespeare's plays. And whilst we did that, we decided to cast aside our casting conventions. We think we know who should play Hamlet and who should play Rosalind. But what if we looked at these parts just like these plays: as if for the first time. All of our actors were an equal company of players, and we decided to see what would happen if we worked from the assumption that any person can play any character. Here's Michelle.

MT: If I was doing original practise, I wouldn't even be here, I wouldn't even be allowed to be on stage. And yet, if our cause is Shakespeare's transformative impact on the world, I know he had a transformative impact on my life and I also know that the characters are gendered but the performers weren't. So he didn't worry about it, so why do we need to worry about it?

And the world is changing and the conversations that he asks us to have, the questions that he was raising then are the same questions that we are asking now on a much broader scale and a much more inclusive scale. And no-one has the monopoly on the human condition, and through the canon it feels like the perfect opportunity to explore that human condition.

IG: We'll be reflecting on our experience of this and asking are we any closer to being able to judge people on the basis of their character? Or will we always reduce people to their gender, race, class or the shape of their bodies? Stick with us to go behind the scenes on the Globe Ensemble, as we talk gender swapping, radical theatre experiments and our wonderful Globe audience, including the bedlam that ensues when they're under a full moon.

[Music plays]

IG: First up Federay Holmes, one of the two brilliant directors in the Globe Ensemble. Now I know I said there was no director in Shakespeare's time and we seem to have ended up with two! But as Fed will tell you, she and Elle White were there to pull back the layers of directorial convention. She sat down with Dr Will Tosh (Research Fellow and Lecturer with our Research Department) to talk about the inspiration behind the Ensemble and why we decided to work in this very different way.

Federay Holmes: We are experimenting with how autonomous, how independent, how self-directing the actor can be. So in the 21st century, actors are generally quite passive recipients of directorial ideas and they are conduits and vessels for the theatre director's interpretation. And we're going back to sort of a pre-directorial period, where the actor actually has a lot more agency and responsibility. So to follow that through, all of the actors in theory are equal; they are of equal importance in the company. So if you have a very big part in one play, you have a small part in the other play. So we don't have a lead actor, we don't have a triangle among the actors.

The director is not responsible for the interpretation. First day of rehearsals, there's been no preparatory work done by the composer, the designer, the choreographer, the fight person; that is all going to come out of rehearsals. So that's all going to be shaped around the actors and their input. So it's going to be very much a production that comes from that bunch of people. We are looking at a play that was written before the director or the designer were conceived, so we are looking at how that works and how that affects our playing of the play. And we're looking (I guess in rehearsals) to find an analogous kind of skill set in the contemporary actor that can deal with that much responsibility. Because we're not Elizabethan actors and we are trained for a completely different working landscape. So in a lot

of ways, I see my role as undoing a lot of that work! So the way we rehearsed the plays was we rehearsed the text really, really thoroughly, but the blocking, how the text might work out, how the relationships might work out, how the character's arc might work out will change from night to night. So the dramaturgy (in a way) is sort of improvised, but the text should be rock, rock solid. And that is a lot of responsibility for a modern day actor whose training hasn't really prepared them for that.

[Audio from rehearsal room]

Jack Laskey: Again.
Ensemble: "The other knowing no burden of heavy, tedious penury".
JL: "The other knowing no burden...no burden of heavy, tedious penury".
Ensemble: "These Time ambles withal".
JL: "These Time ambles withal", thank you. "These, Time ambles withal".

Will Tosh: The approach that Fed and Elle and Michelle have taken has been sort of inspired by or through a desire to honour or to kind of be informed by historic practice. And it's not the mode that the Globe in the past has explored, which goes by the term the name of Original Practices, which is a very kind of material focused desire to recapture historic playing conditions. And that's focused on clothing, on music, on comportment, on the use of the stage. Instead, what the Ensemble have been keen to explore is what's coming to be called Original Process, which is taking inspiration from the ways in which early modern companies might have managed their own business of playing and business of performance. And that is (from our point of view and modern theatre) quite unheirachised. You know, early modern England is not an non-hierarchical place, but given that the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the King's Men operated in quite a shared experience way. So the eight, ten, twelve depending on

when we're talking about, the sort of like working share-holders of the company ran themselves. And there isn't really the position of director and it may be the case that the writer had more of a kind of artistic involvement, but we don't really know.

All we know is they turned out a huge number of new plays on a regular basis and got them together and on their feet and clearly did them well. And I think that's the sense and the spirit in which Michelle and Fed and Elle have been working, which is taking a kind of shared level of expertise and seeing what comes out when that shared expertise is kind of given free rein.

FH: This is a really important distinction I think. This is not about reconstruction; this is a lot about inspiration because it feeds us basically! As 21st century theatre makers, to turn upside down and put away a lot of our assumptions about how theatre is made and put together and what the actor's role is in the Ensemble and what the director's role might be. And all of these assumptions, all of these scripts that we know very well, to have them kind of challenged by questioning what they might have been like in completely different historical context. So Farah [Karim-Cooper] and Will and the resources of the Research Department were useful in that way for pulling out what we know and what little we know about that original landscape.

WT: As you say, they're not reconstructing past practise, but it's taking a prompt, an imaginative prompt...

FH: Yes.

WT: From something that is kind of already there inscribed in the play. So a lot of the work you guys have done with casting across gender, it's because we find in these plays that gender and character are being constructed, whether that character is male or female. And the character and the role is then

constructed by performance and by dress and by behaviour and by how other people respond to that character.

FH: Yes, exactly, exactly. In a way (it's a bit of a blunt analysis), but I describe it as whereas in late 16th century the default actor was male, now our default actor is a person. I wasn't sure how that would go (to be honest), until we got them up and in front of an audience. And so in theory, I assumed that we would successfully project what we needed on to the actor. According to the manual, that's how it should work. But I was nervous especially with *As You Like It*, that our contemporary audience wouldn't be able to do that or wouldn't roll with that. But they did straight away, that was never a problem. So that's been a huge revelation. They are the same as any audience: they will do the work if they're invited to do that work, constructing whatever they need that person to be. Or resist it if that's what they're like as well, because there has been some resistance. Some people just don't want Ophelia to be a man. I have a whole thing about how theatre has absorbed too much literal, literalism, too much habit from film and television and recorded media that we sort of don't trust our ability any more to see...as theatre makers, we don't trust the audience's ability to see whatever they need to see. Because you wouldn't cast this way in television, but it works, of course it works in theatre. Anyone can play any character, I think the only line for me now is is it fair to make that actor play that character (if it's just not what they are ready for)?

So we pushed it to the limit...maybe we will look back and go, "Well actually, we were quite conservative!" But I think having a young woman play Orlando and a tall man play Rosalind, and Orlando is also the height of Rosalind. And they are playing each others' genders and we get away with it, it's about as to the limit as we could go. It's very exciting, it's very exciting standing in the audience and seeing that moment of recalibration that happens when Jack Laskey [Rosalind] walks in and he's wearing a dress. And there's a ripple of, "What on earth...oh, okay!" Just

acceptance, just a recognition and then, "Okay". And I've heard it when Ophelia is referred to as "Sister", there's just that moment of, "Oh, okay". There's sometimes a little laugh, but I have never interpreted that laugh as judgemental or derogatory, it's almost a laugh of, "Oh, is this the game we're playing? Alright!" And that is incredibly exciting and like I was saying earlier about being pulled too far down the very literal casting attitudes that we've inherited from film and television, I feel this project has demonstrated how little I need to be constrained by an actor's external appearance or anything. The only limitation or guide now is an actor's experience, I think for me. One of the things that I get a bit worked up about is that in a lot of theatre companies' effort to cast evenly gender wise (especially with Shakespearean texts or early modern texts), they end up giving the women the kind of gender neutral roles. The ones where they can kind of get away with it, because it doesn't matter if Feste is a woman or Touchstone or the clowns, the women get the clowns. The imbalance in our industry I think is that men have had a whole lot more experience than women, so you get a lot more very experienced men. So to then hand to habitual and go, "Oh, we'll solve the gender balance thing by making the clowns women", you're handing the hardest characters to the least experienced actors. And then, "Oh dear, it doesn't work", and "Oh dear, women aren't funny". It's just so desperately unfair.

So it's very exciting to be starting to balance that up. I'm sort of not that interested in the point where casting in this way becomes a narrative pressure, becomes an interpretive decision. "Wouldn't it be interesting if..." As soon as we're playing, "Wouldn't it be interesting if a woman played this? Or a deaf actor played that?" rather than what we had in the Ensemble was, for instance, we employed Nadia [Nadarajah] and it was definitely a question, "I wonder what will happen if..." You know, we didn't know quite how Celia would turn out if Celia was signing. But we did know that Nadia was a really charismatic,

exciting, dynamic, super-confident person and a really interesting balance with Jack, who is very legato, very laidback and very gentle. And to put those together as a Celia and Rosalind, that was a really exciting thing. How it would work out and affect the play and change the play that Celia is signing, we didn't know. And that wasn't, "We're saying this about Celia". We then allowed that to change the play and we discovered what that did to the play through the rehearsals. I'm hoping that the legacy is that there's more of, "Let's see what happens if..."

WT: What was lovely from an audience point of view was to see women actors cast in roles for their own skill and what they could bring to it. But also (as you say), not cast in the sort of gender neutral roles, but also not cast in the sexless ones.

FH: Yes.

WT: So it's not worrying that this is a female actor in a male role who has a love scene with a man...or who has a love scene with a woman, rather. That is by the by. It's not, "Give them the old politicians who aren't doing anything but talk", or, "Give them the servants who walk on and don't have their own emotional lives". Give an actor a part that they can play.

FH: Absolutely, that would have been cowardly and that would have been kind of avoiding the point and yes, there was never any question...because you're either going to ask the question, "What will this do?" or not ask it, really. I think we've ended up in a much more interesting place and it's just much more fun for the actors. And women are sick and tired of being put in those neutral roles, and having to be grateful for the opportunity. And I just am not interested in that. I think we can move beyond that now.

[Music plays]

IG: So, did Fed's theory stand up in performance? And what was it like for the actors? Shubham Saraf played Ophelia in *Hamlet* and Oliver in *As You Like* It. First of all, we asked Shubs to talk us through what it was like being in the rehearsal room from the actor's perspective, working in this very different way.
Shubham Saraf: It was so amazing to work on Shakespeare, this thing that you know is built up as this inaccessible mountain, gated verse. What does it mean? And then we were playing these sort of games that just really made it English and made it speaking. The bedrock of the games we played, I think we called it feeding in. And we'd all stand in a circle and the person playing the part would stand in the middle (or whoever's in the scene) without the script. And then someone in the circle would hold the script and feed you the lines, line by line by line, and you would kind of repeat and interact and they'd be part of the scene until it dropped in.

[Audio from rehearsal room]

SS: "There were none principal".
JL: Thank you. "There were none principal".
SS: "They were all like one another".
JL: "They were all like one another".
Ensemble: "As half-pence are".
JL: Thank you. "As half-pence are"

SS: Also, for the feeder to have the agency and power. Whereas usually it's like, "My part, my bit". It's completely shared. So say the line is, "To be or not to be". Michelle would be standing there and someone would feed, "Okay, here you go Michelle". And you can interact with that! You can either go, "To be or not to be", or, "To be or not to be". And Michelle uses that, so it's like already a game. And Michelle would really try and hear it. And you can do various things in that moment. You can go, "To be or not to be." "What? What did you just say? To be or *not* to be?" So you kind of line by line, you really look at it, not in an academic sitting

down, pencil paper kind of way. Right there, in the moment, with another person, as it is on the stage. So we've gone through every single line of each play that way, which kind of frees the text up in a way that I've never experienced before.

It's drastically different every night, I literally feel after every show like I'm surviving by the skin of my teeth still. Usually it's like, "Oh yeah, we're comfortable by now". But still, like 24 hours before I get nervous, like really nervous like, "What's going to happen...?" Yes, other games are really, really, really weird like mirror the other person, but don't let them know that you're mirroring them. I remember there was one scene I was doing with Bettrys [Jones], Ophelia and Laertes, and the game was you're only allowed to move when the other person moves, and it has to be invisible to an outside eye that you're playing this game. And so all I was thinking throughout the whole scene was, "Feet, feet. Bettrys just moved her feet!" And we were doing the lines and then the scene was over, and then Fed and Elle our directors were like, "Yes!" And I was like, "What?" And that was a lesson in itself because I feel like you've done something if you kind of don't know what you've done. Every time Fed or Elle would be like, "That's it!" I would be like, "I have no idea what I did!" So then you had no ability to hold on to a right thing. So it's kind of about you letting go of your version and your control of it.

[Audio from rehearsal room]

Bettrys Jones: "I am that he, that unfortunate he".
Ensemble: "That unfortunate he".
JL: Do you mean that?
BJ: I do yes. "I am that he, I am that he".
Ensemble: "That unfortunate he".
BJ: "That unfortunate he".
JL: Do you mean that?
BJ: Yes, "That unfortunate he".

SS: There was no-one sitting behind a table who had preconceived ideas of, "This is our Hamlet, this is what our show is. This is the concept of our show". Because words can be interpreted in so many, you know, infinite number of ways, that to take that experience of interpretation away from a listener, it feels very selfish in a way. I am empowered as a creator, in terms of the way we've created it together. I feel as empowered as a director, as an academic, as a designer, as an actor. I can speak in the rehearsal room, whereas I'm very young, I've just graduated from drama school. Usually in these kind of rooms I'd be a silent mouse, whereas I was speaking much more than I thought I would be in these rooms. But then again, I'm as empowered as an audience member because usually (I find) there's the actors, the creatives on one level, and then everyone is spoon-feeding the audience. Whereas this way, the audience are as in control as we are. I remember the first couple of times we did the shows, we were like, "People are laughing at the most unexpected [things]". And you go, "Well, that's what happened". And you have to accept it and love it and so you are empowered., but also you're kind of letting go and giving it to the audience.

IG: Shubs was chatting to us midway through the run, playing Ophelia on the Globe stage. We talked about the significance of the role and this idea that any person can play any character. What did it mean in rehearsals and performance and how did he cast aside any concerns he might have had about taking on the role?

SS: They are these sort of bastions of, "Oh, have you seen this person's, this person's, this person's [version]". And for me, I've never done a Shakespeare role fully in my life. So I was like, "Woah!" You know?

Before rehearsals and during rehearsals, I read as much as I could read and went into the academic side, tried to inspire

myself with art, poems, because I was determined. In a way, it was so releasing that on the face of it, I'm very different from the usual Ophelia, mainly in terms of gender. And that was very sort of liberating for me, because it made sure that it's going to be yours. You're not trying to live up to anything, because frankly you can't! It's very different. And what I found interesting for me is after watching quite a few and reading, I found it very interesting that a lot of Ophelia's are played as victims, whereas for me it struck me she's more of like an Antigone character. She has a silent courage. "To be or not to be", not to be. "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt", she literally melts. There's a line, she's imbued into water. I think that the final two scenes after her father dies, back in Shakespeare's time as well, suicide was such a great sin that families who...say a member of the family committed suicide, families would then flog the body to make it look like they didn't kill themselves. Because what would happen is the church would sort of as penance because you took a life away from God, they would take all the land, wealth and everything away from the family estate. So it was like one of the greatest sins and she does it, she kind of breaks all...she's torn in two and she just breaks all expectation and codes and structures of being in those final two scenes. So it's been a very interesting journey.

And in rehearsal because I'd read so much and had so many ideas coming in, it was interesting for them to be broken down as well, even in performance. Because the way we've rehearsed has meant that nothing is set. Like this now, we never talked about her as in Ophelia, "Who is she? What's her relationship like?" We never did that in rehearsal. And now I really understand it, because actually I mean I can have my ideas, but in a moment when an audience members listening and I'm playing it, anything can happen. And what matters is what happens in that moment not, "So who is he?" And at the Globe, you can't deny anything, you can't fake anything. There's a plane, there is a plane and there's a pigeon and it just shat. Yes,

you can't deny it. So all we did was sort of play games with these huge sort of scenes, like the nunnery scene...I still don't know what it means, it's the most incomprehensible scene I've ever come across. And to talk about it and to try and solve it and break it apart and split hairs, feels really reductive. So all we ever did was attack it in many ways, play different games with it and that gives us as actors the liberty to just see what's going to happen that night in that moment. Because I may be feeling a certain way, Michelle might be feeling a certain way, the audience member listening might be feeling a certain way. And that will never be the same.

[Music plays]

SS: Anyone should be able to play any character. It's been very interesting, the reactions. I always hear when I come out in a dress, I always hear a couple of giggles in the audience. And it's very interesting to me, there's a line in *Hamlet*, "To put a mirror up to nature", and reveal the form and nature of the time. And before going into performance, you know I thought this would be a generally accepted thing. But it has this way of working, this sort of gender blind casting, has really revealed the form and nature of our time and how people are able to accept certain things but also not able to get past other things. And that's not everyone, but people do struggle.

And that's exactly why we work in theatre, to kind of question and bring to light and put a mirror up to that and go, "Look, this is where we are. What does that mean?" And not say anything, not try and control it, but just ask a question and go, "This is against your expectations of what the Ophelia in your head should be. This is very different. How does that make you feel? Can you accept that? Can you get beyond a hairy chest? Or can you not really see the human underneath?" And I think especially today in our time right now, we should be working as hard as we can to see the human underneath the exterior. So I totally believe that

anyone should be playing any part. That would be the most liberating human experience for an actor, and if someone can get past that for an audience as well. It would be a true recognition of humanity beyond race, beyond disability, beyond every exterior sort of label.

[Music plays]

IG: That was Shubham Saraf, who played Ophelia in our *Hamlet*. So the casting is set, an actor has a part, and the only limitation as Fed says is that it's a part they have the experience to play. And as Shubs says, you're actually freed from the pressures of the role, because you don't fit the conventions of what's gone before. And then you're on stage every night facing an audience. What happens? What happens when the audience sees you come out on stage and is confronted by the unexpected? What happens when you speak gendered words?

Michelle is no stranger to the Globe and in fact played Rosalind on this very stage back in 2015. As part of the Globe Ensemble, Michelle took on the role of Hamlet. So she sat down with Jack Laskey who played Rosalind in this *As You Like It*; incidentally, Jack has also played Hamlet in his career, which made for a truly insightful conversation about Hamlet and Rosalind. Here they interrogate how gender has played a role in their experience of the Ensemble, or more importantly how it hasn't. Here's Michelle and Jack.

MT: Have you ever had any audience members that have said, they didn't think Rosalind could be played by a woman? That they've been really surprised.

JL: Played by a man, do you mean?

MT: I mean played by a man!

JL: [Laughs] Gender's so fluid here!

MT: "Surprise everyone, podcast exclusive: Jack Laskey is a man or woman!"

JL: No, no-one's actually afterwards chatted to me specifically about the gender thing.

MT: Because I've had quite a few and from women as well that have said, "I wasn't sure whether Hamlet could be played by a woman". I find it extraordinary, that. Because these two in particular are so every human.

JL: Yes.

MT: They are so about the human condition, but it's amazing where gender concerns people and where it doesn't.

JL: It's fascinating with *As You Like It*, because there's such a massive gender conversation at the heart of the play, that Shakespeare constantly forefronts. And it's really interesting with this casting being non-gender specific that we are encouraged to investigate that all the more.

MT: That is the one thing, you can hear when you come out in a dress or when Shubs comes out in a dress as Ophelia, there is an audible response to it. But I think it feels like it goes pretty quickly.

JL: Yes, people are very accepting of it.

MT: Yes.

JL: The audible response was more profound before we had our Press Night (obviously it will have mentioned the casting). And

people before Press were really surprised and did lots of laughing...

MT: Disarming.

JL: Yes. And yes, since Press the response has been a bit more gentle and people know what to expect a bit more.

MT: Yes.

JL: But it was really thrilling (and still is) to feel that every night, that we were surprising and as you're saying disarming a huge proportion of the audience every night.

MT: There is that knotty bit where you go, "Well, am I going to be wearing a dress or am I going to be wearing trousers?" And there was an attempt to have a conversation around it, but as ever, the more you try and solve something, the more it created a problem. When actually it was just, "Well Shubs, do you want to wear a dress? As Ophelia, do you want to wear a dress?" Then that is the right choice. Rather than, "Should Ophelia wear a dress?" It became very specific to each of us, didn't it? How we gendered or didn't gender? You had quite a specific journey with Rosalind though didn't you?

JL: Yes, the gender thing is really fascinating because we're just inviting audiences to go on an imaginative journey. And we're saying, "This is King Claudius", right? And he isn't playing a King, but his words and the way people behave around him do that for him. And it's the same with gender. I'm not thinking about playing a woman very much, but there's great stuff that comes from wearing a wig and wearing makeup and wearing a dress. It encourages me to move in a different way, which perhaps brings a bit more fluidity or a bit more elegance or something to my movement.

[Music plays]

MT: Now through the course of doing it, people start to make comments about things, just in passing or in the Green Room. And suddenly, what it's like for a woman to say, "Get thee to a nunnery", to a man or what it's like for a woman to talk about the fact that there's nothing between her legs or this quite...I suppose could be interpreted as misogynistic language. But in the scene, I'm just going, "You betrayed me, you let me down. You are yet another person in a long line of people that I thought I could trust and I can't. And I will expose you in the way that you're all trying to expose me." So while people might go, "That's coming out of a woman's mouth", for me it's just coming out of Hamlet's mouth at Ophelia because of something really specific that's gone on between them.

So I think maybe when I've finished and I look back on it, I might be able to analyse it more objectively. But right now, it's so personal: things like the closet scene...I don't know what the Freudian reading could be of Hamlet and Gertrude. It's just my Mum that has let me down and my Dad's dead and I want to say all the things that I could possibly say that might hurt her. And I want her to hug me and I want her to tell me it's going to be okay. So it's not like going, "I'm playing a woman and you're a woman and now we're having a lesbian relationship". I'm not inverted or there's nothing deliberate like that going on for me. And it's sort of not my job; that's for people receiving it or their reading of it, I guess.

I now don't hear when people say...I think the big one I hear is "unmanly grief". I hear that at the beginning, I very much know that I'm a woman in greed. But from then on in, I don't think I hear ever where Hamlet is referred to as a man or a boy. I definitely say I'm his son, but I don't even think of son as gender specific now. I just go, "I'm his only child". Weirdly gender (for

me) has almost completely disappeared. And maybe that would be a whole different reading if I entirely put it back in.

JL: Yes, there is a lot of stuff that Rosalind says about what women do, when disguised as Ganymede with Orlando. And there's only one that seems to ping out just recently, "Do you not know I am a woman. When I think, I must speak." And obviously, there's a little nudge, nudge, wink, wink from Shakespeare, which he's doing quite a lot. But the rest of them seem to just kind of flow and I don't really think about gender, Apart from that one because I think for a while I was quite scared about it and then scared that it seemed insulting or confrontational.

MT: I think as well on those kind of things what sometimes can happen is people go, "That's what Shakespeare thinks", as opposed to, "That's just a truth for Rosalind in that moment". Really specific to Rosalind.

JL: Yes, yes.

MT: Beatrice would never say that, do you know what I mean? There are [ways]. Ophelia would never say that, Gertrude would never say that. So it's so specific that that's a truth for Rosalind in the forest.

JL: Yes, yes.

MT: Because I remember, I used to love saying that line!

JL: Yes, I do now. I just for a while was just like, "Oh..."

MT: Because I didn't have the conflict, yes.

JL: Yes. I was worried about that conflict, about how that would read. That little moment of maybe perhaps being like, "This is Jack saying this". The more I can get out of the way of the

character, the better. There's a kind of acceptance of just being taken, possessed by the part and by the energy the audience is bringing and the energy that the air pressure and weather is bringing. Just sort of going with it.

MT: Which all affects it. It's so amazing how you're affected by that, isn't it? That we needed a storm last night. If it has been *Hamlet* last night, thank God it wasn't because someone would have got killed last night! Because it was so like, with the storm had just come because we were all like, "Ugh!" So it was perfect that it didn't for *As You Like It* and thank God it was a Comedy and could alleviate some of the pressure. But it's amazing what it does.

JL: Yes. And on a full moon, everything in there becomes a sort of bedlam.

MT: Yes. Oh my God! It's like bacchanalian.

JL: Every full moon, it happens.

MT: Oh my God, yes.

JL: Really properly. People get really giddy, really quickly and like are very unpredictable on a full moon. And you really have to grab the reins in a different way. That's what's so refreshing about the process.

MT: Yes.

JL: It's yes, we're not trying to sort of box it up; we're trying to let it be free for the heartbeat of the play to speak. I'm still exploring the text and still exploring what it means to be a human being. It's just all a journey; it's just all a big journey. And that's what this process and our experience as a company has been about is actually just embracing the journey, rather than boxing it up and

saying, "This is our production of *As You Like It* that's set in Spain", or whatever. Those are also very valid ways to approach Shakespeare, but these two shows have been about building things that grow and change and shift and develop and surprise us.

[Music plays]

IG: If you missed the Globe Ensemble's productions, you'll be able to catch *Hamlet* on the Globe Player later in the year.

Our theme music is from the album Mali in Oak, which was recorded in our very own Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. To find out more about Shakespeare's Globe and what's on, follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. We'll be back with more stories from Shakespeares Globe, so subscribe wherever you got this podcast from.