Such Stuff podcast
Episode 1: The Missing Women

[Music plays]

Imogen Greenberg: Hello and welcome to the very first episode of Such Stuff, the podcast from Shakespeare's Globe. This week we'll be talking about the brilliant Emilia Bassano.

Who is Emilia Bassano? Well, until fairly recently she was largely forgotten by history. A poet and writer and a contemporary of Shakespeare, her voices rings clear across the centuries; a feminist well before her time. Now, she is the subject of Shakespeare's Globe's new play *Emilia*, which takes an imaginative leap from the evidence that survives of Emilia's life, along with her phenomenal poems and builds something beautiful.

Here's Michelle on why she commissioned this new play.

Michelle Terry: So, there are so many extraordinary women in history or throughout history that we just don't know about. And I have done *Love's Labour's Lost* three times and every time I've come back to it, this figure of the Dark Lady (or the Emilia character throughout Shakespeare) just kept coming up in different guises. And so every time I've been really intrigued by who this woman was. So it made sense in a season where I wanted to explore her and explore race and explore gender, she seemed sort of the perfect axis on which to make the whole season spin really which is why we've got *The Winter's Tale*, *Othello*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, all of the sonnets. And someone that I thought was probably an interesting woman, turns out to be the gift that keeps giving and we probably could have written ten plays about Emilia Bassano.

IG: We'll be reflecting on what it means to get creative with the voices that have faded into obscurity and why it's so important to reclaim the untold stories of women from history. We'll also be taking a look at some of the imbalances off our stages, and asking what changes we can make to address them. Stick with us to go

behind the scenes with the *Emilia* team and to hear women's voices written out of history speaking out across the centuries.

[Music plays]

IG: First up, we snuck into the rehearsal room of *Emilia* to catch with writer Morgan Lloyd Malcolm and director Nicole Charles. We chatted about their version of Emilia, writing and telling history from a woman's perspective, and the importance of an all-female cast on the Globe stage.

[Music plays]

Morgan Lloyd Malcolm: Oh, *Emilia*

Nicole Charles: The production.

MLM: Sorry.

MLM: So the production, *Emilia*.

NC: Don't apologise, it's what women do!

MLM: Oh yes. We shouldn't apologise!

NC: No!

MLM: So *Emilia* came out of Micelle Terry who really wanted a play about a woman who has been forgotten by history. Really she's a fantastic writer, she's a poet in her own right. She was a published poet and she was a mum and her poems tell us that she was a feminist, which is quite a big thing for that time.

NC: And I guess in terms of the production of *Emilia*, this kind of remarkable visionary, it was important to us to kind of question ourselves about why is this story important now and why is it important for us to tell the story of this woman now. And I guess in light of the kind of, you know, the rise in feminism and in

intersectional feminism and the #MeToo movement, actually *Emilia* felt incredibly important to sort of join that conversation really. But also in terms of our production values, to really think about that in a contemporary way whilst keeping the original Renaissance meaning. So we're trying to kind of reflect Stuart England in a contemporary mirror and tell that story in a really kind of vivid and if somewhat transgressive way I guess.

[Music plays]

MLM: Nicole came on board and we had a couple of days with loads of books. And spoke to Will Tosh in the Research department, who has been amazing all the way through, him and his team have been incredible, haven't they?

NC: Indeed. But before we spoke to Will we waded through all the conspiracy theories…

MLM: Yes.

NC: And sort of, you know, questioned all of those, considered the possibilities. Then we spoke to Will and he helped us to dismiss some of those theories and rightfully so.

MLM: And also what he did which was really great was remind us you could only look at the evidence in a certain way. You are your own individual person in the way that you look at it. And he almost kind of gave us permission to remember that our take on things is important and so when we were reading, for example, we were reading evidence written by various men. We were able to realise that they had seen her in a very particular way, whereas we were taking a very different side to it.
So, a guy called Simon Forman who was an astrologer that she visited at the time recorded a lot about her, that she was pretty awful and evil and a whore. And when we actually read it, we realised that the reason why he was writing this was because he'd also recorded that she wouldn't have sex with him. So our take on that became, "Well I'm not sure I'm going to believe Simon Forman!"

Will gave us permission (didn't he) to find our own version of Emilia that spoke to us.

NC: Absolutely, he did. I think it's been really important to think about Emilia the woman as opposed to Emilia the woman as reflected through male writings, which has been quite a tricky path to sort of carve really. The more you read the more you start to think…well as the evidence mounts, she must have been sort of status hungry. Well then we had to kind of question, "Well actually did she?" Is that just someone's opinion of what she wanted? Could someone appear to be really sort of desirous of fame, when actually what they really want is to be a writer and to have their work read? And actually those are two very different things but can appear the same. So we had to really think about Emilia and her desires outside of the male gaze really.

I think Morgan's done a stellar job of piecing together, out of all the writings and evidence that are available, but also using her own reflections on those things to create the Emilia that we haven't heard yet. The Emilia who wrote those incredible epic poems, who is a radical feminist and a theological visionary. I think you've really drilled into that really and who she is and also into the gaps in history, what she might have done. Our Emilia is someone who is really courageous, who seeks liberation through productivity, through labour, through work. And I like to think perhaps wants to also give back and teach. We knew she ran a school but if she has that impulse to set up a school and run a school, then what did she do beyond that? What was that spark in her that made her want to give back? She clearly had a social…maybe Socialist leanings essentially I guess. Yes and wanted to free women from being under kind of economic domination from their husbands.

MLM: Which was part of how we investigated her. I guess in our minds. If she has those leanings and she has those needs, then what would have driven her to get to that point? Quite early on we realised how if she was mixing with Shakespeare and similar people and she was being essentially told she couldn't write in the same way as them (as in she wouldn't get the audience, she wouldn't get

published), if she was being told all these things, how frustrating that. And for me as a writer, I very much put myself in her place. And I've always said from the start that I don't believe that woman back then have any kind of different needs, wants, desires to the ones that we have now. And you know we have a very specific 'period costume' version of women that we're quite used to, but I think they were just like us. They were just under different restrictions to us. And I imagined her as myself and what that must have felt like, to know what you have all of this inside you to say creatively and just because of the world and the time you're living in, you're just unable to. How frustrating that would be, how angry that would make you. And that very much came into the way that we developed her and what she wanted and how she would go on to create the world that she does in our play.

[Music plays]
NC: We have three Emilias in our production, and one of the reasons we decided to conceive it in that way is because Emilia lived an unusually long life. She lived to 76 years old, which is virtually unheard of at that time. And you know, we could have one actress playing that role and grey her up, age her up! But we thought there was perhaps a bit more mileage and a bit more juice really in having one Emilia for each phase of her life. We're so different at different phases of our life, I think we make such different choices depending on where we are and what influences us and what our needs and wants are, that we thought wouldn't it be wonderful to have this woman be able to see herself, to talk to herself, to nurture herself, to be inspired by herself. And to have that sort of polyphony I guess, on stage visually and also kind of orally.

We just thought that might be really exciting, because we have all these women within us: we have the voices of our mothers and our grandmothers. And we have those selves within ourselves as well. And it's rather a kind of abstract notion, but it's so true.

MLM: It's almost generational, isn't it?

NC: Yes.

MLM: Because it's like a grandmother, mother and granddaughter in one place, and they're kind of flanking each other and looking out for each other. They're giving each other space and then they're coming back together, you know the imagery with that.

NC: That's right.
MLM: And it's an experiment for us as well, in creating a history play that isn't a normal history play. It's a female history play, a woman's history play. So how do we tell that as women?

NC: Absolutely, yes.

MLM: And I think that we're playing around with form in a way that feels more natural to us than a straight up retelling of what we know. We are listening to those instincts inside us that make us recognise certain things about her that we haven't read in a book, but we just know about her.

NC: Absolutely.

MLM: And that's one of the themes through the play, the fact that somehow there's a muscle memory of people that have come before us, of women that have come before us, and we are kind of tapping into that in writing this play. Both Nicole and I have had very strange moments with this play, where things just kind of come to us or I've written words that I can't even remember writing. It's like a weird thing going on! And it is because we are slightly trying to channel her, and I think she's channelling us and we're all just working together I guess.

NC: Absolutely. And the thing about working together is I guess something that was important to us was the idea of collectively. And in having three Emilias, we're somehow deconstructing the kind of very classic structure of…you know, you have eight lead male protagonists, epic protagonists who run right the way through and is the hero. We just thought, well actually can that journey be shared? Can we tell it as a company of women? And in actual fact, we can.

But it is an experiment. In some ways, we...I questioned whether having three Emilias might kick the audience out of their emotional connection to the single hero or heroine. Because that's the mantle we're used to seeing stories told in, that's how we engage. Therefore, it's going to be a real challenge to hold three, four, thirteen women to share that story. But actually, let's give it a try. Things don't change unless you try to change them, do they?

[Music plays]

Clare Perkins [as Emilia 3]: "We came to this island like so many seeking shelter and purpose, and we had found it. My father and his brothers were revered in the court for their musicianship. We knew our luck. We knew that with this, we had more than those who came with little to offer. But we still felt the notion of our otherness, our differences. And yet we played the game, as well as we played the lutes we travelled with."

MLM: The people that decided who we remember aren't necessarily looking out for the interests of everybody. The canon is very specifically white male. A lot of white guys wrote history and decided which plays, which poems, which books should do well, because they were the ones with the money and they were the ones that were able to enable.

It's so limited and it excludes so many stories, and the more you read about that (or at least read what has survived) you realise that. And we've been fed it and it's whitewashing. And I think that in order to reclaim or find these stories, we do have to get creative about the way that we read what is there. We have to look in dusty shelves for stories that haven't been published continually. You know, Emilia's poems are sitting somewhere in folios; they're around, but people just haven't noticed them. And I genuinely believe there are other women writers out there who were trying that we know nothing about, and people from different cultures that we know nothing about. And it's a new wave and I feel that it's happening at the moment of people going, "Oh, well hang on a minute. We've been

fed this one story, it's like one story for so long. Surely there are others? It can't be that there weren't." And there were! There were so many different perspectives and so many different stories. Why have they not been held on to? And it's because they weren't deemed of interest to the people who were in power.

It's for us as creatives (I feel) to do some digging and to read between the lines and to amplify these stories. And hopefully, it will get an audience and hopefully people will know about her and then buy her poems and read it and start thinking about what it would have been like to be a woman in that time who was desperate to publish her poems. And that's so important, because we have such a limited view of what it was like in that world because we just don't know enough, because of who wrote things down.

NC: It's written from a single perspective.

MLM: Absolutely.

NC: I think also we are at this time really questioning what Britishness means and who that includes. And as creatives, I think it's a really exciting opportunity to delve into history and look at the possibilities, look at the small scraps of evidence which are there, from writings, from art work. And to go, "Who could that chap be blowing the trumpet at the back who looks a bit swarthy? What's that story? How did he get that? Who are his mates? Where does he live? What's going on? What are his challenges?"

I think London has been an incredibly diverse city for a very long time, and there are people from all different parts of the world who have lived here and settled here and have assimilated into British society, just as we are today. And I think the idea of Britishness and Britishness as a diverse collective is ancient. And I think it will galvanise us today to know that we all belong here, that we all have very deep roots. And the responsibility I think that theatre has is to unearth those stories. To give us a chance to see ourselves in new ways and to come together, and to hear ourselves and to hear

ourselves sing together, and to move together in chorus and to breathe as one. That's our job, that's why I do it (part of why I do it).

CP: "We thought we were part of their world, but it is an easy fall when you can no longer pay your way. My mother was right. I had to go."

MLM: When I first took on this project, I knew from the start it was about making sure that Emilia was centred in her own story. And I was very keen to make sure it didn't become a play about her relationship with Shakespeare, because that's what the main narrative has been of most people who have been interested in her. But in further research, I realised that he would have to feature because in our imagining of her, he was part of that. And that also Lord Henry Carey would have to feature, her husband Alphonso would have to feature, various sort of incidental men would be part of that. And when I started realising that, I kind of thought, "Oh God, that's one, two...at least four men on stage!" And then it starts feeling like, actually...it just felt like the men were starting to invade the stage. Like physically in my head I was looking at it and going, "There's men on the stage! And this is her story!" And I thought, well hang on. Why don't we just cast it all women, and then that won't be a problem? And then that totally relaxed me, I was like, "Okay, great. I can put men in there now, it's fine." But on our first read through, it really struck us suddenly how important it was. Because actually, it adds a whole other layer because it's women commenting on men.

NC: Somehow, it politicizes it.

MLM: Yes. It's amazing. And I mean, first day of rehearsals we had some time on the stage and the women (our lovely cast) got up on stage to do a vocal session. Me and Nicole were sat in the audience watching it, and I mean I was in tears, I was in pieces.

NC: She was!

MLM: Because it's just, there's something about it because it's a group of women, they're really diverse, different bodies, different...just everything about them is just this mixture of brilliance and power and strength. And I just haven't seen that.

NC: I think the Globe stage is actually a feminine space. I think it is a feminine space but we rarely see it in all its feminine glory. And I think this is an opportunity to enjoy it for the feminine space that it is. It's really exciting.

It's a really weird thing. I mean, I think it's quite odd. At the beginning of the play, we call them the muses. The way you've written it essentially, all the ingredients for a kind of proper, Greek, traditional, ritual invocation are there. They're not in order, but they're all there…how the f*** are they all there?! When we haven't thought, "Let's do an invocation: we've got the pouring of water, we've got the muses coming up, we've got this moving as a chorus". Everything's there, without us realising that we're doing it. And you think, how has that landed? It's so mystical!

MLM: Yes. It's the power of the Globe! It's from Emilia.

NC: It's that fantastic cauldron called the Globe. It's amazing, it's amazing! I love it.

[Music plays]

IG: Up next, we chatted to Dr Will Tosh (Research Fellow and Lecturer with our Research Department), on what we do and don't know about the real Emilia Bassano. As you heard, Will worked with Morgan and Nicole on the historical context of the play, but it goes two ways and Will also chatted to us about how the production has changed the sorts of questions he might be asking about these historical figures.

Will Tosh: So Emilia Bassano is a fascinating character and person, because she is a woman writing and producing poetry

under her own name in the early 17th century, when it was very unusual for women to write with that degree of self-assertion.

We don't know a huge amount about Emilia Bassano. Like almost everyone who ever lived before about 1800, the documents of their lives don't survive. So we haven't got lots of letters in her hand, we haven't got diaries telling us what she thought. We do have evidence of her baptism and her death; she was born in 1569 and she didn't die until 1644. For the time, that's an exceptionally long life. But it's also a life lived across astonishing change: so she was born at the start of Queen Elizabeth's reign (the same sort of time as Shakespeare), but she lived to see the English Civil Wars, only a few years off from seeing the execution of Charles I.
Emilia Bassano was born into an Italian immigrant family. So her father Baptista came from a family of Italian musicians, and so her father played at court. So her kind of milieu was quite well connected and quite courtly, although her family, she herself wasn't from aristocratic stock at all (she was much more kind of middle class). Her father dies when she's relatively young, and she's left with her mother who's an English woman. And at some point in her youth, she's raised in the household of the Countess of Kent and we know this because later in life, she writes a poem kind of celebrating that period in her youth. Her mother dies in 1587 when Emilia's 18, and that's the point that she becomes the mistress of the Lord Chamberlain. And that's a name that some people might recognise, because Shakespeare’s theatre company from 1594 is the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

So Emilia is having an affair with the man who a few years later becomes Shakespeare’s chief patron, which is one of the areas that people get very interested in because it seems to put them in the same orbit at roughly the same time. Actually, Emilia's involved with the Lord Chamberlain some years before he becomes patron of Shakespeare’s company. And they have an affair which lasts about five or six years. Lord Chamberlain's in his sixties, Emilia is 18. So it's a big age difference. She falls pregnant by him and in 1592, she is effectively married off to a man called Alphonso Lanier, who is another court musician. We don't know how happy that relationship

is. Alphonso doesn't get the court promotion that he might want, evidently there are money troubles in this relationship, very possibly there are other sorts of unhappinesses as well. And in 1597, Emilia goes to visit a man called Simon Forman who is a sort of physician, a sort of astrologer, a sort of quack therapist. Simon Forman's a fascinating character and basically his practice is a cover for his sexual abuse, because he likes sleeping with the women that he talks to. There's an account in Simon Forman's diary of Emilia coming to see him in 1597, and asking his advice about Alphonso's potential career prospects. Simon Forman doesn't really help very much, partly because he keeps trying to sleep with her and Emilia doesn't sleep with him. Simon Forman uses this code in his diary which is "Halek" ("Halek" means to sleep with), and he writes in his diary that she would not "Halek" so we know that she says no.

And the next point that Emilia kind of enters into the record is when she publishes her volume of poetry in 1611, which is the same sort of time that Shakespeare's writing *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* and then *The Tempest*. And that moment of Emilia's publication is quite remarkable. So her book of poetry is called *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, which means "Hail God, King of the Jews". And it's a series of biblical stories retold from the perspective of the female characters. And as well as the core verse, she also includes dedications to a whole series of aristocratic women who are kind of connected with the court: the Queen, Princess Elizabeth, her former patron the Countess of Kent. So the whole kind of artistic work is really speaking sort of women to women. The idea is that not only is her name on the front cover, not only is she retelling these biblical stories from a woman's perspective, but she's also creating textually this sort of patronage network of very powerful and connected women. She evidently had a real intention to be read and to be thought about and to contribute to the literary world that she was in, evidently she was in. She says in the various prefaces that she's writing particularly for the women of England to read, but she also says she's writing for virtuous men to have a slightly better regard of women. So there's a definite sense (that we would obviously now call feminist) that she's engaging with gender dynamics, she's engaging with the sex war

and kind of going, "I'm speaking woman to women, and I kind of want men to listen as well". Now obviously, she wouldn't use that 20th century language, but there is definitely a sense that this is a publication with an intent behind it.

So after 1611 with the publication of her poetry, she lives for a long time. We don't really know what she's doing, she kind of falls out of the record. Her books don't go into a second publication (that's not uncommon, most books didn't). We don't know how widely they were read, to a great extent she is forgotten for many generations. Her life and her identity are sort of rehabilitated in the second half of the 20th century, when she becomes associated at one remove with Shakespeare. And the description of her visit to Simon Forman in his diary is unearthed and discussed and associated with her as a historical figure. And a historian called A. L. Rowse puts various pieces together and suggests that Emilia Bassano, because she has Italian heritage, because of this overlap with the Lord Chamberlain, and because of his sort of perception that she lives a kind of sexually veracious life because she's goes to Simon Forman and he tries to sleep with her. Rowse takes these indications and suggests that Emilia Bassano is the inspiration for or is the Dark Lady of Shakespeare’s sonnets. And that's a very kind of compelling, imaginative argument, because we've got another poet, a woman who may well have a dark complexion, who was kind of vaguely in the orbit of Shakespeare and his theatre company (although as I said, the year's don't quite line up). Now really, that's it in terms of the evidence.

But one of the great things about this season is that that is an imaginative leap. It's a what if the women who for years we've not thought about, actually had an involvement in the writing and creative world that Shakespeare lived in. So although from a scholarly perspective as academics and writers, we're very clear that there's not a huge amount of evidence, really any evidence linking Emilia with Shakespeare and we certainly wouldn't say that she is an inspiration for his work. The idea that we're rethinking how women's writing worked in the period is really attractive , because it's forcing us to ask new questions about how women might have

made their voices heard in a world that was not designed for them to do so. The barriers that were placed in the way of women getting to publication, paying for publication, getting their material out there, let alone getting it onto the public stage (which as far as we know, doesn't happen really at all in Shakespearean period. Women do write drama, but they write it generally for private performance. Imagining ways in which a character like Emilia Bassano might have been involved in that world has been very liberating and very refreshing.

[Music plays]

IG: From the missing women on our stages, we turn to the missing women off of our stages. There's a consistent problem in all industries of enabling women to return to work after having children. In theatre, campaigns like PIPA [Parents In Performing Arts] have been working to address the issue. This season, we welcome Band of Mothers to the Globe, a group of actresses who are also mothers, working together to make sure their motherhood can be part of their creative output. Here's Emma Caplan who set up Band of Mothers and what they're up to and why she started the group.

Emma Caplan: It has become really clear to me (and a lot of other actresses and directors like me) that it's increasingly more difficult for women once they've had babies to re-enter the performing arts industry. There's all sorts of different obstacles in the way in terms of childcare and timings, there's a load of things against us. So I wanted to create a positive piece of action to try and turn some of those obstacles into creative opportunities.

We have started by forming ourselves as a company, which has actually produced some quite extraordinary sensations. Just the act of being in a room together with the sympathy of knowing what our challenges are, there's a sympathy in the room of our shared lifestyles and we're currently working towards performing here at the Globe for Sonnet Sunday. So I'm one of five directors working on that very exciting project in September. So one of my groups is going to be the Band of Mothers, and we will be performing two of

Shakespeare’s sonnets that are written very much with motherhood at the core of its themes. And at the moment, we're playing with the ideas of the mother actresses being on stage with their children, so that we actually really embrace that extraordinary dimension. Since I've become a mother of two little ones, I've been wanting to create some way of changing the way we work. We've sort of used the Sonnet Sunday as a catalyst to get the Band of Mothers group on their feet and making. And now, we're getting ready to create all sorts of things like, for example, an all mother Shakespeare production, harnessing the things that we all have as strengths rather than just focusing on the things that are difficult.

I asked these actress/mothers what part would they like to play because they are now a mother, and it was a seismic shift in the room because for so long I could sense a lot of these actresses had been challenged with thinking about all the things they can't do and the hours they can't work or the jobs they can't take because it doesn't pay for the childminding. And here was then a reversal of that idea and saying, "Actually, let's harness all of the skills and insights and emotional depth that you now have because you're a mother and think about what parts you'd like to play". We’ve talked a lot about the absent mothers in Shakespeare's plays, wanting to do a play about all the mothers in Shakespeare's plays. We are also going to be running around regional theatres' mothers' meetings, where we're actually going to invite mothers from all different cross-sections of society to come in and share stories and hear them and tell their own, if they feel inclined.

We’re losing swathes of talent in this industry, because not just women, men, people with caring responsibilities are finding it just too hard to balance all those responsibilities. I mean, we do live in an age where we want it all: we want our families, we want to carry on with our careers. I think it's actually not rocket science, it's quite basic. What we’ve done with our Band of Mothers in just simply finding an accessible space, that's meant a lot. Saying to the mothers, the twelve mothers that are coming to our regular meetings they can bring their children if they have a crisis with childcare, it's fine. We bring a nanny with us, so that there is that

kind of cover. Just that in itself has been remarkable and emotional for the women actually who've said, "My goodness, the amount of castings I've had to go to and desperately try and get someone in the casting office to look after my child for 20 minutes. And not sure whether that's going to be met with disapproval or judgement." We need to think about the times that we work at, you know, just a simple thing like being able to take your child to school and then come onto rehearsal is going to make for a better day than trying to juggle some convoluted plan with favours and neighbours.

We are planning when we start to make work to try out a double casting method, so that as and when (and there always are when you have children) crises at home, then it's not a crisis. So we want to mitigate against those problems and say, "Okay, well we know what the challenges are", and then we just really logically say, "Well what do we need to just put in place to make that work?" So better working hours, when we schedule our rehearsals we might work from 11.00 - 3.00, or we won't use all the women all the time, so they can get back to pick-ups or just to spend time with their children. And the double casting thing we're going to try out and see if that might just take some of the stress and the anxiety out of the equation. A lot of the mothers that we've spoken to have said they've turned down jobs, because it's just too scary to think of going on tour and, you know, not earning enough to support the nanny at home.

Places like the Globe commissioning...I know that the playwright for *Emilia* is a mother, is a woman. You know, it's beginning and I think it's got to start somewhere and it's definitely happening. But I think there is still so much further to go, I think that we shouldn't have a need to create splinter groups like Band of Mothers, because there should just be an acknowledgement. I think the critical thing is about speaking up and I think times are changing. If you think about in the wake of the #MeToo movement and the tables are turning where people can be more honest and more authentic about themselves and their real lives, their wider lives.

One of our actresses talked about how she was in rehearsals and she had a three month year old baby and she'd sort of kept it all quiet, because every actor fears that they might not get cast again. She really bravely spoke to the director and said, "Look, I've got to be honest with you. At the time when you're giving notes is exactly when I need to be expressing milk. So is it alright if I bring my pump into the next sessions?" And you know, he was a little ruffled at the beginning of that conversation but within five minutes he said, "Actually, of course. Why not? And the fact that you're here and being away from your new born baby is extraordinary." And she described how within a few days, it wasn't just the norm in the note session that she'd have the whirring of this breast pump. People joked about it! People then understood her for her real life beyond the rehearsal room. And I think it's examples like that where it takes us to actually be brave enough to say, "Actually this is what's going on for us at the moment, and if you want me to be able to come here and do my best work then you've got to understand my full story". And I think she's been a real trailblazer and she followed up by saying that that director a week later then actually said to her, "You know what? I've realised I'm calling you into all these extra rehearsals that you don't need to [be in]. I'm going to go back and look at my rehearsal schedule and only call you when I absolutely need you." And it caused him just to think differently. So I think we're susceptible, we're ready, we're open, but it takes a bit of bravery.

[Music plays]

IG: Look out for Band of Mothers on our stages very soon. There's one audience who have had a surge in stories of women from history in recent years and that's young children. An astonishing number of new children's books have come out focusing on brilliant women from history, who might still be missing from school curriculums. The charge has been led by Kate Pankhurst's best-selling *Fantastically Great Women Who Made History*. Kate joined us for our annual Shakespeare's Telling Tales storytelling festival, and we caught up with her to ask why it's important to bring these stories to young audiences.

Kate Pankhurst: The idea for the book came about after I got a bit interested in Emilia Earhart's story, after researching her and using her as a basis for a fictional character. And I learned a bit more about her story and after a discussion with somebody I was like, "This book that collects together all those stories of amazing women from history would be really brilliant". And when I thought of that idea, I kind of had a scout round to see what else other people had done. I couldn't quite believe actually at the time there wasn't really anything around in the picture book field for young children about that subject. And that to me just seemed a bit bonkers, and it definitely should be a discussion that we're having with children and stories that need to be told.

On one level, it's great to kind of share just what are aspirational stories about people who overcame adversity and did remarkable things in history, so that children can hopefully see a little bit of themselves in that story and kind of ask themselves the question, "How am I going to change the world in the future? How am I going to make history in my own [way]? What could be a small way? What could be a massive way?" And to have that gentle introduction to beginning to question the past and how things are now, making children question the world around them so things continue to change. And you know, those discriminations that are everywhere begins to become a thing of the past.

Quite a lot of the time at events if I meet parents and children afterwards, quite a few parents have said, "I've bought it for my daughters. Are you going to do one for boys?" And I'm like, "Ah, but this book is for boys as well!" I think there's that kind of perception that boys don't want to read about female characters and maybe kind of can't identify with those struggles and take the same inspiration from it as girls can. But I think especially with the younger audience that these books are aimed at, I think boys and girls can delight in the fact that they're really exciting stories. Although there's lots of stuff in there that we maybe read on another level as adults (about inequality and standing up for yourself and the world not being fair), I think boys and girls can appreciate that

they're a really good story and learn the same lessons from those things. And also I think it's definitely important that we're having these conversations with boys as well, about the way things have been for women in the past and how things could change in the future, and for them to have an opinion and an awareness about those things.

Maybe one of the hardest bits of doing the books (we've got two that are published and another one that's coming out next year), it's really hard when you've got that big long list of women and you have to be really brutal and kind of go through and be like, "Oh no! But there just isn't space for her." I discovered a woman called Caroline Haslett who campaigned for homes in Britain to have an electricity supply so that it would free women from the drudgery of domestic labour. So that was a brilliant story and I'd never heard of her before and the role she played doing that would have helped to make a difference for lots and lots of women at the time that she lived. She just didn't quite make it in, there was lots of other women on the list and we had to kind of...we already had some people in the field of science and activism. So we had to make that decision to take her out.

It's really heart-warming actually, children quite often come up and are like, "I've got a favourite great woman! I really, really love Emilia Earhart because of this." Or they'll say you know, "I want to be a scientist, like Marie Curie". But then they've also got that really strong sense of fairness and kind of looking at things from the past and being like, "Oh my God, I can't believe that that happened to that woman! That's terrible, she should never have had to deal with that." They're aware of those injustices from the past and they're really bothered about them.

[Music plays]

IG: That's it from us for today. But have no doubt, we'll be back with more spectacular stories of women past and present. You can find out more about *Emilia*, Sonnet Sunday, and Telling Tales on our website, and book tickets online and through the Box Office.

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.