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Welcome

Welcome to a bumper summer edition of *Globe* magazine: the only space to get such a variety of deep dives into all our activity here on Bankside and beyond.

I loved reading about Indiana Lown-Collins's *Globe* directorial debut *Love's Labour's Lost*. It made me all the more excited to rediscover this Shakespeare play that's jam-packed with drama, loves, losses, passion – and now flamenco!

You may well have seen some rave reviews for *Mother Courage* – it is an extraordinary piece of work, and Artistic Director Michelle Terry in the titular role commands the space with such deft talent. The *Evening Standard* described it as 'a service to the public and to the theatrical canon that the Globe has staged it, and on such a scale' – we could not be prouder.

Next to open is *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Chelsea Walker. This is a play so many of us know, and love, and look forward to seeing anew in the heat of high summer.

A joy of working at the Globe is seeing some of the magic behind the curtain – not that we have those for our stages! Designer Rose Revitt reveals how she brings fantastical and welcoming visuals for our youngest audiences in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, which feels like a true expression of our core value of making theatre and Shakespeare accessible and exciting for all.

This year we celebrated a big milestone in the 20th Anniversary of *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*. This project has brought more than 330,000 school children to a Globe production for free – truly an inspirational partnership. Once again, huge thanks go to CEO of Deutsche Bank (UKI) Vathany Vijayaratra for joining us for an illuminating conversation.

I much enjoyed Natasha Tripney's tour around the incredible access work which is embedded here at the Globe and is so important to all our staff, volunteers and audiences. I'm proud that we're leading the way.

Finally, Lola Shalam, who wowed us all as Juliet last summer, returns to play Rosalind in *As You Like It*. She promises us a production to revel in – a big summer festival in the woods. Speaking of woods, another of our core values bursts to life this summer with a Climate Open Day, a first-of-its-kind Climate Playwrighting Prize and much more... read on, Macduff!

All my best wishes,
Stella Kanu (CEO)

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Scene from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Titania and Bottom by Edwin Landseer, c. 1850 | Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

HAYWARD GALLERY

Anish Kapoor

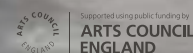
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Anish Kapoor, *Mount Moriah at the Gate of the Ghetto*, 2022. © Anish Kapoor. All rights reserved, DACS, 2026. Photo: Attilio Maranzano.

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AROUND THE GLOBE



Jos Vantylar as Feste
in *Twelfth Night*.
Photo: Helen Murray

Portrait of the actor

Last summer, photographer and Globe Associate Artist Helen Murray was backstage during a production of *Twelfth Night* – when she realised she had the chance to take a very special shot. Jos Vantylar, playing Feste, was standing at the side of the stage, waiting for his next entrance. ‘There’s a particular kind of quiet that happens when an image is working, where you stop thinking about the technical side and you’re just watching,’ she recalls. ‘I had that with this shot.’

The resulting photograph has now received international acclaim: it was a winner in the prestigious American Photography 42 Awards for 2026. The recognition means a lot to Murray: ‘Theatre photography doesn’t always get the recognition that other genres do. To have a backstage image chosen is particularly meaningful. It feels like an acknowledgment that there’s real value in those quieter moments.’ And it was this ‘quality of stillness’ that she really wanted to capture in

the portrait of the actor. Her production photographs are used in press and publicity for shows – but this was a more intimate moment. ‘The Globe’s backstage is this extraordinary space in itself, all dark timber and rope and shadow, and Jos was just standing there in that brilliant jester’s costume, holding the rigging, not performing for the camera at all,’ Murray says. ‘The light hitting his face is coming from the auditorium, spilling backstage, and it felt almost painterly against all that darkness.’

Back to the future

The Globe Shakespeare and Race Festival returns this autumn, running throughout October and coinciding with Black History Month. Taking place in the new Research & Collections Centre, The Future We Make Festival will be a celebration of people, creativity, knowledge and discovery, with the theatre shining a light on young people, artists and

researchers of colour engaging with Shakespeare on their own terms and shaping what his legacy means. At the heart of the festival will be the Globe Young Company's performance of new work by award-winning Black British actor and playwright Anne Odeke. There will also be public lectures from Shakespeare studies scholars, a

roundtable on Shakespeare and Windrush, and a two-day academic symposium on the theme of Contested Futures. The first ever recipient of the One Globe First Book Fellowship will also be announced, supporting a scholar of colour as they complete their first book.

Professor Lucy Munro outside The Cockpit pub, at the site where Shakespeare's home once stood. Photo: Lucy Munro



The Globe Young Company perform on stage. Photo: Cesare De Giglio



Finding Shakespeare's 'missing' house

It's long been known that Shakespeare owned a property in Blackfriars – but its exact location has also long been a mystery. However, the recent discovery of three new documents by Shakespeare expert Professor Lucy Munro of King's College London has enabled her to pinpoint where he actually lived, as well as the size and layout of his house.

While the building was later destroyed in the Great Fire of London, Munro's new research uncovered plans that show the property was at the eastern end of Ireland Yard at the bottom of Burgon Street. It was purchased in 1613 – and the fact that

Shakespeare chose to buy a home so near the Blackfriars theatre possibly indicates he spent more time in London in the latter part of his career than previously thought, Munro has suggested.

'Professor Munro's fantastic discovery proves there's no replacement for human graft in the archive, and our reward for her hard work is a dazzling new sense of Shakespeare the London writer,' says Dr Will Tosh, Director of Education at the Globe.

'She has helped us to understand how much the city meant to our greatest ever dramatist, as a professional and personal home.'

Shelf life

There are big developments ahead for the Globe's new Research & Collections Centre, due to open this summer. Visitors will arrive at a beautiful timber-lined Weston Foyer featuring built-in showcases for items from the Globe's collections, while a refreshed design for air-handling, acoustics and lighting will improve accessibility and the quality of the experience. Precious archive material will be housed in climate-secure storage in the John Wolfson Rare Book Room, while the Wolfson Lecture Theatre will be a state-of-the-art facility with flexible seating, a sprung floor and a high-spec audio-visual set-up. Library and Archive staff get new offices – and absolutely everyone working there or just visiting will benefit from a stylish sweep of new all-gender toilets. Roll on this next chapter!



Triple treat

Not one, not two, but three young actors have been recognised for their performances at the Globe in this year's prestigious Ian Charleson Awards, which celebrates the best stage performances by actors under 30 in a classical role. Rawaed Asde was nominated for his performance as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*; Kasper Hilton-Hille for his role as Troilus in *Troilus and Cressida*; and Stuart Thompson for playing Andrei in *Three Sisters*. Out of 13 young actors shortlisted, the 28-year-old Thompson was awarded second prize at the ceremony in May, calling it 'incredibly galvanising' to be recognised for his performance.

The awards were set up by *The Sunday Times* and the National Theatre in recognition of the actor

Stuart Thompson as Andrei in *Three Sisters* with Natalie Klamar as Natalya (below), and Kasper Hilton-Hille (right) as Troilus in *Troilus and Cressida*. Both were nominated for an Ian Charleson Award. Photos: Tristram Kenton, Helen Murray

Ian Charleson, who died aged 40 in 1990, shortly after giving a famous final performance as Hamlet. And the prize has proved a good predictor of a successful career: former nominees and winners include David Oyelowo, Cush Jumbo, Helen McCrory, Michael Sheen, David Tennant, Ben Whishaw and Jodie Whittaker.

Globe audiences had another chance to catch Asde this summer, as he starred in *Mother Courage and Her Children*.



Strings attached

After enchanting audiences last year, *Pinocchio* returns to the Globe this winter. Here's a glimpse into how the design team crafted a world of magical puppets and dancing donkeys.

The Globe prop team work on Grace Smart's designs for *Pinocchio*.
Photos: Henri T



Love's Labour's Lost meets a Spanish fiesta in
Indiana Lown-Collins's new production. Photo:
Felicity McCabe, Art Direction: Hollie Marshall

LOVE, LABOURS... AND

Indiana Lown-Collins brings a Spanish twist
to *Love's Labour's Lost* this summer – by
sending her cast to flamenco boot camp.
Nancy Durrant finds out more

FLAMENCO!

There is nothing obvious about the relationship between Shakespeare's wordy, witty comedy *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Spanish art of flamenco. However there are, director Indiana Lown-Collins assures me, several very good reasons why it's going to work brilliantly when she combines them on the Globe stage this summer.

And not just because she's been champing at the bit to bring the two together since she was the theatre's Resident Associate Director. 'I wanted a play that had really strong women in,' she says, 'because I think that's what's so beautiful about flamenco. It's still quite patriarchal, but the women are actually the strongest

in it. I just don't think the men always know – or they pretend not to know.'

She could be talking about either the dance or the play. The latter follows the, well, dance between the King of Navarre and his companions, who have rashly sworn off female company for three years, and the Princess of France and her ladies, with whom they immediately fall in love. This precipitates a madcap sequence of concealments, disguises and revelations in which the ladies roundly outwit the men. As Lown-Collins says: 'The women are so kick-ass.'

The artform is also one that is close to Lown-Collins's heart: growing up in Spain, the director danced

'WHAT FLAMENCO DOES AMAZINGLY IS SEX AND DEATH'

– INDIANA LOWN-COLLINS



Director Indiana Lown-Collins (left) is working with flamenco dancer and choreographer Carmen Igarza (right) to bring a Spanish flavour to Shakespeare's comedy. Photos: Matt Pereira, Chris King Photography

as a child. 'When I experienced flamenco, it made me feel alive and strong and human. I think Shakespeare writes that humanity, and, also, *Love's Labour's Lost* has a few Spanish characters. So I thought, well, Shakespeare's already written Spanish culture and Spanish blood into it, so I can just expand it.'

It also creates a fascinating contrast. The male court has rejected the company of women because it's a distraction from their academic studies. The play itself relies on endless wordplay, repartee, rhetoric and puns, as well as malapropisms and pretentious grandiloquence for comic effect (it includes Shakespeare's longest word, 'honorificabilitudinitatibus'). 'I thought it could be actually really interesting to marry something super physical, like flamenco, with a play that can feel very wordy,' Lown-Collins says. She's working with the professional flamenco dancer and teacher Carmen Igarza on the production, who will help to train the cast.

Lown-Collins is particularly well placed to mitigate the textual crunchiness of the play – she was raised in a small town in rural Spain, and didn't study Shakespeare at school. 'At the beginning, I was like, "what is this language and world?" But it's been a really beautiful experience coming at it fresh, because, for me, it feels almost like new writing.'

Her approach also helps to reach a wide audience, she says. 'As someone who hasn't grown up with Shakespeare, sometimes I do watch and think, what is going on? Who are you? And what is this third subplot I've completely missed? So telling the story through dance and movement at the same time means that it's accessible to many more people, especially as it's a play that's not as well known.'

Flamenco has its origins in Andalucia, and though scholars argue endlessly about the details, Carmen Igarza tells me, the seeds were probably sown around the 15th century. Romani people from northern India travelled to and settled in the south of Spain, which at the time was under Moorish rule, but had significant Jewish and Christian populations. In what flamenco eventually became, you can hear echoes of the lyrics of 'very old Jewish songs, the Arabic influence in the guitar is there, and in the way we move the hands, you see the influence of classical Indian dance'.

Though it started out as 'a very domestic kind of dance, in social and family celebrations', Igarza says,

by the end of the 19th century 'flamenco began to be performed in coffee houses, it became something that you paid money to see performed'.

The form's unique, multicultural background is perhaps part of the reason it works so well as a storytelling medium. 'Flamenco is so dramatic, you have to be such an actress to do it,' explains Igarza. 'You have to really believe and connect with the audience.' It can express a huge range of emotions: 'We have styles that go from, like, party – kind of "look at me" – or flirty, to more comedy, all the way to angry or very sad. Comedy, loss, pain, death – flamenco has all of those.'

What the dance does amazingly is sex and death, says Lown-Collins, and that's another reason why it should work so well with *Love's Labour's Lost*: 'There's



Choreographer Carmen Igarza (below) will be leading the actors in a 'flamenco boot camp' during rehearsals. Photos: Chris King Photography, Felicity McCabe, Art Direction: Hollie Marshall

'FLAMENCO IS SO
DRAMATIC, YOU HAVE
TO BE SUCH AN ACTRESS
TO DO IT'

— CARMEN IGARZA



this battle of the sexes; love, hate, passion, flirting, and there's this amazing conversation between life and death. I'm really interested in that melancholy undercurrent. Flamenco can help bring that to the surface.'

Still, it's going to take some work. Britain is not overflowing with actors who are also experts in the intricacies of this complex dance form. The answer is a six-week daily flamenco boot camp, led by Igarza during rehearsals – three hours every morning before working on the play itself in the afternoon.

Igarza is confident it will come together, however: 'It's difficult if you do it to a very high level, but there is something about flamenco that is quite organic and quite natural. It's technical, but it's not like ballet, which is very hard on the body; you can make it accessible. I'm going to be 50 this year, and I'm still dancing.'

All you need, she says, is rhythm. 'And I think most actors have a sense of rhythm; they know how to perform, they know how to stand, to have that presence. That's what I'm looking for.'

Behind any production of an historic work lies the question, why now? Lown-Collins thinks that there's a clear contemporary resonance for *Love's Labour's Lost*.

'These characters feel like they're trying to escape something,' she says. The King of Navarre starts the play 'by shutting out everything that makes you feel, everything that makes you human. And I do think we're living in a world at the moment in which we are shutting down and shutting out. Maybe we're not retreating for three years to read books, but I think we're not connecting in the ways that we used to. So I'm interested in exploring the parallels.'

'And again, what flamenco does beautifully is bring people together. What I loved the most as a seven-year-old girl was at the fiestas, dancing with my 83-year-old neighbour. And when I moved to England, I realised that intergenerational relationships and knowing your neighbours in the same way aren't quite as much of a thing here. I really miss the fiestas, and how you all come together to share food and music and dance.'



Igarza agrees, and argues that the Globe, with its unique space, is the perfect setting: 'There's that sense of vitality and community – flamenco is something you do with other people. You need your musicians, you need your dancers, you need your audience. When I'm at the Globe watching a play and you see people reacting, that's how flamenco works. There are a lot of connections.'

'Flamenco,' says Lown-Collins, 'will represent life within the play. And for some characters that's much more tangible, and they can express themselves more, and then there are some – mainly the lords – who are suppressing it and saying, I am not going to allow it in. But the flamenco keeps bubbling up, so as the play goes on, little bits will come in as they allow themselves to open up. I think it's going to be fun.'

Developing the play has 'been quite emotional' for the director, who is a partial wheelchair user. 'When I started to use mobility aids is when I stopped dancing, and it was one of the hardest things. I didn't see anyone like me really doing it, and I think I felt embarrassed to be starting to use them.' But since working with Igarza on *Love's Labour's Lost*, something is shifting for her. Like the characters in the play, she finds herself opening up – to the possibility of how she might dance again.

'Carmen said to me, "why don't you start trying it again and learn a new way of doing it?" And looking back, I was amazing, I was really beautiful as a dancer. So I think I would like to,' says Lown-Collins. 'I'm hoping that maybe going through this experience as a director, bringing flamenco together with theatre and a playwright I love so much, might give me the courage to give it another go.'

Nancy Durrant is a culture writer and broadcaster. She is a co-host of *The London Theatre Review* podcast and writes the *London Culture Edit* Substack

Love's Labour's Lost, Globe Theatre, until 13 September



MASTERS OF WAR



Michelle Terry (left) plays Mother Courage in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the 1939 play by the German playwright and theatrical radical Bertolt Brecht (above, 1948). Photos: Felicity McCabe, Art Direction: Kim Garrity; Alamy Allstar Picture Library Ltd, AA Film Archive

As Bertolt Brecht gets his Globe debut with *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Andrzej Lukowski explores how the German theatrical innovator took inspiration from Shakespeare

Written by the great German playwright Bertolt Brecht in a month-long frenzy at the outbreak of the Second World War, *Mother Courage and Her Children* is one of the great anti-war plays – perhaps *the* great anti-war play. Following the eponymous war profiteer as she traverses Europe making a morally dubious crust during the appallingly bloody Thirty Years War, her three grown-up children die in varyingly bitter circumstances as the conflict wears on. Originally staged in Switzerland in 1941 at the height of the Second World War and then again in a blasted post-war Germany, *Mother Courage* is generally now regarded as a strong contender for the title of Brecht’s greatest work and is a quintessential part of the Western canon. Like most 19th- and 20th-century playwrights, Brecht has never been programmed at the Globe. But Artistic Director Michelle Terry has made some inroads into this in recent years, with recent debuts for Chekhov, Ibsen and Arthur Miller. When it comes to staging Brecht, however, we aren’t talking about just some stories but rather a whole system, a philosophy of what theatre could and should be. And despite the 300-year gap between their times, his ideas do feel uniquely compatible with Shakespeare, Shakespearean performance and the ethos of the Globe. While not entirely uncritical of Shakespeare,

Mother Courages pulling their carts: Fiona Shaw (below left), who played the role at the National Theatre in 2009, and Helene Weigel (below right), co-founder of the Berliner Ensemble with her husband Bertolt Brecht, in the first performance of *Mother Courage and Her Children* in German at the Deutsches Theater in 1949. Photos: Geraint Lewis, ArenaPAL; Mander and Mitchenson, University of Bristol, ArenaPAL



Anna Jordan is the author of a new version of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Photo: YellowBelly Photo

Brecht certainly thought about his work deeply, adapted many of his plays, and acknowledged him as the key playwright of the past. Writing in 1955, he wrote of the ‘need to study the structure of the classics, particularly Shakespeare’. ‘Shakespeare and Brecht loved theatre and everything that makes theatre uniquely *theatre*,’ says Terry, who plays the title role of Mother Courage this summer. ‘They never want the actor or the audience to forget that it is a play. It’s not real life.’ Terry had wanted to do *Mother Courage* for a while, and had a specific version in mind: a funny, compassionate 2019 take from playwright and screenwriter Anna Jordan. Commissioned by the Royal Exchange in Manchester and touring company Headlong, it relocated the action from the Thirty Years War to a dystopian future in which Mother Courage and her three children traversed battlefields in an old ice cream truck, rather than the more traditional wagon or cart. Jordan admits she didn’t quite ‘get’ Brecht when she came across him at drama school, particularly the famous *Verfremdungseffekt* or ‘distancing effect’ that’s central to his work, wherein the audience is always reminded that it’s watching a play. ‘Anything that suggested the audience get less emotionally involved in a play didn’t feel like my bag,’ she recalls. But she’s changed her mind over the years, and now points to Brecht’s innovations as a way to cut through the noise of our world, rather than disengage the audience emotionally. One of his key conceits was never to write a drama about literal contemporary events: so his response to the Second World War was set 300 years earlier; her take is set in a dystopian future. But that doesn’t mean his work doesn’t connect with what’s happening in the world now, or with the audience’s feelings about that. ‘It’s important to me that our audiences do feel for Mother Courage and other characters,’ says Jordan, ‘that they can put themselves in their position and feel their pain. The plight of Mother Courage needs to sing out while the audiences remain active and engaged with the story.’ Somebody else who didn’t do contemporary events was, of course, William Shakespeare. I don’t imagine I need to explain to *Globe* readers that his history plays were not wonkish documentary accounts, but dramas designed to speak to the times in which they were written. What’s more

‘MOTHER COURAGE IS A TRUE SURVIVOR’

– ANNA JORDAN

Julie Hesmondhalgh starred in the first production of Anna Jordan's version of *Mother Courage and Her Children* at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester in 2019. Photo: Richard Davenport, ArenaPAL



‘THE BEST PLAYS REMIND US THAT JUST BECAUSE THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY ARE, THEY DO NOT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE’

– MICHELLE TERRY

Brechtian than a play like *Henry V*, an endlessly malleable drama that begins by noting the audience is watching it at the Globe?

‘We know how much Brecht was influenced by Shakespeare’s plays and particularly the history plays,’ says Terry. ‘You can see this in the way Brecht uses historical settings to speak to the present day, the absence of the fourth wall, direct address, the use of song, the narrator, or chorus-type character.’ And so Terry is convinced the Globe is the perfect setting for Brecht. ‘You get the distancing effect for free at the Globe,’ she says. ‘Even the most serious of scenes are often offset by the inherent levity that comes from being outdoors. You can be performing the most harrowing and heartbreaking of scenes, but it won’t stop the pigeon landing or the rain coming down. Reality lives alongside fiction.’

So why *Mother Courage* in particular, out of the whole Brechtian canon? Pragmatically, the title character is simply a great female role, and Terry is an actor-manager. And, of course, a play about the horrors of war is always relevant, and perhaps a little more so in 2026 than in 2019. ‘The world feels crazy,’ says Jordan. ‘War is here, war is staying, war is getting closer – and that’s why this play about the impact of war on human beings feels even more important.’

‘Right now, it feels like we are living through a dark time,’ says Terry. ‘Like *Mother Courage*, we appear to be learning nothing.’ Not that she sees this as a doomy project: ‘The best plays remind us that just because things are the way they are, they do not always have to be this way.’

The Globe is a very different space from the Royal Exchange, and aside from the fact we’re getting a fresh production from director Elle While, Jordan has also tweaked her play, paring back the futuristic elements to better fit the Globe’s unique character. But what she is committed to is her take on *Mother Courage* herself. Interpretations of the character run the gamut from ‘cynical monster’ to ‘desperate, relatable mother’, but Jordan is fundamentally sure who her protagonist is.

‘As a parent I understand the struggles of co-parenting one very lively boy,’ says Jordan. ‘I can only imagine parenting three, solo, while living through war. *Mother Courage* is a true survivor. She thinks in the long term which can make her appear cruel in the short term. She’s not only driven by survival though. She’s an entrepreneur, a chancer, a fighter – and sometimes she *loves it*. She’s a truly flawed feminist anti-hero.’

‘I once described *Mother Courage* as being like Del Boy in *Only Fools and Horses*,’ she continues. Brecht might have enjoyed that: for all the cerebral theories and icy European intellect, he was a playwright of the people. And in his own way, he loved Shakespeare, who he was often compared with. His Globe debut, then, isn’t just an experiment with programming an interesting name and seeing what happens: rather, it’s something of a homecoming.

Andrzej Lukowski is theatre editor for *Time Out*

Mother Courage and Her Children, Globe Theatre, until 27 June

Why are we so obsessed with enemies-to-lovers romances? Isobel Lewis explores how Shakespeare led the way in *Much Ado About Nothing*

Wild Hearts



Much Ado About Nothing, Shakespeare's ultimate enemies-to-lovers romcom, returns to the Globe. Photo: Felicity McCabe, Art Direction: Studio Doug

What is it about the enemies-to-lovers plot that we just can't get enough of? Whether it's Lizzie Bennet and Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* or Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan in *You've Got Mail*, stories where two people meet and take an immediate dislike to one another – albeit a sexually charged one – only to fall in love down the line have dominated our culture for centuries. The list is endless: *Bridget Jones's Diary*; *10 Things I Hate About You*; *My Fair Lady*. Even *The Sound of Music*, if you really think about it. And heterosexual love stories aren't the only ones to get a look in. *Heated Rivalry* (the queer hockey romance show that recently got the world's pulses racing) and *Red, White & Royal Blue* both centred upon couples with a loud initial dislike for one another who quickly ended up together.

But Shakespeare got there first – with *Much Ado About Nothing* arguably being the ultimate enemies-to-lovers story. As the romance genre has boomed in recent years, across fiction and into film and TV, many contemporary romcoms have adopted what Chelsea Walker, the director of the Globe's summer production, calls this 'delicious' plot device. 'We love tension, conflict, power play. We love that we can see it before they can. And we love the moment when hate tips over into love – it makes the satisfaction of it so much sweeter,' she says.

And nobody did it quite like Shakespeare. Plots where enemies become lovers are spread throughout his works, from Petruchio wrangling Katherina's favour in *The Taming of the Shrew* to *Romeo and Juliet*, where born foes fall helplessly in love.

For a man writing some 400 years ago, Shakespeare produced love stories that still feel remarkably new, says

Walker. He doesn't depict romance through 'rose-tinted' glasses, she argues: 'He's writing about how hard it is to make yourself vulnerable and open and soft in a society that can be harsh and manipulative and easy to judge.'

For proof of just how caustic an attitude towards romance Shakespeare's characters can have, look no further than *Much Ado About Nothing*. Written around the turn of the 17th century, the play rotates around two romantic leads who initially can't stand each other. To even label Beatrice and Benedick as the central couple feels dicey. After all, Hero and Claudio's romance is a more prominent driver of the plot. Yet when people describe *Much Ado* as their favourite Shakespeare, they're rarely thinking about Claudio and Hero.

Beatrice and Benedick exist in opposition before he even crashes on to the stage in Messina, with Beatrice's uncle Leonato describing how the pair 'never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them'. The comment hints at a past dalliance that audiences can never know the full extent of – although Beatrice will allude to a betrayal where Benedick won her heart 'with false dice'.

Whatever happened, it must have been pretty bad given the insults that ricochet through the air during their first lexical sparring. Nobody is safe: not the other, nor their entire gender, nor, in Benedick's case, the very concepts of love and marriage themselves. When Beatrice hears this, she plays relief. 'A dear happiness to women,' she retorts, quick as a flash. 'They would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor.' It's the Shakespearean version of snapping: 'Um, I wouldn't date you anyway.'

The pair pull no punches. To Benedick, Beatrice is 'dear lady disdain': 'If her breath were as terrible

Chelsea Walker (below) directs the new production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a firm audience favourite also staged at the Globe in 2011, starring Charles Edwards and Eve Best (right). Photos: Marc Brenner, Manuel Harlan



'For me, Beatrice is Shakespeare's most contemporary female role'

– CHELSEA WALKER

as her terminations, there were no living near her; she would infect to the North Star,' he comments of her outspoken, bold language. Beatrice is equally unimpressed with what men – men like Benedick, yes, but also all men – have to offer her. When Leonato expresses hope that his niece should marry, she replies: 'Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust?'

The ability to deliver such stinging insults – while still getting an audience to root for the pair – has long made the characters appealing to actors, too. Setting the Globe's stage alight this summer are Pippa Nixon and Ken Nwosu – but the theatre has a history of memorable warring lovers. In 2024, Amalia Vitale was a witty



Beatrice and Ekow Quartey a pompous Benedick, while the great Eve Best ran rings around Charles Edwards in Jeremy Herrin's 2011 production.

And these roles have historically attracted the biggest names. Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh put the parts to film in the 1993 movie, but many famous faces have been our Beatrice and Benedick on stage: Maggie Smith and Robert Stephens, Catherine Tate and David Tennant, Hayley Atwell and Tom Hiddleston... You can see the draw: these parts require expert-level comic timing but also real chemistry and feeling between the actors.

For both halves of the couple-to-be, pride is a driving emotion. When their scheming friends trick Benedick and Beatrice into believing that the other

'Stories where two people meet and take an immediate dislike to one another only to fall in love have dominated our culture for centuries'

Much Ado About Nothing has long proved a draw for actors, with *Doctor Who* co-stars Catherine Tate and David Tennant reuniting on stage in the play at Wyndham's Theatre in 2011 (below), while the plot provided the inspiration for *Anyone But You*, with Glen Powell playing Ben and Sydney Sweeney as Bea in the 2023 romcom (right). Photos: Geraint Lewis, ArenaPAL; Sony Pictures 2023 CTMG, Inc



is head-over-heels obsessed with them, both initially take satisfaction in having bested the other. Yet within a matter of minutes, Beatrice and Benedick become comfortable with the idea that they could adore the other back. 'Love me? Why, it must be requited!' declares Benedick, while Beatrice echoes his sentiments: 'Benedick, love on; I will requite thee/ Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.' This swift shift brings to the surface a romantic – and sexual – tension that has obviously been simmering beneath their apparent dislike.

This fluctuation in feelings is one that couples at the centre of many of our favourite romances go through, from *Dirty Dancing* to *Beauty and the Beast*. Think about *When Harry Met Sally*, Nora Ephron's 1989 flick frequently heralded as the gold standard of the romcom genre. The leads have more than a whiff of the Beatrice and Benedick about them. Shakespeare's heroes, with their tirades assuming to know the opposite gender, are reflected in Billy Crystal's blunt home truths about the so-called differences between men and women (who in case you missed it, cannot be friends).

Romance stories, whether in print or on screen, are overwhelmingly consumed by women – yet women have little autonomy within the traditional marriage structure and the stories it features in. Just look to Hero and Claudio's *Much Ado* plot, where you'll see a woman humiliated over a false claim that she has been unfaithful. But the enemies-to-lovers plot, by its nature, assigns power to women.

Beatrice gives as good as she gets, and the pair are, ultimately, presented as intellectual equals. Benedick falls for Beatrice *because* of, not in spite of, this strength. This is not a case of the shrew being tamed, but both parties loving the other for who they are. These are 'incredibly modern' character traits, particularly for a female lead, Walker argues. 'For me, she's [Shakespeare's] most contemporary female role.'

So it's no wonder that *Much Ado* has continued to inspire modern romantic comedies. In 2023, audiences the world over flocked to the cinema to see Sydney Sweeney and Glen Powell in the romcom *Anyone But You*. The film became a surprise box office sleeper hit, and led to critics and industry experts declaring that the big screen romcom was back in business.

Many will have watched *Anyone But You* without twiggng that the story, about a pair of warring not-quite exes, takes direct inspiration from *Much Ado About Nothing*. That our leads are called Bea and Ben – and Bea's surname is Messina – is a hint, sure. But there is no shoe-horning in; this alive, undated plot sneaks through unchecked.

And that's what makes us return to the enemies-to-lovers plot, and to *Much Ado*'s Beatrice and Benedick, the genre's greatest representatives. It's a dynamic that's still fresh because it feels real and relatable in a way that many classic romance stories do not. And it reminds us that human relationships have always been hard, actually.

Isobel Lewis is a journalist and critic

Much Ado About Nothing, Globe Theatre, until 24 October

SiMPLY

Splendid Productions bring Shakespeare to life for young audiences. Rosemary Waugh hears how designer Rose Revitt creates a welcoming world for them



SPLENDiD

Midsummer Mechanicals, Splendid Productions' take on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was seen at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2023.
Photo: Manuel Harlan

A ruff wide enough to block a doorway, brightly coloured tentacles sneaking up out of trapdoors, smoking cauldrons, bowers of flowers... bringing to life the Globe's family shows requires an especially playful and inviting touch from a designer. A huge part of staging plays for young audiences is about making the theatre feel really welcoming, explains Rose Revitt, the designer for this summer's show, *A World Elsewhere*. 'And for me, that's about making it as visually welcoming as possible, so it feels like an exciting place, not an intimidating one.'

The set and costume designer is returning to the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse for the third time alongside writer and performer Kerry Frampton and writer and composer Ben Hales of Splendid Productions. The company specialises in theatre for young people and educational settings, running theatrical workshops in schools as well as staging their own professional productions. Their two previous shows for the Globe's indoor space, which were both directed by Lucy Cuthbertson, were *Rough Magic*, a squelchy, silly, spell-casting spin-off of *Macbeth*, and the riotous, sunshine-filled *Midsummer Mechanicals*, which gave *The Dream*'s play-within-a-play its own afterlife. Both were nominated for an Olivier award and were, according to Revitt, 'just a chance to indulge in real fun'.

In the case of those productions, the desire to make the Playhouse a welcoming space for children directly informed the design in some very practical ways. *Midsummer Mechanicals* saw the stage adorned with homespun bunting to give it a festival-like, DIY aesthetic. As the audience took their seats, the children in the pit area closest to the stage were put to work with fabric shreds making their own decorations so there was a visual link between what was on stage and what was in their own hands. And with *Rough Magic*, the design featured large sheets of gold panelling that reflected the light around the normally darkened theatre, transforming it into a brightly lit space ripe for the riotous comedy of the play.

'IT'S ABOUT MAKING IT AS VISUALLY WELCOMING AS POSSIBLE, SO IT FEELS LIKE AN EXCITING PLACE, NOT AN INTIMIDATING ONE'

- ROSE REVITT



Rose Revitt has designed all of Splendid Productions' plays at the Globe, including 2025's *Rough Magic*, starring Rosemarie Akwafo (left) as Nona. Revitt's designs (below) drew on Elizabethan fashions. Photos: Manuel Harlan, Rose Revitt



When we sit down to talk in early April, Revitt has only just had the 'white card meeting', where a designer shares a model box with the team so they can all get an idea of the overarching design concept. It is, she stresses, very much a work-in-progress, partly because of how far they are from opening night and partly because, as with all their shows, the team like to work in a collaborative and constantly evolving way. Even the script itself isn't locked down at this stage, she explains, and will continue to shapeshift until much later in the creative process.

What they do know, however, is that *A World Elsewhere* will be the story of an 11-year-old boy named Cass who has grown up with a head full of imaginary adventures aided by his Shakespeare-loving Granny. But one day, the tales stop being quite so wondrous and become a little more unsettling. Revitt's aim is to create 'a space of pure childhood creativity' where the audience feels like they have stepped inside Cass's mind. 'I want it to be like an imaginarium,' she says, 'but from the perspective of an 11-year-old boy so it's filled with all these objects that have led to this point in his life.'

The designer is no stranger to working in some of the most distinctive theatres in Britain, having previously designed for the Globe's main outdoor space and at the Manchester Royal Exchange, a venue frequently referred to as resembling some kind of spaceship. The parameters these spaces immediately place on any show and the design of it are, according to Revitt, actually a spur to creativity.



Splendid Productions return this summer with *A World Elsewhere* (left), after *Rough Magic*, starring Janet Etuk (right), and *Midsummer Mechanicals*, with Jamal Franklin and Kerry Frampton (far right). Photos: Felicity McCabe, Manuel Harlan, Art Direction: Kim Garrity and Kharis Wong

This is even more the case when it comes to creating children's theatre for the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, a space that, as Revitt points out, was not built with younger audiences in mind. For example, the sightlines can become a little bit of a challenge when you factor in audience height, as young children sitting on certain benches can struggle to see all of the stage. Instead of trying to conceal this problem, *Midsummer Mechanicals* contained a scene where Bottom stalked up and down the auditorium loudly complaining about the ridiculousness of staging a play in a theatre where the only place everyone can definitely see him is right in the middle.

Another feature of the Playhouse that the team had to grapple with was the use of candles. The famous atmospheric gloom of the flame-lit theatre wasn't the kind of environment they were hoping to share with families. But deciding to ditch the candles opened up the design possibilities in surprising ways. All that fluttering bunting, for instance, would have been far too risky if they had been mounting a show in the normal manner.

The return to Shakespeare's Globe is also an exciting prospect for Revitt because it grants her access to the 'incredible' in-house costume department and prop stores. *Midsummer Mechanicals* and *Rough Magic* both played around with recognisably 'Shakespearean' pieces of costuming in gleefully silly ways, like that giant, doorway-blocking ruff. Both shows used many existing pieces from the costume store, sometimes with clever alterations and sometimes in combination with new or other found items. Revitt describes how her design process became a continual dialogue between her free-flowing thoughts on paper and the exquisite bits of clothing she discovered while rummaging in the store. 'Sometimes a perfect



costume item would turn up, and I'd end up rearranging the rest of the design around it because it was too good not to use.'

The prop stores were another source of continual inspiration and fascination. Revitt discovered everything from a severed pig's head ('so authentic it looks freshly cooked!') to a great hoard of weaponry ('the quantity of swords and daggers is tremendous') and unexpected items left over from productions, such as inflatables and scooters.

This commitment to reusing items has the added benefit of being a more sustainable way of working. It also contains a lovely echo of the 'dressing-up box' world of kids staging makeshift plays in a bedroom filled with mess and magic. And Revitt's own creativity in thinking up a whole new world for a familiar item is beautifully fitting for this new play about the limitless imagination of a child when hearing old stories.

The unfiltered reactions of young audience members during a show are what keep her returning to work with Splendid Productions. In fact, she sees something very Shakespearean in their full-throttle vocal interjections, like those that may have arisen from the Globe Theatre groundlings of the Elizabethan era.

'Kids will always tell you what they think. They don't hide it when they're enjoying something, and they don't hide it when they don't like something,' says Revitt. 'To know you've been part of creating that sort of joy, it's just wonderful.'

Rosemary Waugh is a critic and journalist, and the author of *Running the Room: Conversations with Women Theatre Directors*

A World Elsewhere, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, until 30 August

HER NAME IS LOLA

She captured hearts last summer as Juliet. Now Lola Shalam returns to play Rosalind in *As You Like It*. The rising star tells Frey Kwa Hawking about how she's fallen in love with Shakespeare

Lola Shalam plays Rosalind
in *As You Like It* this summer.
Photo: Felicity McCabe, Art
Direction: Studio Doug



Her name is Lola

Sean Holmes's *Romeo and Juliet* last summer might be contender for the most fun the tragedy has had on stage at the Globe. Set in the Wild West, one of the standout performances was Lola Shalam's earnest, steely Juliet: clad in gingham and disarming with her humour and breathlessness, she made audiences feel her painfully young age with her fraying voice.

This summer, Shalam returns to the Globe as Rosalind in *As You Like It*, directed again by Holmes alongside Charlie Josephine, playwright of 2022's *I, Joan*, who also stars as Rosalind's love interest, Orlando. One of Shakespeare's most beloved heroines, Rosalind is a crossdressing commander of prose and pretence – who ends up schooling Orlando in how best to court her, while she's in disguise as a young male shepherd named Ganymede.

Shalam only graduated from drama school in 2023: her star is rising fast. And of her five professional roles so far, two are as Globe leads – while a third was as a witch in Simon Godwin's *Macbeth*, starring Indira Varma and Ralph Fiennes. Though Shalam immediately owns up to how surreal it is to find herself in this position as a



young actor, she's fairly dogged by Shakespeare, and for good reason: she speaks it with a rare clarity of meaning.

Turning 26 in 2026 ('It's handy,' she observes), she grew up in Wanstead, north-east London, only encountering Shakespeare at school. 'Some actors I know are like, "When I discovered *Hamlet*, off my parents' shelves..." We didn't have that on the bookshelves! It wasn't a world that felt particularly inclusive to me, or the people I was at school with.'

But she was helped into that world by a visit to the Globe. Her sharpest memory from being taken to see a 90-minute *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* production of *The Merchant of Venice* in 2014 is how close the actors were, and the lack of mics. 'I remember feeling like, oh, we're not going to be able to

Last summer, Lola Shalam starred as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (below) – but her first experience of the Globe was attending a *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* production of *The Merchant of Venice* in 2014 (left). Photos: Tristram Kenton, Amit Lennon / Deutsche Bank

‘PLAYING JULIET OPENED A WINDOW’

– LOLA SHALAM

dick about in here, we've got to be with these people.' There's a picture of her from this day, brunette and tiny, stationed right up against the stage as 'one of the gobshites' of the class.

Being gobby meant she was always called on to read aloud in class, too. 'I was trying to change the language: all the "o'ers". I thought, we'd just say "over", wouldn't we?' Shalam laughs. 'I think I only really began to marvel at the text when I had to look at it for *Romeo and Juliet*, as something you're going to have to get up and mean and say in front of loads of people. Then you go, oh my God, *that's* why he's written every single detail like that. It makes sense.'

Though Shalam enjoyed drama from an early age, her mum kept her from going all-in until she was 16, when she started at ArtsEd, a performing arts school in Chiswick; they suggested she attend solely for acting instead of her planned musical theatre stream. Commuting two hours a day for sixth form there, she was delighted not to be doing maths anymore – but her fellow students were already thinking about drama schools. 'I was like, "We're here, aren't we? What do you mean?" Their heads were in the game.'

It took three years of auditions after that, a year-long foundation course, and keeping busy with the National Youth Theatre and working in a Doc Martens shop, before she got a place at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, doing her final rounds of auditions on Zoom during the pandemic. Once there, playing parts like Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* – dedicatedly coming in with her hair in rollers and listening solely to jazz singer Blossom Dearie – she thought she'd found her groove: 'Camp, hilarious, slightly unhinged women.'

'I was always cast as the mums, or the funny little sister, or the gobshite auntie, those sorts of peripheral roles,' she recalls. 'Once Sean gave me the opportunity to play Juliet, it opened a bit of a window where it's like, oh, I could be the one falling in love, or holding the weight of a show.'

The renowned vocal coach Patsy Rodenburg, then Head of Voice at Guildhall, directed her as Edgar in an *Oedipus* and *King Lear* mashup while she was training – but taking on Juliet was another ask. Certain she'd be able to ignite the words for people who thought they didn't connect with Shakespeare – like her younger self – but wanting to know that she'd do it justice,



Her name is Lola

Rising star Lola Shalam swung onto the Globe stage in Sean Holmes's Wild West-set *Romeo and Juliet* (below), and during rehearsals (right). Photos: Tristram Kenton

Shalam turned to YouTube videos of legendary Royal Shakespeare Company's Director John Barton's televised Shakespeare workshops. She got obsessed with watching him working out the rhythm of the verse and showing where to put the stress in each line. 'Once you notice where he's put it, it doesn't make sense to put it any other way. And there's still room every night for things to move you and to affect the other person in an alive way, but it's sort of underscored by the same heartbeat.'

'It got a bit nocturnal,' she continues, 'understanding the poetry of it all. And some of the sentiment. Shakespeare said it better than I could ever say it. He's speaking on behalf of a 13-year-old girl, and he's captured her bravery and wit, and boisterousness and earnestness – this isn't some kind of reductive, swooning little girl.' Shalam is full of enthusiasm, too, for Holmes – the director who helped her actually get the words to come to life on the Globe stage. She was relieved to find

‘SHAKESPEARE SAID IT BETTER THAN I COULD EVER SAY IT’

– LOLA SHALAM



he shared a similar balance of sincerity and cynicism as her: 'It's quite nice not to be sort of shrouded in luvvie-dom, when looking at something that's so revered,' Shalam jokes. But one thing Holmes is certainly sincere about is what a bright new talent Shalam is: 'Lola is ferociously intelligent, collaborative, creative and mercurial as an actor. It's a real privilege to get to work with her again after her amazing Juliet – I love her theatrical brain, as well as her theatrical presence.' Shalam's theatrical presence is, he believes, especially well-suited to the Globe's stage – even if she admits to finding it an exposing space that comes with complicated layers of audience expectation. 'They don't come in converted,' she insists. 'Out there, you can't hide, and the audience can't. It's bizarre, because you can see every single face, so if you catch someone's eye when you're following a thought that you're trying to share with everyone, and that person isn't engaging, you notice that. And you can either lean in and try to grab them, or retreat. It's a dance, and it changes every single day.' She's delighted to be back on that stage this summer – although she also describes an initial panic at being cast as Rosalind, borne of a worry she didn't know the play well enough. But then she found that her co-directors felt the same: there was a shared acknowledgment that *As You Like It* can be a strange play, bucking expectations at every turn. For starters,

it's set in Arden – an English forest which has palm trees and a lion. While Juliet is often seen as the ultimate ingénue role, Rosalind is a slightly thornier proposition. 'There are moments where Rosalind gets really ugly, you know,' says Shalam, pointing out how 'vile' her character is to Phoebe, a shepherdess who falls for Rosalind while she's disguised as Ganymede. Not that this is off-putting; she feels ready to exercise these different acting muscles. 'I'm excited to be able to be an arsehole, or to play a showboat, or to access someone who's really indulging in something that everyone else is getting quite irritated with them for.' Shalam won't start rehearsals until July, but she knows Josephine and Holmes are hoping to create an *As You Like It* which feels like a night out that's gone on too long, with people forgetting and revealing too much of themselves. Describing the production's intended sense of freedom and fizzy recklessness makes Shalam remember the drag queens and firebreathers who populated her own first night out, with her mum, who worked as a photographer for burlesque and cabaret clubs when she was a teenager. They'll be bottling that kind of spirit, she promises: 'It will be like a big party, a big summer festival. Let's go out into the woods and feel it.'

Frey Kwa Hawking is a writer, critic and Associate Dramaturge at the Bush Theatre
As You Like It, Globe Theatre, 14 August to 25 October

Audrey Brisson as Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Globe this season. Photo: Helen Murray



DREAM BIG

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time. Holly Williams hears how the Globe is shining new light on the subject

When the king and queen of the fairies Oberon and Titania argue, the whole natural world is thrown into crisis. 'And thorough this distemperature we see the seasons alter,' says Titania, when ill-met by moonlight near the start of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She reprimands her estranged lover with news that, thanks to their fall-out, 'the spring, the summer, the childing autumn, angry winter change their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world, by their increase, now knows not which is which'.

There are times today when reading about extreme weather events – catastrophic floods or driest summers on record – it feels like Shakespeare's fairy royalty must be in the grip of an almighty row. But, of course, there's an all-too-human reason behind our increasing sense that nature is being turned upside down: man-made climate change.

The past 11 years have been the 11 warmest on record, according to the World Meteorological Organization, and to avert the worst impacts of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to below 1.5 degrees. We all know how important it is to reduce emissions – but in a world riven with global conflicts and repeated financial shocks, holding up climate change as the number one issue facing all of us can still be a challenge.

However, every organisation has its part to play – and for the Globe, that has meant making a commitment to sustainability at every level. 'The Globe is a building made of a thousand oak trees, open to the elements on the bank of the River Thames: it is of the environment,' says Artistic Director Michelle Terry. 'In terms of our carbon footprint, we are comparatively light because we do not use vast amounts of electricity to power lights and sound – but we can always do more. Our new organisational strategy has climate action at the heart of it.' This includes carbon monitoring for gas, electric, water and waste with the aim of being net zero by 2030.

But it also means putting climate change centre stage: through exciting commissions, experimental productions and a brand-new playwriting prize. 'Storytelling and our imagination are some of the most powerful tools we have,' says Terry. 'We need to pay attention to the stories we are telling ourselves about planet Earth, stories that will inspire us to take action. But it is not just the stories we tell – it's also the way that we tell them.'

And, aptly, this summer it is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that's been told in a new way. On 28 June, Emily Lim's new production had a special off-grid performance, exploring how far the theatre could move towards a low-energy production.

The Globe is famously a theatre space 'guided by daylight' – so what's the big deal in going off-grid, the casual audience member might think? Staging *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in midsummer, wouldn't there be plenty of natural daylight to perform in? But such unplugged experiments are about far more than just how an actor finds their light. It's about paying attention to how energy is used all around the building, from the freezers that keep your interval ice-cream cool to the computers in the box office that hold your tickets – as well as gathering information about audience behaviours.

'We need to pay attention to the stories we are telling ourselves about planet Earth'

- MICHELLE TERRY

The Globe is built of over a thousand oak trees, and invites audiences to watch theatre under open skies. Photo: Leora Bermeister

'What happens if we switch off our monitors backstage, and don't air condition the green room? What happens if we ask audiences to record and be mindful of the way they travelled in, and what they ate in the interval?' asks Guy Jones, New Work Associate at the Globe.

Alongside the off-grid *Dream*, the Globe also featured a Climate Open House on 21 June, 'throwing open the doors of all of our spaces to host the conversation around the climate crisis in a playful, inclusive way,' says Jones. A 'Letters to the Earth' event saw visitors reading aloud their own love letter to the planet from the Globe's main stage. Community choir Acapellies performed their *WildSong* concert, while actor Paul Ready shared his monologue *Little Animals*, about our loss of connection with nature. Looking further ahead, the theatre will host *MakeBeth* in the autumn: where young audiences help to create a unique cardboard set using only waste cardboard from the Globe's workshops and offices.

Earlier this year, the Globe launched The Climate Playwriting Prize, a brand-new competition to find the most exciting new plays about the climate crisis, and this also opened for entries in June. The winner will receive £15,000 plus support towards a production. The competition is run in collaboration with Fern Culture, an environmental storytelling consultancy, and Climate Spring, a TV development company, alongside partner theatres around the UK.





‘The Climate Playwriting Prize will fire up writers to think big and be bold’

‘Individualism has got us into this mess. It is cooperation and collaboration that will get us out of it,’ says Terry, adding that she hoped the prize would result in ‘a huge catalogue of plays ready to be developed or produced’.

Yet climate change plays can have a bad rep, acknowledges Jones, with the received wisdom being that it’s ‘very hard to write a play about the climate crisis’ – and also that ‘even if you put them on, no one will come anyway’. But Jones believes both these truisms are now out of date.

‘I felt like I wanted to challenge both of those,’ he says. ‘I think it’s a responsibility to be making work about the world that we live in, and the climate crisis is *the* story of our time.’ He also holds the firm belief that storytelling could be part of the solution: ‘How can we imagine a way through a crisis? The easiest story to tell about the climate crisis is one of



Emily Lim's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (far left) had an experimental off-grid performance this summer, while in the autumn *MakeBeth* – a version of *Macbeth* where the set is collaboratively made out of waste cardboard – visits the Globe (left). Photos: Helen Murray, Paul Blakemore

dystopias, of a very bleak future... where are the stories of collective action? I felt like there was a platform here to energise and galvanise the industry.’

The hope is that this nationally significant prize will fire up writers to think big and be bold. Certainly, it sparked immediate interest: within weeks of announcing the prize, over 500 writers had signed up for more information.

And the invitation is there to think expansively about what a ‘climate play’ might be. ‘We’re very, very open-minded,’ Jones says – so long as the plays ‘have a really meaningful relationship to the climate crisis. It’s not enough to be a romcom that is set on a stormy day – it needs to be bound up in the way that characters are thinking, feeling and acting. We’re interested in proper human drama that talks about the emotional cost of living through this time.’

The winner of the prize will be announced this winter. But for audiences whose appetite for climate plays has been whetted, Timberlake Wertenbaker’s new play *The Animals Come to the Table* fits the bill – and will be part of the winter season in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. The play is ‘essentially about a peace process instigated by animals’, says the playwright. The new full-length script grew out of a short play she wrote for *Burnt at the Stake*, the Globe’s innovative project staging short plays anonymously in 2023 – another initiative encouraging fearless writing from playwrights.

‘It’s set somewhere in the near future,’ says Wertenbaker of her play. ‘I’ve always been fascinated by language and there are recent and amazing discoveries about the language of animals, including interspecies communication. And if you can decode a language, you can also translate it both ways. And then maybe listen and learn.’ Not, she adds, that she set out to write a climate play: it was a happy accident it fitted with what the Globe was also thinking about.

But she adds: ‘I’m sure a lot of playwrights are thinking about climate change – because who isn’t?’

Holly Williams is an author, journalist and editor of the theatre Substack *Exeunt* and *Globe* magazine. Her novels *What Time is Love?* and *The Start of Something* are published by Orion

The Climate Playwriting Prize deadline for submissions is 1 September

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Globe Theatre, until 29 August

The Animals Come to the Table, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, 11 December to 24 January 2027

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

This year's *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* production was a version of *Romeo and Juliet* directed by the Globe's Director of Education Lucy Cuthbertson. Photo: Cesare De Giglio

More than 330,000 schoolchildren have watched a show in the Globe for free, thanks to *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*. This year, the partnership celebrates a milestone 20th year



Over the past 20 years, *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, the Globe’s flagship education programme, has enabled over 330,000 state secondary school students from London and Birmingham to watch a Shakespeare play live, often for the first time, and entirely for free. Every year, the Globe stages a specially adapted performance of a key text which is designed to support young people as they build towards their GCSEs, like this year’s *Romeo and Juliet*, a modern and accessible interpretation abridged to a thrilling 90 minutes. Participating schools also receive free-to-access wraparound activity including Continued Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, bespoke workshops and digital learning resources through the project’s dedicated microsite.

The partnership with Deutsche Bank influences and inspires countless young people and has been doing so for two decades. This milestone reflects the collaboration and trust that exists between Shakespeare’s Globe and one of the world’s leading financial services providers. Such longevity and stability has allowed *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* to create meaningful and lasting social change.

At a special event at the Globe in March to celebrate the project’s 20th anniversary, broadcaster Brenda Emmanus OBE spoke to Vathany Vijayaratra, UK and Ireland CEO of

Deutsche Bank, and Stella Kanu, CEO of Shakespeare’s Globe. They were joined by Aoife Gaston – an actor who visited the Globe as part of the project when she was a student and returned to act in a *Playing Shakespeare* performance in 2023 – and Kate Tillyer, a teacher who has been bringing her students to the Globe as part of the programme for many years. – *Holly Williams*

This conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

Brenda Emmanus Theatre, as we all know, has always depended on patronage – from Shakespeare’s own time to today – and the arts flourish when organisations recognise their value not only as cultural treasures, but as powerful tools for education, for connection, and for social change. Through *Playing Shakespeare*, thousands of young people have had the chance to experience Shakespeare live, many of them for the very first time. But when did you first meet Shakespeare?

Stella Kanu I was always a reader as a child, and Shakespeare was one of my earliest literary loves. So when, at 15, my drama teacher took a group of us to the National Theatre to see *Antony & Cleopatra*, I thought I was in for magic. But I was horrified. ‘This is

Hayden Mampasi as Romeo in *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank: Romeo and Juliet* (left), and the panel celebrating 20 years of the partnership (right), with chair Brenda Emmanus speaking to Stella Kanu, Vathany Vijayaratra, Aoife Gaston and Kate Tillyer. Photos: Cesare De Giglio, Nina Photography

‘WE CAN BUILD TRUST WITH TEACHERS AND ENCOURAGE AN ABILITY TO TEACH SHAKESPEARE IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY’

– STELLA KANU





School children get the chance to watch *Romeo and Juliet* for free during school visits to the Globe thanks to *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* (left). Broadcaster Brenda Emmanus interviews the Globe's CEO Stella Kanu as part of the panel discussion (below). Photos: Cesare De Giglio, Nina Photography



‘WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE SEE THE PLAYS ON THE STAGE, THERE IS THIS OFFER TO OWN SHAKESPEARE FOR YOURSELF’

– STELLA KANU

not what I imagined,’ I remember thinking. In fact, I was so disappointed that I left at the interval! It was only a few years later that I realised what exactly I had walked out on: Dame Judi Dench and Anthony Hopkins. Even now, I can only laugh at it...

Emmanus Vathany, what was your experience? Is it very similar?

Vathany Vijayaratna So mine’s a little bit more ordinary than that! The play that introduced me to Shakespeare was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, when I went to secondary school. When I first opened the text and sat in my English lesson, I just thought: ‘What is this? I can’t understand this?’ But the school did something that really resonates with why we’re here today, because in addition to reading the play in English, the sixth formers set up a drama club at lunchtimes. In addition to bringing the play to life, it created that sense of community: meeting people, having a bit of a laugh and forming friendships.

Emmanus Aoife, when did you meet Shakespeare?

Aoife Gaston We did a production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. I just fell in love with it. I played Bottom as a kid. That’s how I became an actor, because my parents were like, ‘You just shine on stage – you just became this completely different person.’

Emmanus Let’s talk about the long-term relationship between the Globe and Deutsche Bank. There have been 20 years of stability in the project – what would you say that’s enabled you to do this?

Kanu Lots and lots of things. Obviously, there’s the scale that we are able to operate at, in terms of young people coming through the doors. But there are other benefits, like the idea that we can build trust with teachers and encourage an ability to teach Shakespeare in a completely different way. And there’s also something about the real confidence that comes with *Playing Shakespeare* – when young people see Shakespeare’s plays on the stage, there is this offer to *own Shakespeare* for yourself. The more it becomes alive and speaks to every person present, the easier it is to see that Shakespeare is for everybody.

Culture is for everyone – so how do we encourage people to see theatre and culture as one of their five a day? To have a good life, we need to have access to culture. We’re giving theatre to young people in the early phase of their lives, expecting that it has an impact cognitively and emotionally.

Emmanus Vathany, from a corporate perspective, why has *Playing Shakespeare* been so important to you?

Vijayaratna For us, there are a few things that have made it very successful. Firstly, because it’s a long-term partnership, it really does build that relationship, and not just through our corporate social responsibility, but actually with the employees and the whole firm. When I look at this programme over the 20 years – and I’ve been at Deutsche Bank over 20 years – it resonates because it is embedded. About 16,000 tickets have been bought by employees to come and see the shows. People have client events here, and clients bring their families. I’ve seen a number of the plays through *Playing Shakespeare*: I bring my children, my mother and my mother-in-law, and they love it. We have even started recently having employees volunteer here as stewards.

The other thing is it resonates with the values that we have. We’re a people business, and the partnership really works for us because it’s about opening-up horizons, it’s



about creating opportunities for young people who might not otherwise see themselves in these spaces.

Also, we are a large employer in the UK and in the City of London, and the Globe is on our doorstep. So it matters to us that we understand the responsibilities that we have to the community around us. And because it's Shakespeare, it's a marquee thing. For us as an organisation, this reflects how we approach our responsibilities more broadly, understanding our role locally in the communities we are part of, while connecting to our wider global impact.

Emmanuel You must be called on for support all the time. Why have you made the arts a priority?

Vijayaratna Education is a core pillar of what we think is important for us to build a good long-term business. When people who want to work for us ask what we look for, we

say we look for curiosity, resilience, critical thinking and the ability to understand different perspectives. These are the skills that watching Shakespeare starts to spark: trying something that maybe looks a bit difficult to start with but isn't... That is not to say that all the young people who come to watch *Playing Shakespeare* want to work for Deutsche Bank – that's not the intention! The intention is that they build the skills that are useful more generally, and they enjoy it.

Emmanuel Katie, many of us meet Shakespeare in the classroom. How do the children respond when he is performed live?

Katie Tillyer Loudly! Seeing the play actually being performed here and now is really powerful for them. And the Globe is quite unique, as it enables them to react and interact – and that's fantastic for their learning and engagement.

'WE LOOK FOR CURIOSITY, RESILIENCE, CRITICAL THINKING... SKILLS THAT WATCHING SHAKESPEARE STARTS TO SPARK'

– VATHANY VIJAYARATNA

Vathany Vijayaratna, UK and Ireland CEO of Deutsche Bank, in conversation with Aoife Gaston, an actor who performed in a *Playing Shakespeare* production in 2023, and Kate Tillyer, a teacher who brings students to the Globe every year (right). Pupils respond to the *Playing Shakespeare* production of *Romeo and Juliet* earlier in 2026 (above right). Photos: Nina Photography, Cesare De Giglio



Seeing it performed as well as just hearing the language really opens it up – to the point where I think I've had students say to me after a performance at the Globe: 'But they weren't speaking Shakespearean.' And I say: 'Well yes, they were, they haven't changed the play...' But I understand their reaction: because they can see the actors, they understand the emotion behind the language.

Emmanuel Aoife, you've performed in *Playing Shakespeare*. What is the experience like, playing to that audience?

Gaston When there's a kiss or a fight, you get an eruption of sound and response; it's insane – I love it. I think it is the closest to a Shakespearean audience that you're going to get.

Emmanuel And for you, Stella, when you look at the young people taking part, is there any particular 'aha' moment when you think: 'This is really working'?

Kanu Last year, there was a moment when probably about 30 young people were very loudly reciting the script that they knew. They were following along with it. And it's a sound I've never, ever heard before. That, for me, was something quite special.

The *Playing Shakespeare* project encompasses so many elements that are under threat now – creative access, cultural engagement and the belief that great art

should be open to everyone. And that's why partnerships like this are so important. For us here, the endeavour is always about 'Shakespeare for all'. It's always about being able to get under the hood of why and how Shakespeare's plays can still be relevant.

And we also want to be an example of what a good partnership looks like – not just for ourselves, but to encourage others to think about doing similar things.

Emmanuel How do you see the relationship evolving over the next 20 years. What would success look like?

Vijayaratna For me, it's that it does continue to evolve. Last year, I attended a performance where some of the children from the schools took part in a competition and at the end the winner came up and performed their own soliloquy. Firstly, it was a phenomenal piece of writing, but it was also just an amazing way to see how *Playing Shakespeare* has evolved – that it's gone from sitting and watching to somewhat co-creating. It's really nice to see that the Globe is thinking about what it takes to engage young people. And the work that you do here, whether it be on violence or thinking about social cohesion, shows that the themes that come through Shakespeare are still so relevant in today's world. I hope that we can continue to be part of that story.

Holly Williams is an author, journalist and editor of the theatre Substack *Exeunt* and the *Globe* magazine. Her novels *What Time is Love?* and *The Start of Something* are published by Orion

The Globe is putting inclusion at the centre of everything it does. Natasha Tripney discovers how

ACCESS ALL AREAS

Blanche McIntyre's bilingual production of *Antony & Cleopatra* in 2024 featured BSL and integrated captions, and starred Nadia Nadarajah and John Hollingworth. Photo: Ellie Kurttz

When Shakespeare's Globe was being designed, the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act, which promotes equal access to public space, had yet to come into force. Access considerations were not a priority, explains Sarah Howard, who is Head of Access at Shakespeare's Globe. Today, however, access and inclusion are central pillars of the organisation – from ensuring disabled audience members have agency in how they experience a show to making sure accounts of disabled lives are visible within the Globe's historical archive.

'We're one of the few venues in the UK with a dedicated access team,' Howard says, adding that the theatre offers one of the highest numbers of assisted performances in the country. For every single production in the Globe Theatre and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, there are a range of captioned, BSL-interpreted, audio described and relaxed performances. There are also touch tours to further enhance the experience for disabled theatregoers, while steps are currently being taken to turn the Globe into a dementia-friendly venue.

Howard – who was recently appointed as the Government's Disability and Access Ambassador for Arts and Culture – believes offering people choice is a crucial part of inclusion. At many venues, disabled theatregoers have limited options, particularly when it comes to seating. At the Globe, plans are in place to expand seating options for wheelchair users in the main auditorium, enabling people to choose what best suits their needs, including ticket price and sightline.

A disabled theatregoer's journey begins well before they arrive at the venue. As a wheelchair user herself, Howard understands this first-hand. Recent research, through the 2025 Access Culture Survey, highlights an unmet demand for better accessibility information. 'Without easily accessible key information, many disabled people will simply not take the risk of attending a performance,' says Howard. 'You may as well put a big moat around the Globe.'

Access videos on the Globe website guide visitors through the building and both venues, reducing uncertainty. 'We provide visual, verbal and written information,' Howard explains. There are visual stories for each performance designed to help neurodivergent audiences and others with specific access requirements understand what to expect from a show beforehand – reducing anxiety. Again, it all boils down to flexibility and choice, and giving people what they need to make informed decisions.

The Globe is, of course, a re-creation of an Elizabethan playhouse, open to the elements with largely wooden seating, neither of which is particularly compatible with accessibility. While it can't control the British weather, there are always ways to ensure people are made to feel as comfortable and welcome as possible. 'One of the biggest

Helping put inclusivity at the centre of the Globe's mission is Sarah Howard, Head of Access (left). Zeon Campbell-Nottage performs as part of *A Night in Sign*, a BSL cabaret night at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (right), and Nadia Nadarajah and John Hollingworth lead the cast of *Antony & Cleopatra* (below). Photos: Sophie Underwood, Charlie Swinbourne, Ellie Kurttz



'ONE OF THE BIGGEST BOUNDARIES TO ACCESS IS ATTITUDE'

– SARAH HOWARD

boundaries to access is still attitude,' points out Howard. 'When the attitude is right, it says to people, look, we will make this work for you.'

Howard and her team are also responsible for ensuring inclusion encompasses creatives and staff. Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists feature in the majority of productions, both on stage and off. This includes Globe Associate Artist Indiana Lown-Collins, who makes her directing debut at the theatre this summer with *Love's Labour's Lost* (see page 14). Disabled creatives are also shaping the way access is incorporated into productions, says Howard. Rachel Bagshaw's 2024 production of *The Duchess of Malfi*, which starred Francesca Mills in the title role, used creative captioning – in which captions are embedded into the set design – to bring a playful contemporaneity to some of that play's more challenging scenes. 'Accessibility is the watchword for this production,' *Time Out* commented in its review.



‘OUR AIM IS TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE FEELS VISIBLE, VALUED AND HEARD’

– SARAH HOWARD

Recently, the organisation has adopted a more people-first approach, Howard says, in an attempt to shift the narrative around inclusion and disability. ‘Through the stories we tell on stage and the people we choose to collaborate with, we hold both a responsibility and an opportunity to reshape perceptions. Our aim is to ensure that everyone feels visible, valued and heard.’ This shift is reflected internally at the Globe, with the proportion of staff identifying as disabled increasing from eight per cent to 19 per cent in the past year.

‘The historical narrative around disability has long been defined by limitation and negativity,’ Howard says. With over three decades of experience in access and the arts, she acknowledges the progress made in rights, visibility and opportunity, but emphasises how much remains to be done: ‘Access has to be at the heart of an organisation. Because when we improve access, we don’t just open doors, we change how disability is seen and understood.’ And that thinking extends to every level of the organisation, from exhibitions to the education programme – and certainly includes the research department.

The Globe is in the process of developing a new Research & Collections Centre, which will house the organisation’s extensive archives. Earlier this year the theatre hosted Disability and the Archives: Access, Absences and



Participants in a Globe family workshop for the Deaf and BSL users (far left), and a touch tour at the Globe, assisted by Access Ambassador volunteers (left). Photos: Cesare De Giglio, Alex May Covell

Action, a two-day virtual conference exploring the ways in which disabled lives have been recorded, obscured, or erased across literary, performance and institutional records. ‘Archives tend to give greater priority to what I call the “default human”, someone who is a man, who is white, and who is non-disabled,’ explains Philip Milnes-Smith, the Globe’s Digital Archivist.

Locating disabled people in the archives is not straightforward – not because they aren’t there, but because they have, up to now, been difficult to uncover. There was an awareness, Milnes-Smith says, that disabled people were not findable through the catalogue, for researchers or staff. Steps have been taken to address this, including the creation of four new research guides on finding race, disability, queerness and gender in performances of Shakespeare’s plays and in the texts themselves.

Previously, if you were to search the archive using the terms ‘disabled’ or ‘disability’, you would get only four results. Now, the research guide offers a ‘disability lens’ on 70 Shakespeare characters, as well as identifying plays by other writers which have been performed at the Globe that also have disabled characters.

‘It’s currently an issue with scholarship that our understanding of disability is rooted in a modern understanding of it, so that any reaching back becomes difficult,’ explains Milnes-Smith. Ways of thinking about disability evolve over time, as does the language surrounding it. Words that would have been commonly used in the past are no longer appropriate. As an archivist, he says, it’s important to be aware that applying modern terms to the past can be problematic – but so can using the outdated and derogatory terms of the time. Both approaches need to be interrogated.

‘This ties into the broader question of who is doing the description and the extent to which the description is still in the hands of the people who had this power in the past.’ Lived experience is key to this, says Milnes-Smith, who is himself autistic. In historical records, disabled people were often being described or categorised by people who had no personal experience of the things about which they were writing.

But there’s also a similar issue with modern archivists not having any lived experience of disability. This was one of the reasons the Globe recruited an inclusion advisory panel to help create the guides, featuring people with experience of disability.

‘It’s important to remember that disability is a club that any of us could join at any moment,’ says Milnes-Smith. Most of us, as we age, will experience it to some degree. So these conversations affect us all – and they are evolving. ‘Shakespeare should be accessed by everyone,’ says Howard. ‘We’re constantly looking at ways that we can develop and take things forward.’

Natasha Tripney is the international editor of *The Stage* and writes the European theatre Substack *Café Europa*

What's On



Globe Theatre

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Until 29 August

Much Ado About Nothing

Until 24 October

Love's Labour's Lost

17 July–13 September

As You Like It

14 August–25 October

Pinocchio

28 November 2026–3 January 2027

Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

A World Elsewhere

25 July–30 August

Globe Young Company 2026:

The Pineapple Club

10–11 October

MakeBeth

24 October–1 November

Julius Caesar

6 November 2026–14 February 2027

The Animals Come to the Table

11 December 2026–24 January 2027

The Seagull

15 January–10 April 2027

King John

20 February–11 April 2027

Family events

Sword Fighting Demonstration

Until 29 October

Ghosts & Ghouls Family Tour

Until 31 October

As You Like It: Family Workshop (5–8 years and 9–11 years)

27–30 October

Twelfth Night: Family Workshop (5–8 years and 9–11 years)

27–31 October

Pinocchio: Puppetry and Drama Workshop (5–8 years and 9–11 years)

28 November–19 December

Pinocchio: Puppetry and Drama Workshop for the Deaf and BSL users (5–8 years and 9–11 years)

17 December

Events

Pride Guided Tour

Until 26 October

Shakespeare's True Crimes Walking Tour

Until 30 October

The Globe Talks: Love's Labour's Lost

2 September

The Globe Talks: As You Like It

16 September

Research in Action: Editing in Action

17 September

Research in Action: Global Early Modern Stage

7 October

Shakespeare and Race Festival

October

Courses

Young Actors Short Course (8–10 years and 11–13 years)

Until 6 April 2027

Members' Events



Heaven to Hell Backstage Tour

Our exclusive Members-only Heaven to Hell backstage tour gives you a view of the Globe you can't see anywhere else.

Join us in the heavenly attic towering above the theatre before descending into the depths of 'hell' underneath the stage to discover the secrets behind how our productions are staged. You'll have the opportunity to visit our backstage stores and see props and costumes from iconic Globe productions before experiencing the thrill our actors feel when they step out on to the stage.

'I had an amazing time on the Heaven to Hell tour getting to see and experience parts of the Globe I could only previously imagine. I've seen many productions over the years, and future visits are only going to be enhanced having now seen "behind the curtain".'

– Greg, Friend of Shakespeare's Globe

'I absolutely loved this tour. I visit the theatre regularly and have been on a few of the other tours, but this was excellent. The tour guide was so informative. It was so interesting to hear his stories and anecdotes, especially about shows and actors I had seen. I felt totally uplifted and enthused about the building.'

– Julie, Friend of Shakespeare's Globe

Dates:

Saturday 11 July – 10am

Saturday 29 August – 10am

Sunday 14 February 2027 – 9.30am

Saturday 10 April 2027 – 10am

Tickets, £20, can be booked online or through the Membership Office on friends@shakespearesglobe.com

My Shakespeare

Meet George Fouracres – the *Saturday Night Live UK* star who's played Hamlet and Falstaff at the Globe

What do you do at the Globe?

I am an actor and an associate artist.

What do you do when you're not at the Globe?

Currently, I spend my time writing and performing on a television show called *Saturday Night Live UK*, where we make nice hot fresh comedy for you every week. So fresh it still has that new comedy smell when it comes out. Also, my hobbies are film photography, playing Pokémon games, reading history books... and cats.

Why is the Globe a special place for you?

It is the first place I really got to be the actor I had always wanted to be. Performing in a beautifully encapsulated world and telling huge, gorgeous stories that could take place anywhere in space and time and still be as familiar as your childhood bedroom. It is an inclusive, compassionate, wild and strange place, and I love it.

What brought you to the Globe?

Associate Artistic Director Sean Holmes, who absolutely rolled the dice on a confused 29-year-old customer service manager whose career had mainly consisted of sketch comedy, poetry/folk scratch nights and a bit of stand-up.

What has been your favourite production?

A solid tie between *Hamlet* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. *Hamlet* because I am ferociously proud that we made something new, challenging and brave that connected with my generation, particularly my generation of



George Fouracres in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Globe in 2025. Photo: Marc Brenner

people living with mental illness and psychosis (I have bipolar disorder), even if my accent (I'm from the Black Country) and performance (sometimes I'm funny) annoyed some of the old guard (good!). *The Merry Wives of Windsor* because I am deeply in love with Sir John Falstaff, that foul old rascalion, and I got to build a love story with Kat Pearce, one of the greatest actors I have ever met. True, true honours, both.

What does Shakespeare mean to you?

For me, he's a spectacularly rare and gleaming insight into the emotional vocabulary of English people beyond London in the Early Modern Period. Since he's not a 'university man' he doesn't have the lofty, confected style of his contemporary playwrights, and obviously there's something unique in the way he saw the world so clearly but so mysteriously. Hearing the language of Warwickshire farmers and tradesmen spoken by

Venetian dukes and fairy queens, and that echoing down the ages for the whole of the English-speaking world, is nuts. And fantastic.

What has been your favourite moment at the Globe?

Performing 'To be, or not to be' in front of my parents.

What's the best part of your job?

Trying not to sound pretentious: the best thing is *hearing* people *listening*. I've always tried to bear in mind that in the 16th and 17th centuries people said they went to 'hear the plays', not 'watch' them. You spend weeks in rehearsals trying to bring these stories to life, but when you're on stage speaking and you clock that people are actually following and engaging with what's going on, and possibly also having a whale of a time, that is an enormous privilege to experience.

Who would be your dream guest to a show at the Globe?

Ireland's 'Pirate Queen', Grace O'Malley. She came over in 1593 for an audience with Queen Elizabeth I at Greenwich Palace and refused to bow as she was chieftainess of the clan Uí Mháille of County Mayo, where many of my ancestors came from. I'd like to think that as one of the terms of the temporary deal she negotiated with Elizabeth in exchange for peace in Western Irish waters, she was given a ticket to one of Shakespeare's plays, maybe in the royal box (I know the Globe wasn't there until 1599, but bear with me, it's my fantasy). Then she and her lads could clap along with the jig, have a few drinks afterwards and sail away from the South Bank.

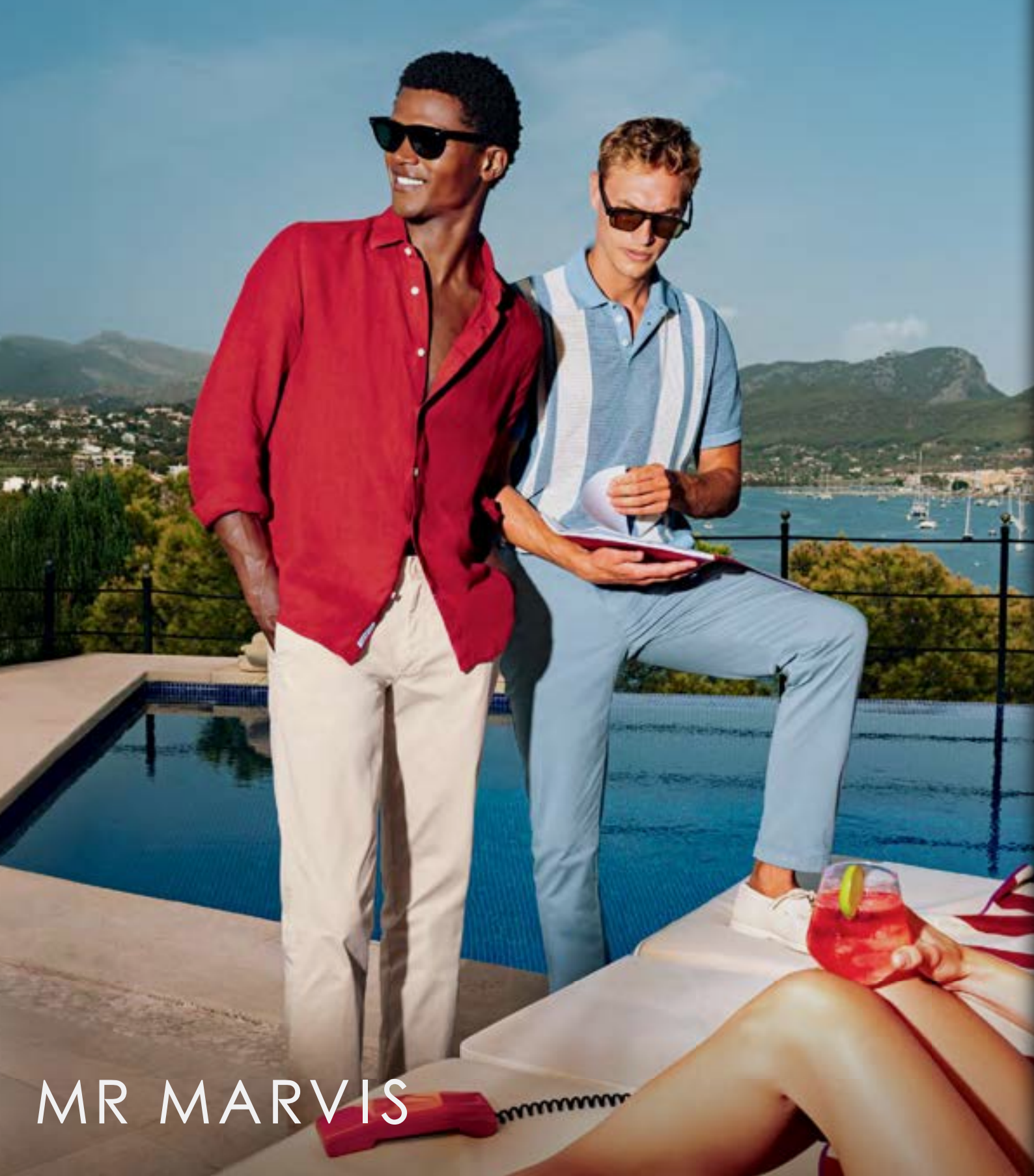
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