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Edited by Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper
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Shakespeare's Globe

From 1997 Shakespeare's Globe flourished once more on London's South Bank after an absence of four hundred years. The playhouse is now a major attraction for theatregoers, scholars, tourists, teachers and students of all ages, who come to experience Shakespeare's plays and those of his contemporaries performed in their original conditions.

The team of artists and education specialists who made this happen come together here to reflect on their ten-year experiment. Principal actors, designers, musicians and Globe Education staff engage with international scholars in a lively debate about the impact of this extraordinary building. Featuring an in-depth interview with former Artistic Director Mark Rylance and a contribution from Patrick Spottiswoode, Founder and Director of Globe Education, the book highlights the complex relationship between designer, composer, actor and audience that gives energy to this thriving Shakespearean centre.

CHRISTIE CARSON is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at Royal Holloway, University of London.

FARAH KARIM-COOPER is Lecturer in Globe Education, oversees all research activities at Shakespeare's Globe and chairs the Globe Architecture Research Group.

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Edited by

CHRISTIE CARSON

and

FARAH KARIM-COOPER



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CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of colour plates</i>	x
<i>Notes on the editors</i>	xi
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xii
Foreword ANDREW GURR	xvii
Acknowledgements	xxi
Introduction	I
CHRISTIE CARSON AND FARAH KARIM-COOPER	
I The 'essence of Globeness': authenticity, and the search for Shakespeare's stagecraft	13
FRANKLIN J. HILDY	
PART I: THE 'ORIGINAL PRACTICES' PROJECT	27
Introduction	29
CHRISTIE CARSON	
Stage action	35
2 'Practising behaviour to his own shadow'	37
TIM CARROLL	
3 'Original practices' at the Globe: a theatre historian's view	45
ALAN C. DESSEN	
Stage appearance	55
4 Exploring early modern stage and costume design	57
JENNY TIRAMANI	
5 Cosmetics on the Globe stage	66
FARAH KARIM-COOPER	
	v

CONTENTS

	Music and sound	77
6	Music and aural texture at Shakespeare's Globe CLAIRE VAN KAMPEN	79
7	Music, authenticity and audience DAVID LINDLEY	90
	Actor/audience interaction	101
8	Research, materials, craft: principles of performance at Shakespeare's Globe MARK RYLANCE	103
9	Democratising the audience? CHRISTIE CARSON	115
	PART II: GLOBE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH	127
	Introduction FARAH KARIM-COOPER	129
10	Contextualising Globe Education PATRICK SPOTTISWOODE	134
11	'That scull had a tongue in it, and could sing once': staging Shakespeare's contemporaries JAMES WALLACE	147
12	Learning with the Globe FIONA BANKS	155
13	Research and the Globe MARTIN WHITE	166
	PART III: RESEARCH IN PRACTICE: PRACTICE IN RESEARCH	175
	Introduction CHRISTIE CARSON AND FARAH KARIM-COOPER	177
14	Performing early music at Shakespeare's Globe CLAIRE VAN KAMPEN, KEITH MCGOWAN AND WILLIAM LYONS	183
15	Discoveries from the Globe stage MARK RYLANCE, YOLANDA VAZQUEZ AND PAUL CHAHIDI	194
16	Directing at the Globe and the Blackfriars: six big rules for contemporary directors RALPH ALAN COHEN	211

CONTENTS

Conclusions	226
CHRISTIE CARSON AND FARAH KARIM-COOPER	
Afterword	230
GORDON McMULLAN	
<i>Appendix 1: Globe Theatre and 'Essence of Globeness' projects since 1970</i> by Franklin J. Hildy	234
<i>Appendix 2: A draft Artistic Policy – 1988</i>	236
<i>Appendix 3: Ten Commandments for the new Globe by Alan C. Dessen, 1990</i>	237
<i>Appendix 4: Shakespeare's Globe productions 1996–2007</i>	239
<i>Appendix 5: 'Read Not Dead' staged readings</i>	243
<i>Appendix 6: Globe Quartos</i>	253
Bibliography	254
Index	260

ILLUSTRATIONS

1	Old Globe Theatre, Century of Progress International Exhibition – World's Fair, 1933–4, Chicago, Illinois (Franklin J. Hildy's collection)	page 20
2	1936 Old Globe Theatre, Great Lakes Exhibition, 1936–7, Cleveland, Ohio (Cleveland Public Library, photography collection)	21
3	Timothy Walker as Malvolio in <i>Twelfth Night</i> (2002), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Trammer	36
4	Michael Brown and Rhys Meredith as the twins in <i>Twelfth Night</i> (2002), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Trammer	71
5	Mark Rylance as Olivia, <i>Twelfth Night</i> (2002), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Trammer	72
6	Musicians, <i>Measure for Measure</i> (2004), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Trammer	78
7	Mark Rylance as <i>Richard II</i> (2003), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer Andy Bradshaw	102
8	Colin Hurley as Autolycus in <i>The Winter's Tale</i> (2005), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer Andy Bradshaw	116
9	Southwark schoolchildren perform a scene from <i>Othello</i> as part of the annual <i>Our Theatre</i> production (2004), photographer Andy Bradshaw	138
10	A Rutgers movement session on the Globe stage, photographer Andy Bradshaw	143
11	<i>Read Not Dead</i> staged reading of <i>Philotas</i> , photographer Sheila Burnett	146
12	Globe Education Practitioner Jack Murray leads a workshop as part of the <i>Excellence in Cities</i> programme, photographer Kieron Kirkland	162

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

13	Musicians, <i>Edward II</i> (2003), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Tramper	184
14	Yolanda Vazquez as Hermione in <i>The Winter's Tale</i> (2005), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer Andy Bradshaw	198
15	Paul Chahidi as Maria in <i>Twelfth Night</i> (2002), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Tramper	206

COLOUR PLATES

Between pages 58 and 59

- 1 Mark Rylance as the Duke of Vienna, *Measure for Measure* (2004), Hampton Court Palace, photographer John Trammer
- 2 *Cymbeline* (2001), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Trammer
- 3 *The Winter's Tale* (2005), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer John Trammer
- 4 *Hamlet*, Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza (2000), photographer Jenny Tiramani
- 5 *Twelfth Night*, Middle Temple Hall (2002), photographer John Trammer
- 6 Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis (2003), photographer Jenny Tiramani
- 7 Jig from *Much Ado About Nothing* (*Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, 2007), Shakespeare's Globe, photographer Andy Bradshaw
- 8 The interior of Blackfriars Playhouse, the American Shakespeare Center, Staunton, Virginia, photographer Tommy Thompson

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Musical, The Taming of the Shrew, Tamer Tamed, Woyzeck (all RSC); *Faustus* (Northampton), *Engaged* (Orange Tree), *Arabian Nights* (Young Vic), *Misalliance* (Clwyd) and *All's Well that Ends Well* (Oxford Stage Co.).

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

in 2005. His seventeen roles included Henry V, Richard II, Hamlet, Cleopatra, the Golden Ass, Olivia, the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, Proteus and Bassanio. He only directed one production himself during his tenure, *Julius Caesar*, in 1999. In 2007, he was the co-recipient with Claire van Kampen and Jenny Tiramani of the Sam Wanamaker Award for pioneering work that has contributed to the understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare. More recently, in 2007, he wrote and acted in the successful play, *The BIG Secret Live 'I am Shakespeare' Webcam Daytime Chatroom Show*, at the Chichester Festival Theatre.

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FOREWORD

Andrew Gurr

When we were working on the evidence for the design of the original Globe in order to identify the shape and materials needed to realise Sam Wanamaker's vision, we did sometimes discuss whether the end-product of our labours would work as a modern theatre. None of us seriously believed that it might attract big crowds. The most clear-sighted objective any of us had was to get the replica of Shakespeare's Globe as right as we could, so that we could then see what might be done with it. At a different time and in different books I had suggested that Elizabethan playgoers probably behaved more like a football crowd than modern theatre audiences, but none of us had any idea that the novelty of groundlings round the stage would transform the experience of modern playgoing in the way it has done since the first performances at the new Globe in 1996.

The greatest single benefit of the Wanamaker project was that it drew together a huge assembly of expertise, from theatre-history scholars to architects to historians of English vernacular building. It was a truly international enterprise, too. Besides Sam from the USA, the architect Theo Crosby was from South Africa, John Orrell was an Englishman resident in Canada, and I was from New Zealand. We all shared the same fascination with London that first drew Shakespeare to the city. We worked to complete most of the first step in the enterprise over a decade ago. In the ten years since it opened the Globe has used the skilled actors, directors and students of theatre to see how the old type of theatre might still work. The result has been to show that it works in a wholly fresh and invigorating way, a way that has told us a lot that is exciting about Shakespeare and his contemporaries. This book is a record of these first ten years, and what they have accomplished.

Underpinning all the work, and Sam's own vision, was and still is the assumption that Shakespeare as player and co-owner of his company's two theatres always knew exactly what he was doing. Therefore, the theory goes, a fresh approach to the original staging of his plays through the surviving play-texts should be able to show

ANDREW GURR

us a lot more of his practical genius than we have discovered through the last century or so. To establish that required digging into the state of theatre in Shakespeare's own time. It means not only creating a version of his own physical workplace but uncovering the stories behind his two theatres, finding out why his company from the outset wanted different summer and winter venues, and how they used them. Shakespeare invested 10 per cent of his own savings in the Globe, a theatre already old-fashioned when he helped build it in 1599, and nine years later when Richard Burbage finally secured the Blackfriars indoor playhouse to use for his company he took a similar share in it. From then on, as they had planned from the outset in 1594, the Shakespeare company was the outstanding theatre company of its own day and indeed of any time. For nearly fifty years it played with wonderful extravagance and indeed arrogance, leaving one of its playhouses empty each season while using the other, at a time when London suffered from an extreme shortage of playhouses.

Reproducing the full set of conditions under which Shakespeare produced his plays is impossible now, as we are often told. This book acknowledges that problem in several places. Now we have a version of what the Globe might have been like in 1599, in the same materials and therefore offering similar acoustics (though before the final painting and carvings were applied to the interior, as Martin White says in chapter 13, 'Research and the Globe'). Since then we have experienced the staging of several plays in what is now called OP (versions of what might have been the 'original practices'). And playgoers have flocked to this new/old theatre to experience the shock of the old.

The effect on actors and audience of open-air playing, where large crowds make themselves into visible and active participants in the event, has been the biggest revelation of the whole project so far. This book registers some of the ways in which so many people have navigated through what Claire van Kampen calls in chapter 6 the 'turbulent seas of mistrust' (see p. 79) to find out what they can from it all. They have evoked, quite rightly, many reservations about the discoveries that have been made and about what might be found in the future. It is vital to keep these reservations in mind as you read these accounts.

Perhaps the most weighty doubt of all is the obvious distance between playgoers then and modern audiences. Here is just one instance of that gulf. It shows itself in the difference between the performance conditions in Shakespeare's years and those of today in the minds of the audiences for whom George Chapman wrote his first comedy, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, in 1595. He, and the Admiral's Men led by the greatest actor of his day, Edward Alleyn, knew exactly what they were doing. When they staged the play, the Admiral's had been set up a year before along with the Shakespeare company, the Chamberlain's Men. The two companies shared the exclusive right to perform at the Theatre and the Rose in the London suburbs, where they were free from the Lord Mayor's hostility. This meant that Londoners

FOREWORD

had only the two playhouses and the two companies to go to if they wanted to see a play. By late 1595 both companies were fully aware that their audiences were seeing the same faces on stage each day playing a different role, creating a problem of overfamiliarity. They had seen Alleyn as Hieronimo in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, and as Tamburlaine, Faustus and Barabbas in Marlowe's great plays. So what Chapman did was create a farce using multiple disguises so that the audience could watch Alleyn posing as parodies of his own characters from other plays. He starts the play disguised as the Blind Beggar who is really Cleanthes, Egypt's banished general returned in secret to Alexandria. He also disguises himself as Leon, a usurer with a bottle-nose like Barabbas in *The Jew of Malta*, and as Count Hermes, a braggart who rants lines from *Tamburlaine*. In these four roles Alleyn spoke more than a third of all the lines in the play. The Barabbas and Tamburlaine-like figures allowed him to burlesque his own famous roles as a 'fustian king', the term he self-mockingly called himself in a letter to his wife in 1593. As the blind prophet he prophesies to three court ladies how they will meet their future husbands. Then in turn as Cleanthes, Leon and Hermes he meets and marries all three.

The play is a hilarious farce for which modern readers simply lack the experience to identify the parodied characters, let alone Alleyn's own self-mockery. The late Millar MacLure, for instance, said regretfully of the play that modern readers 'will have cause to reflect grimly (as every reader of minor Elizabethan drama must) on the curious tastes of our ancestors'. Unless you could recognise the false nose that Alleyn wore for *The Jew of Malta* and already knew his resonant lines spoken as Tamburlaine, and unless your playgoing was confined to the plays of the only two companies then permitted to perform in the vicinity of London, there is no way you could make sense of, let alone enjoy, Chapman's rollicking farce. We cannot now share the information the first playgoers had at the staging of these plays. Language is our most obvious loss – we proudly entitle the standees (an oddly American term for such a positive posture) in the yard with the name 'groundlings', ignoring the scorn that Hamlet packed into the word when he invented it to describe the gapers at his feet. In his time a groundling was a small fish, a loach with a huge sucker for a mouth that enabled it to feed off the algae from the stones at a river's bottom. As a pretend prince he might be expected to scorn the gapers staring up at him from the yard. Richard Burbage, playing that prince for the first time, is told how the boy companies have dislodged the adult players from the city. He grieves for the players, as we hear, but the original audiences would have known very well that the landlord of the boy company then playing at the Blackfriars and profiting from their success was Burbage himself. Lacking that information now, we are alienated from the thrill and comedy of the immediate moment on the original stage.

That is one enormous task the Globe's actors still have to confront. But in the first ten years' working with the Globe great progress has been made towards

ANDREW GURR

a more thoroughgoing reconstruction of Shakespearean playing conditions, and more is to come. Just as the Shakespeare company started at their one old-fashioned outdoor theatre and later added to it seasonal playing with their indoor theatre, so the addition of a version of the Blackfriars should allow Shakespeare's Globe to copy the original company with performances all the year round. The versatility and mobility of the original company, happy to transport its plays from one venue to another at the drop of a purse, is a challenge to creative theatre work now; that was one of the standard expectations then. Taking plays like *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* indoors after a summer at the Globe, or starting them indoors and then taking them into the daylight, offers rich new possibilities that should teach us more about the principles and the practices of Shakespearean staging.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that the word 'maverick', used by Patrick Spottiswoode about the Globe project, was originally the name of a Texas rancher who neglected to brand his calves. The word was subsequently picked up to define a thief, anyone who stole and then branded such calves. While resisting any suggestion that the Globe is an illegal activity, the idea that it might be thought of as a not-yet branded calf ready to grow into a mighty bull does have its appeal.

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[More information](#)

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