

Shakespeare for all?

Some reflections on the Globe Theatre's *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* project

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Abstract: Every year since 2007, the Globe Theatre has run the *Playing Shakespeare* project, largely funded by Deutsche Bank. This has three main components: school-based workshops, CPD sessions for teachers and free performances for school students. From 2014 to 2016, we were commissioned to evaluate this project. In what follows, we reflect on the nature of this project and its relation to the versions of Shakespeare that figure so prominently in the terrain of contemporary schooling in England.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Globe, rehearsal room, performance, audience, interpretation

The *Playing Shakespeare* project

Every year since 2007, Globe Education has run the *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* project, the central component of which has been the offer of free tickets to students in London state-maintained schools to a Shakespeare play specifically aimed at secondary students. Since 2015, the offer has been extended to state schools in Birmingham. In addition, the project has offered CPD (continuing professional development) sessions at the Globe for teachers and school-based workshops for students.¹ The CPD sessions have provided training on creative approaches to teaching Shakespeare, while the one-hour school-based workshops are designed to prepare students for the experience of the performance at the Globe, while also introducing students and their teachers to more active, drama-based ways of exploring a text. Additional materials have been provided via a designated micro-site which follows the creation of the production; the site also offers interviews with the cast, the text, a blog by a cast member, a range of teaching resources and other information for teachers and students about the play and about this particular production of it.

We were commissioned to evaluate the project over the three years from 2014 to 2016 (*The Merchant of Venice* in 2014, *Othello* in 2015 and *Twelfth Night* in 2016). We observed CPD sessions and performances at the Globe (alongside groups of students, standing in the yard or sitting in different places) and workshops in London schools; we interviewed school students and their teachers; and we analysed questionnaires and on-line surveys as well as data on participation supplied to us by the Globe. In what follows, we draw on these data to consider the impact of the project and what it reveals about both the place of Shakespeare in the terrain of secondary schooling and the competing and sometimes contradictory discourses that swirl around the sign 'Shakespeare'.

It is important to note the scale of the *Playing Shakespeare* project as an intervention in the cultural and educational lives of London school students. In the first ten years of the project, about 140,000 free tickets had been allocated to schools in London and Birmingham; more

than a thousand workshops had been held in participating schools and colleges; hundreds of teachers had attended the CPD sessions at the Globe. The scope of the project has also expanded over time: there are more performances and more workshops than there were in the first few years (Rokison 2013).

But how does the Globe project sit within the ways that Shakespeare is conceptualised in relation to schooling and experienced by school students?

Curricularised Shakespeare

It is now nearly thirty years since the first version of a National Curriculum was imposed on most schools in England, and since then there have been four other versions, each with significantly different emphases and each predicated on somewhat different notions of what a curriculum might look like and what it might be for. In all five versions, however, one constant has been the presence of Shakespeare as the single mandated author.

Within the discourse of policy itself, there has been very little explanation provided for this assertion of Shakespeare's singularity, probably because the authors of such policy considered that no reasons were necessary. Nonetheless, some sense of the assumptions that inform Shakespeare's place in the curriculum can be gleaned from the curriculum documents themselves. The first version places secondary students' engagement with Shakespeare within a developmental trajectory, as a salient element in their encounters with 'texts written for adults, including pre-20th century fiction, poetry and drama ...' (DES/Welsh Office 1990, 33). The second version mandates that 'Pupils should be introduced to literature of high quality, including works written in previous centuries' (SCAA 1994, 17), thus marking a shift in emphasis from the degree of challenge posed to teenage readers by such texts to the inherent value of the texts themselves. This emphasis is also evident in the third and fourth iterations (DfEE 1999, 49; QCDA 2007, 93-5), though the period of the New Labour government (1997-2010) also marked the promotion of a different version of the Shakespearean icon, with the playwright becoming a sort of captain of creative industry, a role model for Britpop *avant la lettre*:

Shakespeare was a playwright, a poet, an actor, and a shareholder in his theatre company – a company that might perform one week for anyone who could afford a penny to stand and watch a play at the Globe, and for the fashionable courts of Elizabeth or James I the next. He understood how to take a familiar story and create tragic, hilarious, suspenseful, philosophical, challenging dramas with which people all over the world continue to identify. (DCSF 2008, 6)

In the fifth and most recent incarnation of the English curriculum, there is a return to a more sober, culturally conservative set of values, where the aims of the entire curriculum are presented in explicitly Arnoldian terms:

The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It *introduces pupils to the best*

that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement (DfE 2014, 6; emphasis added).

What, though, might such an introduction look like? To what, precisely, are the school students to be introduced? As a cultural sign – or icon, perhaps – Shakespeare exists in multiple forms in the world (cf. Lanier 2002). But what form does curricularised Shakespeare take – and how does the Globe project relate to it?

For the Globe, the project might be construed as an extension of the organisation’s overall aim:

To promote and improve the understanding and enjoyment of all aspects of the dramatic art; principally in relation to the study of Shakespeare in performance (Globe website: purpose and vision - <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/about-us/todays-globe/purpose>).

From this perspective, the culmination of the project is the experience of a live performance at the Globe; the other elements – CPD, school-based workshops and the micro-site – thus might be seen as preparation for the performance.

For the main sponsor, however, *Playing Shakespeare* is somewhat differently imagined. It is one facet of Deutsche Bank’s *Born to be* programme, which ‘aims to break the cycle of youth unemployment through early intervention ... [helping] young people reach their full potential by developing employability skills, confidence and aspirations’ (*Born to be* website, https://www.db.com/unitedkingdom/content/en/born_to_be.html). More specifically, Deutsche Bank envisage that the *Playing Shakespeare* project will have an effect on the participants’ academic performance:

Encouraging academic achievement

Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank offers students a new way to learn about Shakespeare – through a fast-paced contemporary production. It aims to inspire greater academic achievement in the classroom.

How it works

It’s crucial for teenagers to understand Shakespeare’s themes and language as they have GCSEs to pass, and the results will affect their next steps in life. However Shakespeare’s themes and language are complex, especially for students who speak English as an additional language.

Through live performances, educational workshops and online learning resources, *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* helps London state school students and their teachers meet national curriculum requirements, emphasising themes in the plays that are relevant to modern day life.

(https://www.db.com/unitedkingdom/content/en/playing_shakespeare.html)

Here, then *Playing Shakespeare* is conceptualised primarily as a curricular project – an intervention in the core business of schooling, namely the high-stakes examinations wherein students’ understanding of ‘Shakespeare’s themes and language’ will be assessed.

From the Globe's perspective, the play's the thing; from their sponsor's, it is a means to an end: to misquote Fagin, 'In this life, one thing counts/In the school, test results'. The project might well achieve both – be an end in itself and a means of raising academic achievement. But we found some evidence that the tension between these two perspectives is apparent in schools' and students' experience of the project.

This tension is in part a product of logistics. Far more school students were able to attend a performance of the play than were involved in the school-based workshops or than were the beneficiaries of the CPD sessions attended by (some of) their teachers. Far more students attended the performance than visited the micro-site.² For those students whose only involvement in the project was the performance itself, it seemed to us that the experience would remain, at least in the short term, somewhat detached from their experience of English as a school subject, or even of Shakespeare within the English curriculum.

From some teachers, too, there was evidence of a similar disjuncture. In one of the schools that we visited to observe a workshop involving Year 8 students (12-13-year-olds), we were informed that there was a group of older students (Year 10, 14-15-year-olds) who were to attend a performance 'as a cultural event': the phrase their teacher used revealed a clear categorical separation between curriculum and culture. In this school, for the younger students, the performance was seen as an augmentation of their work in English and Drama; for the older students, it was to be a moment of broader cultural enrichment.

More generally, it was clear that there was very wide variation in the way that different schools approached the project. In some schools, classes were chosen to be involved in the workshops and to attend the performance because they were the ones who were studying the play or had already studied the play. In these cases, the project was very closely articulated with the planned curriculum. In one school, the English teacher had devised an assessed GCSE task around his class's workshop and trip to the Globe. In other cases, the classes that were involved in the workshops and/or the performance were chosen for reasons of scheduling convenience or necessity (they were the ones that happened to have a timetabled English or Drama lesson on the day when the workshop or the trip to the Globe was scheduled). What sometimes happened, therefore, was that the classes that participated in the workshops were *not* the ones to attend the performance. If the project is conceived of as a single, unified curricular intervention, this evidence of the absence of a joined-up approach in planning and delivery must be considered problematic. We return to this issue below.

We also found evidence, in the performances we attended and in accounts provided for us by teachers who accompanied students to other performances, that some of those who came 'cold' to the play struggled to make sense of it. We are, therefore, somewhat sceptical of the approach to the performance as a 'cultural event', if by this is meant an isolated experience without preparation or explanation (cf. Adams et al. 2012). We fear that, for some of those who remained baffled by the plot(s) and characters, and by a context which, for all the valuable work of interpretation that informs any performance (and even more so ones such as these that were so deliberately crafted with a teenage audience in mind), is in important ways distant from contemporary lived reality, the whole experience may have

been an alienating one. As one of the teachers whom we interviewed put it:

You have to prepare students properly for the performance – because otherwise it could be dangerous – and irresponsible – in that this could be their only experience of a live Shakespeare, and they might come away with a sense of it not meaning anything. (Interview, 13 March 2015)

In part, what this reveals is the complexity of the project's intersection with the domain of schooling. Even with a curriculum as centralised as that which is to be found in England, even with Shakespeare figuring so prominently in the high-stakes tests that shape secondary students' experience of the curriculum, how schools responded to the *Playing Shakespeare* project revealed wildly different conceptions of what the project represented as well as wildly different conceptions of Shakespeare, both in performance and in the curriculum – and in the relationship between these two versions of Shakespeare.

For a significant number of London schools, the commitment to the *Playing Shakespeare* project has continued over many years. Each year, some schools send a whole year group (that is, often between one and two hundred students) to the performance, are involved in the school-based workshops and the CPD, and make text choices to fit in with the play that has been chosen for performance at the Globe. In other schools, the commitment to the project is more variable, depending on a wide variety of factors, including the teachers' sense of the appropriateness of the chosen play for their students. (So, for example, we were aware of some schools that had made the decision not to be involved in 2016, when the play was to be *Twelfth Night*, because the teachers judged that it was not a play that was likely to appeal to their students.) Elsewhere, the project is located very differently in the structures and processes of school life. Thus, for example, we visited some schools where those students who were chosen to be involved – both in workshops and in attending the performance – were those who had been identified as 'gifted and talented'.³ In such cases, involvement in the project became another way of reproducing inequality within the school – and another way of signalling both the difficulty and the elite status of the cultural icon that is Shakespeare. Those schools that participated by sending entire cohorts of students, on the other hand, seem to have embraced the slogan 'Shakespeare for all':⁴ in such cases, the project was a way of signalling a universal entitlement. This is how a teacher in a North London boys' comprehensive school expressed such a commitment:

This is the first year that the school has taken a whole year group. It was the English department that made this decision: as a point of entitlement, we should take everyone – a whole year group. We pushed really hard for everybody to go. A very vulnerable little boy almost got himself excluded from the trip – but the trip is precisely for people like him, and we worked hard to ensure that he was allowed to come.

When we got to the Globe, one boy asked, 'Are we still in London?' A significant minority have never been to the theatre at all, never have the experience of seeing their own city even. We wanted the boys who spend a lot of time in the corridor [having been excluded from lessons] to have a really positive experience. And they got it – it's brilliant! We were all surprised by how well they sat, and were engaged,

they had theatre etiquette, they were mindful of where they were – and they were pretty blown away by just how terrific it looks. (Interview, 13 March 2015)

In the following three sections, we look more closely at the main constituent parts of the *Playing Shakespeare* project as we observed them across the three years of our evaluation.

CPD sessions

One of the valuable aspects of involvement by creative practitioners in schools is the enrichment of teachers' day-to-day pedagogy through the sharing of specific disciplinary practices (Thomson et al. 2012): in the Globe's case, the habits and discourse of the theatre and the rehearsal room (cf. Neelands et al. 2009; Thomson et al. 2010; Franks et al. 2014).

In one CPD session (December 2013), the facilitator's approach to text was refreshingly open: she compared the script to plasticine: 'You can't break it.' Editing pieces of script was strongly encouraged, with the proviso that teachers work with the rhythms of the verse. The facilitator suggested that the advantage of using edited pieces of text was that teachers can hook students in quickly: 'it's a way into the "real thing"'. An advantage of drama-based approaches is that they invite interpretation: the facilitator commented that in her experience students are often surprised by the invitation to develop their own ideas.

In the following year, activities largely focused on explorations of character (Iago and Othello); language (verse, prose, punctuation); and themes (jealousy, racism, love/hate). Additional activities which focused on Desdemona, or explored broader considerations of fathers and daughters and depictions of 'Moors' in Shakespeare were included in the packs given to participating teachers, but not covered in the workshops we saw. Activities generally prompted a high level of engagement from the participants, particularly where the drama exercises threw new light on selected pieces of script. (And, on an occasion when individual participants were less ready to engage fully in the activities, this was handled with commendable tact and sensitivity by the workshop leader.)

The workshop leaders we observed in the final year of our evaluation were particularly sensitive to the range of expertise teachers brought, and skilful in adapting to the diverse and sometimes disparate groups of participants. Each stage of the CPD session was well paced, including the tour of the theatre, the purpose of which was clearly focused on preparing school students for their visit to the Globe. The two workshops we saw were structured differently but both managed to maintain a tight focus and ensure that each activity was clearly linked. In one of the observed workshops the practitioner chose to focus just on the first workshop objective ('to explore the nature of the unrequited love between Olivia, Viola and Orsino') employing introductory activities focused on plot ('Whoosh!')⁵ and themes (games around the love triangle), followed by script work focusing on the relationship between Viola and Olivia. The second workshop we observed not only touched on explorations of gender identities but also began to address the second stated objective, the changing status of Malvolio. Judging from the evaluation responses, many teachers much appreciated the brief practical work around the function of iambic pentameter and prose. We found both these workshop leaders to be refreshingly down to earth about the

challenges of teaching Shakespeare in school and appreciative of participants' own expertise right from the outset.

As indicated above, written evaluations completed at the end of the workshop were overwhelmingly positive. The following examples of summative comments are typical:

- "It was a pleasure to attend this workshop. It was fun, informative and gave food for thought and different perspectives on teaching Shakespeare"
- "Excellent facilitator- enthusiastic, understanding, knowledgeable without being patronising or dull. Clear rationale/justification for each of the exercises - highly relevant to the classroom. Reminds that Shakespeare is accessible and drama can be used to provide entry to what is greatly perceived as being difficult and unengaging material"
- "Absolutely wonderful - re-invigorating. Lots of practical ideas"

In these CPD sessions, the relations between the teachers and the theatre practitioners who led the activities seemed to us to be more complicated, more dialogic, than the effect of 'creative practitioners' on schools described by Thomson et al. (2012). The sessions provided the teacher-participants with opportunities to reconsider and extend their own classroom practice, to think about how approaches they experienced in the workshop might be applied and adapted in their own teaching; but this did not feel quite like a meeting of opposed pedagogies, 'creative' versus 'default', as the typology of Thomson et al. (2012) might suggest. It seemed clear to us that teachers arrived at the workshops with an array of different pedagogic practices, many of which might be legitimately construed as 'creative'; what the workshop achieved was thus, at least for some of the participants, an expansion and a validation of their existing practice.

School-based workshops

In themselves, the school-based workshops organised as part of the *Playing Shakespeare* project might be construed as a large-scale intervention in curriculum and pedagogy: for the students involved – an estimated 8000 across the three years of our evaluation of the project⁶ – the workshops offered the possibility of exploring aspects of the play through a series of drama-based activities; for teachers, too, the workshops presented opportunities to observe ways of working that might be incorporated into their own practice.

We were impressed by the quality of the workshops which we observed. Working in different contexts, with very different groups of students, the facilitators (who were Globe practitioners – sometimes the same people who led the CPD sessions) enabled the participants both to focus in detail on small sections of the text and to relate such textual work to questions of performance. We also saw evidence of very deft pedagogy – of facilitators making the most of what the students offered and turning this into effective teaching points, about the play and about the Globe. To illustrate this, we present a more detailed account of one of the workshops observed in 2015 (at School M).

The workshop, involving 18 students, was held in a small drama studio at the end of the school day. The workshop leader began by getting the students in a circle, sitting on the

floor. She asked if any had been to the Globe before. None had. She explained that it is a reconstruction, emphasising performance and entertainment rather than book-oriented study as its primary purpose, and suggesting that the Globe provides a means to enable us to get closer to what Shakespeare is about. She emphasised the significant characteristics of the performance space: open to the elements, in the round. She went into the middle of the circle to demonstrate the practical implications of this, the intimacy and the lack of separation between actors and audience. After some warm-up physical activities – exploring the space of the studio, finding empty spaces, clapping, jumping – she distributed quotes from *Othello*, all relating in some way to the position of women. Students, working in groups of 3 or 4, were encouraged to work out what they could about what was being said about women in these quotes. Both the facilitator and the supervising teacher circulated, intervening in the groups.

The groups were then given one minute to devise a ‘frozen moment’, using the quote they had been given, to show something about how women are treated. In devising this, the students were asked to think about being seen from all angles and to construct their tableau in such a way that it had more than one level (so, for example, people standing, sitting, lying). The groups then presented their frozen moments to the rest of the class.

The workshop leader’s orchestration of this was very deft, very inclusive. Here, as throughout the workshop, she contextualised the work that the students were doing in relation to their forthcoming visit to the Globe to see *Othello*. So, her introduction to the Globe as a performance space was couched in the terms of *what the students would be able to see and experience for themselves*: she was inviting them to see the space as one that had particular affordances and offered particular challenges to the actors. All students were involved, and the activity worked very well to open up questions of gender, power and property in relation to the world of the play. Students in the groups and in the discussion following the presentations were thoughtful and engaged.

In the next section of the workshop, the focus shifted to the relationship between Othello and Iago. Having given out copies of the scene, the facilitator allocated a line to each student. She asked the students to choose four words from their lines and to say them energetically. When they had done this, she encouraged them to share what they had understood about Iago. They did so – and demonstrated that they had already understood a great deal about Iago’s character and motivation. Students were then asked to choose one word from their line and to perform it with a gesture. Again, here, the workshop leader made a link to the performance, suggesting that one of the joys of the play is the way in which Iago, alone on stage, talks directly to you, the audience. In the next activity, students worked in pairs on the same dialogue between Othello and Iago. They read the lines to each other, focusing attention particularly on the use of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives. The pairs were then invited to make more use of the space, deciding with each line whether it should be represented as an advance (moving closer to their interlocutor), a retreat (moving a pace away) or a manoeuvre (a step sideways). When the students tried this out, one pair – two boys – read the whole exchange as a series of retreats, so that by the end of the scene they were at opposite ends of the studio.

The facilitator's response to this, when she brought the class back together, was to draw attention to what the pair had been doing as something to be taken seriously, something that was worth exploring (when it would have been very easy to dismiss it, or ignore it as mere silliness). She invited other students to comment on the meaning that might be ascribed to this physical separation – and they responded sensitively, imaginatively, thoughtfully. The facilitator then made the point that, even at opposite ends of the studio, the two boys were still closer than they would be if they were to stand at opposite ends of the stage in the Globe. Again, then, the workshop enabled both an exploration of the text in the physical space of the school drama studio and an anticipation of the performance space of the Globe. The students were thus positioned both as active participants in exploring the meaning of a key scene in the play and as informed spectators, able to look out for, and consider the effects of, particular staging decisions in the production that they were about to see.

As one of the students observed, in a focus group after she had seen the performance:

The last activity we did, with the staging, helped me to pay attention to it more – I saw in my mind that there was a reason for the staging decisions that they had made at the Globe – for where people were standing, who was close together or far apart. (Focus group, 10 March 2015)

More generally, the workshops prepared the students for their forthcoming visits to the Globe. Often, the facilitators provided a brief history of the original Globe, in such a way as to bring it alive for the students, giving them a sense of the very particular conditions of performance and linking these conditions to the activities in the workshop. At one of the schools we visited in 2014 [School A], an initial activity of physicalising the Globe by making a circle and positioning students as the pillars of Hercules and the groundlings, with a suggestion of the sky above, was rendered all the more vivid when the facilitator emphasised how close the theatre was to the school. At a different school [School B], the workshop leader's brief introduction to the Globe was similarly engaging – with a suggestion of the equalising effect of everyone sitting 'in the same light.' The students' written evaluations suggested that they were just as excited about 'seeing the Globe itself properly' and 'seeing things as they used to be in Shakespeare's time' as they were about the play itself.

We were also struck by with the workshop leaders' adaptability. We saw them lead effective workshops with students who had no prior knowledge of the play, with students who already had detailed knowledge of it, and with students with markedly different levels of prior knowledge – and with groups ranging in size from two to thirty. Such adaptability is achieved through a great deal of preparation.

An example of a workshop leader's adaptability is provided in one of the workshops that we observed in 2014 [School G, 12 March 2014]. When the facilitator, on arrival at the school, learnt that two of the three workshops he was to run were for students who would not be going to see the performance, he proposed that he might offer a workshop based on *Romeo and Juliet* instead for the groups who were not to go to the Globe (and continue as planned

with a workshop focusing on *The Merchant* for the group that was to see the play). The suggestion was accepted by the teacher in charge. The *Romeo and Juliet* workshop that followed was very effective in engaging a group of unconfident Year 8 students in a coherent, fast-paced exploration of Shakespearean language, enacted and interpreted in and through movement and gesture as well as through the expressive possibilities of speech. The workshop made an observable difference to the students' understanding of language realised in performance, as well as providing them with a thoroughly enjoyable and confidence-building introduction to a particular play.

Across all three years of our evaluation, the large majority of the student responses, in focus groups and in the questionnaires they completed, indicated that the workshops had made a significant contribution to the participants' understanding and enjoyment of the play and to their subsequent work on Shakespeare in school. Such pleasure is not to be taken for granted, nor to be underestimated for its significance in providing a solid basis for future work on Shakespeare.

Where teachers were attentive observers of, or participants in, the school-based workshops, there was evidence of their readiness to incorporate aspects of the workshop approaches into their everyday classroom practice. Reflecting on the workshop activities, one supervising teacher commented:

I felt that a lot of the breaking down of Iago's speech was the kind of thing I could do in an English lesson, so I learnt from it. And I really liked the staging activities.
(Interview, 10 March 2015)

On the other hand, we have also observed sessions where school-based staff remained detached, supervising behaviour without evincing much interest in the content of the workshops themselves. These were, in any case, one-off events, clearly distinct from the everyday business of English lessons. Even for the more involved teachers, we simply do not know what impact the workshops have had on their everyday practice (cf. Galton 2010; Pringle 2008).

Globe performances

This evaluation provided us with an opportunity to talk to young people about their experience of theatre-going. This is a relatively under-researched field – in both academic and professional circles (Freshwater 2009, 32; Adams et al. 2012). Reason's research with young people involves asking them to draw memorable moments and to create spider-diagrams that captured the experience of being part of an audience (2006; 2010). He reflects on a group of teenagers' vivid responses to watching *Othello* – to the 'emotion, tension and energy' (2006, 235) generated by the performers' presence coupled with their awareness of the audience around them. Reason recognises the significance of theatre-going as a learned activity (2006, 240). The many students that we watched plays with and spoke to were at different stages in their learning: as we have indicated, some had never

been to theatre before, some had studied the play, some had little idea what play they were going to see, some came with an awareness that they were part of a selected group, some came with their whole class or year group, travelling in different ways, from different locations. Watching the audiences of school students, their teachers, support assistants and enablers arrive for an afternoon performance from both directions of the river, and over the Millennium bridge and from various tube stations, was a reminder of how difficult it is to capture the experience in any definitive way.

Authentic Shakespeare?

Often unexamined, or at least unquestioned, notions of authenticity inform reactions to and expectations of Shakespeare in performance. Over the years, we have frequently encountered colleagues in English departments (and students on the pre-service teacher education programme on which we work) who treat the Zeffirelli (1968) *Romeo and Juliet* as more authentically Shakespearean than the Luhrmann (1996) version, largely because of the presence of men in tights and the absence of guns and fishtanks (or so we assume). Such questions of authenticity become more prominent, more sharply posed, in relation to productions at the Globe, a theatre whose every beam and pillar signals an investment in acts of theatrical reconstruction. The Globe is interested in the study of Shakespeare in performance, as its aim, quoted above, indicates, but its interest is more specifically in the forms of performance that are rendered possible – necessary, even – by the performance space that so meticulously attempts to recreate the ‘original’ conditions of performance (cf. Rylance 2004).

Many students expressed excitement at seeing a live performance in comparison to the film adaptations that are a feature of studying Shakespeare in school. One evaluation mentions ‘seeing the play instead of sitting around and watching it on YouTube’; a group of Year 10 students talked of how, in comparison with film or television interpretations, the theatrical experience, ‘brings it to life, this is how it was meant to be performed.’ These views were not universally shared, however. In 2016, we encountered some students who regarded the 1996 Trevor Nunn film as the ‘original’ *Twelfth Night*. For them, either because Nunn’s was the version that they had seen first, or because there was something about its production values that rendered its interpretation of the script the authoritative one, or for some other reason not articulated, the Globe performance seemed to have the status of an interesting riff on Shakespeare, but definitely not the thing itself.

In the workshop evaluations many students said they were looking forward to the visit because they wanted to ‘see the Globe itself’, to see a play ‘outdoors’, ‘how the Elizabethans watched it’, and felt that they were ‘exploring the world of Shakespeare.’ For many, this sense of the cultural significance of the Globe was informed by the content of the school-based workshops (see previous section), but there were clearly other influences and sources of knowledge at play.

In tension with such notions of authenticity was the desire, evident in all three of the productions which we evaluated, to render the plays relevant to a twenty-first century teenage audience (cf. Rokison 2013). This strand was most conspicuous in *The Merchant of Venice*, where it was met with a variety of responses. For some who were anticipating an experience that might transport them to Shakespearean England, 'seeing a Shakespeare play and being able to watch something that isn't modern', this adaptation provided some challenges. As one student put it in a written evaluation, 'Theatres should wear period clothes'; another advised, 'Try not to make it too modern, it sort of contradicts the whole play.'

In interview, the Year 10 boys from School A felt patronised by *The Merchant's* pop music and modern setting and agreed it must have been aimed at a younger audience (as did their English teacher). Some of the students at School E felt disappointed that it was more of a 'show' instead of a play by Shakespeare. They were particularly critical of the way that Pharrell Williams's 'Happy' had been co-opted so that it framed the whole production. A student from School A felt that this 'distracted me from some of the serious sort of plot lines.' Students from other schools were divided in their responses. Some of the students at School G liked the use of contemporary cultural references – 'In the beginning, it was all like *Made in Chelsea*' – and those aspects of the staging that seemed to locate the play in a world of modern affluence: the jacuzzi, throwing money around, partying. Some of the students at School F felt the modern dress helped them to make a connection with the play and to understand it and were more enthusiastic, feeling that the production was addressed to them. Their teacher agreed that she thought the 'iconography of the costumes' made the production accessible. In the written evaluations there was appreciation expressed of the way it was 'musical, bright and fun' and the realization that Shakespeare is 'very versatile'.

Many of the students appreciated that the cast reflected the ethnic and gender mix of the audience (though they did not articulate it like that). The boys from School A, who were all black British, agreed that Tyler Fayose, the actor playing Lorenzo and the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant*, 'really talked to you' and the girls from School F said that they appreciated the way Portia was 'talkative, funny' and 'had a lot of pride'. In one of the evaluations, a student mentioned liking the court room scene because 'it gave girls power.' These aspects of the casting and interpretation, common to all three of the productions we evaluated, were significant in encouraging students to feel that they are a part of the Shakespeare legacy that the Globe represents.

Over the three years of our involvement with the project, we found that those groups of students who had studied the play were able to articulate their own feelings and ideas about the production they had seen. The Year 10 students who had seen *The Merchant* assumed a tone of expertise in critiquing the tone, mood and setting of the play and reflecting on why the director had chosen to include the songs and dancing. The confidence that some of the students had to critique the production may have stemmed in part from the point of comparison they had, having watched excerpts from the film adaptation starring Al Pacino (Radford 2004). They were thus able to recognise in the Globe version the

possibilities of interpretation. This has significant implications for their sense of themselves as learners, particularly in relation to a degree of criticality and creativity – a recognition that they might be able to make artistic choices in performance, with a view to addressing an audience in particular ways.

Shakespeare for schools?

Across the three years of our evaluation an ongoing concern of ours has been the reductive way the stage production has been conceived for a school audience. In the directorial decisions, we detected a tendency to underestimate the capacity of young people to respond to challenging ideas and themes explored in subtle, nuanced ways.

The choices of play (*The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *Twelfth Night*) might be seen as adventurous, a departure from the earlier years of the project. What we mean by this is more than the fact that these plays are somewhat less central to school Shakespeare than, say, *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet*; they offer distinct possibilities for school students to explore, within the context of a Shakespeare play, issues that are of direct – one might even say pressing – contemporary relevance. Indeed, it is hard to see how anyone could be expected to engage with *Othello* without addressing issues of racism, or *The Merchant* without exploring antisemitism. *Twelfth Night* is not, of course, unique within the Shakespearean canon in the space it affords for a consideration of the fluidity of gender identities, but it is a play in which questions of gender are particularly prominent, and particularly interesting. Many of the students who participated in the project had been shown all or part of the (1996) Trevor Nunn film of *Twelfth Night*, an interpretation that attends directly to the complexities involved in the performance of gender. In the world beyond the English classroom, too, school students encounter, and are familiar with, representations of gender that call into question the validity of heterosexist, binary norms.

At the Globe, the focal point of the play was shifted away from Viola and Sebastian, Orsino and Olivia, towards Malvolio, Belch, Maria and Aguecheek. Not surprisingly, it was the scenes involving these characters that fully engaged the school audiences. The students were involved in the ridiculous plotting, outraged at Malvolio's kill-joy interventions, appreciative of the allusions to popular culture. And they laughed – a lot. Precisely because Shakespeare can seem so distant, so difficult and so dull, it matters that this production provided its audiences with a very different – and infinitely more approachable – take on a canonical text. And yet, we would want to ask, does this have to be at the expense of those other dimensions of the play that might also speak to young people today?

In this production, there was a fleeting moment when Viola practised strutting as a man after being saved from drowning, but few students could recall this and several who did not know the play were confused by this narrative turn. Orsino looked shocked and disgusted when Cesario proclaimed his love at the end of the play, before revealing her identity as Viola (Act 5, scene 1). This reaction sent clear signals that same-sex love is undesirable, as, potentially, did some of Cesario's looks at the audience as Olivia made moves on him. This attitude was worryingly echoed in the way that the Year 7 students talked about the interactions between the three characters. Some thought the way that Olivia straddled

Cesario (Act 3, scene 1) was ‘disgusting, just disgusting’ and ‘nasty ... I didn’t like it because I knew she was a girl and it just seemed wrong.’ In the Globe production of *Twelfth Night*, invitations to explore gender identity and the different forms sexual attraction might take were either ignored or reduced to crudely sexualised spectacle.

Reflecting on the production of *The Merchant*, a teacher at School F was impressed with the way her students had been ‘enthralled with the spectacle’ but was concerned that ‘ultimately the characters are racist and we are cheering at the end.’ She felt the serious theme of prejudice and antisemitism was ‘a bit glossed over’. Comments from the written evaluations reflect this range of attitudes. Whilst students from School F were left remembering the comic and romantic elements (‘The ending was sweet and cute’), in contrast students from School E, a school with a predominantly Jewish population, drew attention to moments of disrespect towards Shylock and symbols of his faith. One student recorded their reaction at some length:

The part of the play that stuck in my mind was at the very end, when Gratiano spits upon Shylock’s tallit and kippa. It was particularly memorable because it was unexpected, and really disrespectful and anti-semitic. It was horrible and disgusting ... (Student evaluation, March 2014)

The production reviews published on the micro-site reflect the ambiguity of this production, with some students apparently seeing the play unproblematically as a comedy, others recognizing that the play might be simultaneously a comedy and a tragedy. The essay by Derek Dunne (2014) published in the programme (and reproduced on the micro-site) offers a brief historical overview of Shylock and asks whether the play is anti-semitic or a play about anti-semitism. Whilst we accept that the director’s reading of the play is that Shakespeare leaves us to make our own mind up (interview with the Director, micro-site), we feel that a schools’ production should take responsibility for dealing with issues of racism, especially in the context of London school audiences. A useful set of materials on the micro-site might have offered, alongside Dunne’s essay, activities exploring two or three different readings of the play and a brief stage history, encouraging an appreciation of how readings of Shakespeare have been shaped by history. Here again, though, what was most apparent to us was how differently students responded to the performance because of the massive variations in what had, in different schools, preceded the visit to the Globe.

The conditions of production: how the audience is positioned and involved

Setting aside the predictable complaints about the hardness of the seats or the physical challenge of standing for two hours in the bitter cold of a February afternoon, many students expressed excitement at the intensity of the experience of being an audience at the Globe. Interviewed after their visit to see *The Merchant of Venice*, a group of 13- and 14-year-old girls [School F] were particularly appreciative of the way the actors were ‘always engaging the audience by looking around’ and that the actor playing Portia (Catherine Bailey) playfully picked out some of the men in the audience. A student from School F commented that this style of acting was enhanced by the natural light in the Globe, so that

‘the actors could see you.’ Being ‘seen’ in this way seemed to offer a moment of complicity, a significant dramatic engagement that made the experience particularly vivid and memorable. These students had been sitting above the stage and had clearly appreciated the ways that the play was blocked and that the actors kept moving, using the whole stage and even the auditorium, so that everyone could see the action. The bare stage was another aspect of the affinity they felt for the production, since this was closer to the circumstances in which they themselves might make drama than in other theatres they might visit (particularly in the West End). In the programme notes for *The Merchant of Venice*, the director Bill Buckhurst remarks:

The best part of performing at the Globe is that it allows you to involve the audience, make them feel like they are part of the action.... The audience is another member of the company.

From our own observations, the company certainly exploited the physical space of the theatre, initiating a Mexican wave at the start of the performance, blocking some action in balconies and interacting with audience members from the stage. Being encouraged to join in at the outset created a welcoming and electric atmosphere – and the audience responded with excitement to the high-energy start of the play. This had some quite profound effects on students’ experience of the production.

One of the students in School G reported that she felt ‘guilty’ about the treatment of Shylock at the end of the court scene. Noting the indifference of the other characters on stage at the time, she realised that her feeling of complicity in Shylock’s treatment was in part a product of the staging of the play: ‘It was like you’re doing this as well.’ Standing in the yard, she had been in close proximity to the actors as they walked past her. So, she suggested, it was easy to identify with their characters, and to feel more like a participant than a mere observer. Another student reinforced this point, mentioning the effect of giving masks out to the audience, so that they became involved in the party atmosphere and thus aligned with the party-going characters.

In the 2015 *Othello* season, too, students’ experience of being in the Globe was clearly enhanced by the peripheral business around the performance. Those we interviewed talked about playing football with the actors, taking selfies with them, going on stage to move boxes around and helping the actors with the parachute silk and bunting. In written evaluations, many cited actors coming down the zip wire or getting stuck as the most memorable moment. One said that the interaction helped them to ‘feel like you’re in the play, part of it.’ This aspect of the performance plays an important role in encouraging a diverse and young audience to feel that the theatre and Shakespeare may be for them.

We would also want to draw attention to other ways in which students’ experience of a visit to the Globe was made more inclusive. The ushers were very solicitous of a group from a special school that we observed, learning students’ names and helping them to move around when they needed a break. In a written evaluation a Year 9 student commented on

the friendly staff and good wheelchair access. Though this was not billed as a relaxed performance, it fits Andy Kempe's description:

...one of the main aims of a relaxed performance is to make as few changes to the actual show as possible but rather to make adjustments to the organisation of the front of house in order to reduce anxiety and stress.... In this way relaxed performances open the door to main-stream theatre. (Kempe 2015, 60)

The informality of the performance overall, the friendliness of the actors and the fact that many audience members were able to move around contributed to the sense that this was a tolerant environment and even that contributions from the audience might be welcome. One visually impaired student sang along to the Willow Song, rendering it more poignant.

The overwhelming majority of students involved in the project had had some prior experience of Shakespeare. What the project offered was a series of new perspectives on, and ways of working with, a Shakespeare play; central to this is the emphasis on live, embodied performance. In 2016, we were more aware than we have been in previous years of students' response to the experience including the expression of a desire to perform. Many of the students whom we interviewed told us that they didn't just want to see another play at the Globe – they wanted to act in one! This response is an interesting one: it can be read as an indication of the project's success in raising students' aspirations, in opening their eyes to hitherto undreamed-of possibilities; more concretely, it might be construed as a response to the particular conditions of theatrical production which the students had experienced at the Globe. In several of the evaluations, students drew themselves (the groundlings at least) as central to the action. The blog posts attest to the ways that the actors felt they had succeeded in exploiting this performance space for all that it has to offer in terms of communication with the audience. And one of the teachers whom we interviewed reported that her students had appreciated Tyrell playing Belch because he made eye contact with them. The actors' enthusiasm and openness, and the way that the audience participation was managed so that students felt as if they were integral to the dramatic action, have thus had an impact.

Reflecting on the performances we observed in 2016 and on what students and their teachers reported to us, we feel we must emphasise how much pleasure *Twelfth Night* provided. This was evident in students' feedback on the school- and college-based workshops; it was simply unmissable in the audiences' responses to the performances themselves. That thousands of school students attended a live Shakespeare performance – most of them for the first time – and enjoyed themselves is an achievement in and of itself. If Shakespeare is to be for all, and if school students are to be enabled to see a purpose in their encounters with the plays, it is vitally important that they experience them as pleasurable.

After the show: evaluation as learning

We were impressed by how much students got out of the project. We have provided some detail in relation to this in the preceding sections. Here, we want to make a point about the evaluation process itself. We start by providing some examples of these post-performance discussions, which we observed after students had seen *Othello*.

In a Year 8 focus group, one student thought that the way that Othello married Desdemona without her father's permission foreshadowed his 'aggressive and rough' behaviour at the end of the play. Others wondered whether Desdemona's surprise at the change in his behaviour suggested a 'split personality.' Through discussion, this group reached a more nuanced understanding of the specific circumstances in which Othello is vulnerable to the seeds of doubt and suspicion that Iago sows. Some concluded that *Othello* is a racist play because of the way that it shows black people as gullible and weak. Some were unsure about Othello's accent and what it represented: they did not think that it defined him as an outsider because it was so subtle. There was further discussion in this and other focus groups about the representation of Othello as 'mixed-race', or even 'Italian-looking.' Some expressed surprise that he appeared so young. We recognise the value of these conversations among students: *Othello* is a difficult, controversial play, and it is entirely appropriate that students should raise questions of representation in relation to the play and its realisation in a particular performance.

What emerged clearly from all students whom we spoke to was their awareness of the ways in which the female characters were represented in this production of *Othello*: at a disadvantage and subject to abuse, but also able to demonstrate solidarity and strength in response. Students picked up on Iago's harsh treatment of Emilia. They noticed that he was dismissive of her when the party first arrived in Cyprus, in contrast to the way that Othello and Desdemona greeted each other. Several had precise recall of the action around the handkerchief (Act 3 scene 3), when Iago denied his wife a kiss, concluding that Iago appeared 'selfish and two-faced in that scene' - recalling Emilia's opinion of men that, 'They eat us hungerly, and when they are full,/They belch us' (Act 3, scene 4). Desdemona and Emilia's scenes together appeared to capture the audience's attention, particularly when the characters sat on the edge of the stage and sang (Act 4 scene 3). The school audience became very quiet at this point – and this was a moment that many students recalled some time later. There was widespread admiration for Emilia when she refuses to be silenced by Iago – and an appreciation for how this moment was rendered in performance. One student expressed outrage at the way 'he was using her to get his revenge on Othello'. There were comments in both written evaluations and focus groups about the way that Desdemona struggled as Othello suffocated her, 'She spoke up. Standing up against male domination.'

At the end of one of the focus groups that we held in schools, the teacher who had been present at the session, who had also accompanied her students to the Globe to see the play, expressed surprise at what she had just observed: the quality of her students' exploration of the play. She reflected on the value of the focus group session as a means of enabling the students to think more about the play and their experience of it – and she said that she regretted not setting aside time in English lessons in which all who had seen the play might

have had a similar opportunity. We share this view. We would want to argue that the opportunity to think and talk about the play *after* seeing the performance is as important as any work done in preparation beforehand.

An example of this is provided by the comment made by the student about the guilt she felt at Shylock's treatment. Her recognition that staging contributed to the meaning *emerged in the course of the conversation*: it was not an idea that a student had, fully formed, before the discussion. It is, in our view, a particularly strong example of the intersection of technical, aesthetic and ethical understandings that can emerge in such discussion – and an equally strong instance of the need for such guided exploration of students' experience of the performance.

We believe that this is true in relation to any play, or indeed any shared aesthetic experience. We welcome the project's choice of plays in the three years of our involvement in the project, for a variety of reasons, not least the fact that it marks a break with the canon-within-a-canon, the small number of Shakespeare plays that tend to dominate the school curriculum and hence school students' experience of Shakespeare. We also welcome the choices because these plays pose real challenges of interpretation and performance, challenges of empathy and of morality. Precisely because of this, we do not feel that the performance can be left to speak for itself: school students need to have the opportunity to reflect on what they have seen and heard, to talk about their views and experiences, their pleasures and their puzzles, with their peers and with their teachers (cf. Bennett 1990). They need these opportunities if the performance is to contribute effectively to their learning and development, and if Shakespeare is to be, in any meaningful sense, for all.

Whose Shakespeare, and what for?

Above, we pointed to the contradiction between the Globe's aims and those of Deutsche Bank's *Born to be* initiative, from which most of the funding for the *Playing Shakespeare* project is provided. We want to return to this contradiction now, as we reflect on the significance of the project. The Globe's orientation is towards 'the study of Shakespeare *in performance*' (emphasis added). It thus sits at somewhat of a tangent to the curricularised Shakespeare of government policy, which is a Shakespeare to be encountered primarily through the act of reading: Shakespeare as printed text. Seen through the prism of the funder, the Globe's role becomes a more directly pedagogic one, offering 'a new way to learn about Shakespeare – though a fast-paced contemporary production'. For Deutsche Bank, too, the performance is central, but not so much as the focus of study as the means of access, so that 'national curriculum requirements' can be met.

It is instructive to contrast the *Playing Shakespeare* project with another recent large-scale intervention in the domain of curricularised Shakespeare in England, the Learning Performance Network (LPN) programme developed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in collaboration with the University of Warwick. Unlike the Globe project, the LPN programme

was conceived from the start as an intervention in pedagogy. Its aims were, quite explicitly, a challenge to existing ways of doing Shakespeare in schools, offering a manifesto for change – ‘Stand up for Shakespeare’ – that was addressed and oriented to teachers (Neelands et al. 2009, 11): it offered them ‘significant intellectual and practical resources’ (Thomson et al. 2010, 5) to enable them to change how and when they taught Shakespeare (and other texts), incorporating the ensemble and rehearsal room practices that the RSC had developed as ways of working in and for the theatre. The aim of the LPN, then, was to effect a large-scale change in teachers’ pedagogy. Each of the different activities - including visits to the theatre in Stratford and CPD provided by the RSC – was conceptualised as contributing to this goal. And, to enable this to happen, the LPN was established as a series of long-term partnerships between the RSC, the University of Warwick and hubs of schools. Schools were committed to being involved in the initiative for three years, and the commitment entailed the allocation of significant resources of staff time. It is precisely because of the clarity of the aim of a shift in pedagogic practice that it was possible for those who evaluated the programme to identify a ‘dilution effect’: while substantial changes were to be seen in the approach of those teachers who were most invested in the LPN, the practice of those teachers whose involvement in the programme was more peripheral tended to more superficially affected (Thomson et al. 2010, 26).

With the Globe project, it would be possible, as our account above indicates, to identify schools and individual teachers who were more or less invested in *Playing Shakespeare*; but it would be neither appropriate nor meaningful to talk of an analogous ‘dilution effect’, because the project did not cohere in the same way around a single set of clearly articulated aims. The CPD programme provided by the Globe shared many of the approaches to text-in-performance advocated by the RSC: what it offered to teachers was, as we have suggested, a version of rehearsal room pedagogy (Neelands et al. 2009; Thomson et al. 2010; Franks et al. 2014). The school-based workshops drew on modified versions of these approaches, but we found no evidence that they were planned or conducted with the intention of effecting a change in the host schools’ own practices. They were experienced, by and large, as one-off events, oriented towards preparing students for their forthcoming visit to the Globe rather than modelling for teachers a praxis that might be incorporated into their everyday classrooms.

There are analogies between the *Playing Shakespeare* and the Shakespeare Schools Festival in terms of its reach. The SSF involves students performing half-hour versions of nearly all of Shakespeare’s plays, in performances spaces across the UK, following dynamic CPD and school workshop sessions. In 2018 there were 875 schools involved in the ‘world’s largest youth drama festival’ (SSF Impact Report 2018, 5). Like *Playing Shakespeare*, the SSF makes claims to raising academic attainment and life skills through students’ active involvement but with particular emphasis on inclusivity and social cohesion. Teachers and student directors are encouraged to adapt the abridged versions in any way that they see fit, including signed performances or those that involve very little dialogue. It is significant that through these two interventions students are being encouraged to regard the Shakespeare canon as something open to playful adaptation and experimentation. Our sense, though, is

that the Shakespeare that is taught for examination remains largely separate from the Shakespeare that is performed by students or for students at The Globe.

The focus of *Playing Shakespeare* is the Globe: the moment around which the different dimensions of the project coalesce is the performance itself. But what a performance means to any spectator is contingent on all sorts of shaping circumstances. As we have reported, school students came to the Globe with wildly different prior experiences of the play they were about to see, different kinds and degree of preparedness. They came, too, with widely differing senses of who they were – of how the audience was constituted: from the solidarity of a whole cohort (and hence a sense that this was for everyone) to the exclusivity of a privileged group (the ‘gifted and talented’) or of a random effect of timetabling.

Writing of the tendency to claim for Shakespeare the singularity that is both assumed and reinforced through the English national curriculum, Gary Taylor suggests that the sign ‘Shakespeare’ has acquired a rather different kind of singularity – a kind of ultimate indeterminacy:

A singularity (represented by the symbol *) is the center of a black hole ...
If Shakespeare has a singularity, it is because he has become a black hole.
... Shakespeare himself no longer transmits visible light; his stellar energies have been trapped within the gravity well of his own reputation. We find in Shakespeare what we bring to him or what others have left behind; he gives us back our own values. (Taylor 1990, 410-11)

Shakespeare thus becomes rather like the psychic paper brandished by Doctor Who: it signifies whatever seems most apt in the circumstances in which it is read. And that is closer to our sense of what the *Playing Shakespeare* project has represented: Shakespeare for all, perhaps, but definitely not the same Shakespeare for all.

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¹ The CPD element has been funded by the Globe; all other elements in the project have relied on sponsorship provided by Deutsche Bank.

² We have no data on the numbers of students who have made use of the website; but the total number of visits to the microsite before, during and immediately after the production run, was in each of the three years of our evaluation smaller than the number of students who attended the performance.

³ The widespread use of the term 'gifted and talented', as a way of identifying, and then making particular provision for, sub-groups of students within schools, was a product of the National Strategies initiative under the New Labour government (1997-2010). See, for example: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110812194519/http://nsonline.org.uk/search/inclusion/results/nav:50208>.

⁴ The slogan has been widely appropriated, as a quick internet search will demonstrate. See, for example, the page on the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust website: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/visit/whats-on/shakespeare-for-all-nov/> (accessed 22 October 2018).

⁵ The 'Whoosh' activity was originally devised by Joe Winston of Warwick University, working in conjunction with the RSC (Farmer 2019). Its presence here in the repertoire of Globe practitioners is an indication of the ways in which ideas and practices circulate across institutional divides.

⁶ Data supplied by the Globe.