

EDUCATION PACK 2012

A co-production between Headlong Theatre, Nuffield Theatre, Southampton and Nottingham Playhouse in association with Hull Truck Theatre.



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William Shakespeare – ‘The play’s the thing’

Shakespeare was born in Stratford upon Avon in 1564. For someone celebrated as perhaps the greatest playwright and poet in the English language, surprisingly little is known about his life. Baptised in his local church on the 26th of April, no one knows the exact date of his birth. After attending his local school at the age of 18 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, who six months later gave birth to their first child. In total they had three children: Susanna and twins Hamnet and Judith. Soon after Shakespeare moved to London and began a successful career as a playwright and actor. Performing as part of the troupe the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (later The King’s Men) Shakespeare enjoyed considerable success.



All in all Shakespeare wrote or co-authored 46 plays and poems. His considerable output and mystery surrounding his private life has led many to try and ‘fill in the gaps’. The film ‘Shakespeare in Love’ imagines what might have been happening to Shakespeare at the time he wrote ‘Romeo and Juliet’, and how this might have changed the play.

Improvisation Exercise

In small groups pick a moment from Shakespeare’s life and make up a scene to show the audience what happened and what you envisage his life being like at the time?.

You could try and answer, why he got married so young? Why did he suddenly move to London without his family?

Decide who you are, where you are, and what you want.

Some people go even further and speculate that because of how little we know about William Shakespeare, he might not be the real author of the plays we still have today. They argue instead that the spy Francis Bacon, rival playwright Ben Jonson or even Queen Elizabeth I might be the real author of his work. What’s not in doubt is the considerable contribution Shakespeare’s work has made to the English Language. You might not know it but lots of the phrases and words you use everyday come from his plays.

Synopsis

Romeo and Juliet was written in 1595-6 and is set in Verona, Italy, at a time when a longstanding feud between two noble families - the Montagues and the Capulets - constantly breaks out into brawling on the streets. Prince Escalus, ruler of Verona, threatens terrible punishment on anyone who takes part in further violence.

Young Romeo Montague is hopelessly in love with the unattainable Rosaline and, in an attempt to cure his lovesick misery, his friends persuade him to go disguised to a party at the home of his family's sworn enemies, the Capulets. Romeo reluctantly agrees to go when he learns that Rosaline has been invited.

At the party, he meets Juliet, only daughter of the Capulets, and not even knowing each other's names, they fall instantly in love. Juliet's hot-headed cousin, Tybalt, has spotted Romeo and his friends but is prevented from challenging them by her father, Old Capulet. He does not wish to see his party disrupted, and speaks well of Romeo's reputation in Verona.

During the preparations for the party, however, Juliet's mother has told her that Count Paris, a suitable young nobleman (who is also at the party) has asked her father for permission to marry her. Even though shocked by the discovery that their families are sworn enemies, both Romeo and Juliet are determined to marry, and choose go-betweens to help them arrange a secret wedding. Romeo asks his friend and mentor, Friar Laurence, to conduct the ceremony, while Juliet sends her elderly nurse to meet Romeo and learn the arrangements he has made.

Friar Lawrence is amazed by Romeo's sudden rejection of his love for Rosaline but reluctantly agrees to marry them, believing that such a marriage might bring an end to the ancient feud. As arranged, Romeo meets the Nurse, who is instructed to make sure that Juliet arrives at the Friar's the following morning ready to be married.

Now secretly married to Juliet, Romeo encounters her aggressive cousin, Tybalt, who challenges him to a duel. Romeo is unwilling to fight with him for Juliet's sake, but his closest friend, Mercutio takes up the challenge instead. When Romeo steps between them in an effort to stop the fight, Mercutio is stabbed to death. Romeo then kills Tybalt in a rage and is forced to fly the scene.

Angry that his laws have been broken, but accepting that Tybalt started the fight, Prince Escalus banishes Romeo to Mantua. Romeo is distraught and runs to the Friar for advice and help.

Alone in her room on her wedding night, Juliet, unaware of the death of her cousin or her new husband's banishment, eagerly awaits Romeo's arrival. When she learns what has happened, Juliet is so distraught that the Nurse promises to arrange one night together for the newly-weds before Romeo must leave Verona. The following morning at dawn, the couple part sadly, promising each other that they will find a way to be together forever and that their current problems will be solved.

Juliet's parents believe that her grief is caused by Tybalt's death so, in attempt to cheer her, they suggest she should marry Count Paris immediately. When she refuses, her father threatens to disown and abandon her, so she too seeks advice from the Friar, who has also been approached by Paris to marry him to Juliet.

Realising that she is so desperate that she might commit suicide (and perhaps fearful of the consequences for himself if he allows her to commit bigamy), the Friar advises her to go

home and make peace with her parents. He then gives her a potion that is guaranteed to make it appear that she has died in her sleep. He explains that the effects will wear off within 42 hours, by which time she will be buried in her family's crypt.

He promises to send a letter to Romeo immediately, explaining the situation and asking him to return in time to be with Juliet when she awakes.

Juliet takes the potion and is discovered 'dead' when her nurse and mother try to wake her for her marriage to Paris. Her 'corpse' is then taken to the crypt where it is laid beside that of the dead Tybalt. The Friar's messenger leaves to find Romeo in Mantua.

The Friar's messenger is delayed on the way and, instead of learning of the Friar's plan, Romeo's servant, Balthasar, returns to Mantua from Verona bringing news of Juliet's supposed death. Devastated, Romeo purchases poison with which to kill himself and hurries back to Verona, planning to die by Juliet's side.

Attempting to break into the crypt, he is interrupted by Paris and they fight. Romeo kills Paris and, reaching Juliet's body at last, embraces her and drinks the poison, kissing her as he dies.

Having learned that his messenger had not reached Romeo, the Friar runs to the crypt, discovers Paris's body and reaches Juliet's side just as she revives. Unable to persuade Juliet to leave her dead husband, and fearing for himself if he is discovered there, the Friar runs away, leaving Juliet alone with Romeo's body.

Realising that all their plans have failed, she pulls his dagger, stabs herself in the chest and dies.

Once the bodies are discovered, the Friar confesses everything he knows and is pardoned by Prince Escalus. Knowing that their feud has brought about the deaths of their children, the warring families are reconciled and agree to build a monument to the young lovers.

Directing Exercise

Make notes on the Headlong production of *Romeo and Juliet*, and think about what choices the director made to modernise the play?

If you were directing a production of '*Romeo and Juliet*', where would you choose to set it and why?

If you need any help read the interview with director Robert Icke later on in this pack.

Themes of the play

Love

Perhaps the most obvious subject or theme in *Romeo and Juliet* is **love**. However, Shakespeare presents love in different ways. There is Romeo's early love for Rosaline. This is like a puppy love, which the Friar calls 'doting' and not 'loving', because it was only really Romeo who believed he was in love.

Paris' love for Juliet is quite similar. He wants to marry her, but approaches her father rather than Juliet (as was the tradition). He does not really show any deep feelings for her, and even says he has 'little talked of love'. This seems to indicate he wants a good marriage and has chosen her, rather than the two of them falling in love.

There is another view of love - as something spiritual and between friends. This is shown with the love Juliet shares with her Nurse, the Friar and Romeo, and the friendships between Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo. Each of these shows a close understanding. They might make fun of each other and criticise one another's choices, but they respect and care for each other. They will also take great risks for one another: Mercutio dies to protect Romeo's honour.

The love between Romeo and Juliet is our classic idea of romantic love - they will do anything for each other and their language and behaviour reflect this.

Finally, Shakespeare deals with yet another view of love - as something purely sexual. A number of characters, especially Mercutio and the Nurse, make repeated references to sex. This is very different to the idealistic love shown by Romeo and Juliet.

Hate and Death

The themes of death and violence permeate *Romeo and Juliet*, and they are connected to passion, whether that passion is love or hate. The connection between hate, violence, and death seems obvious. Love, in *Romeo and Juliet*, is a grand passion, and as such it is blinding; it can overwhelm a person as powerfully and completely as hate can. The passionate love between Romeo and Juliet is linked from the moment of its inception with death: Tybalt notices that Romeo has crashed the feast and determines to kill him just as Romeo catches sight of Juliet and falls instantly in love with her. From that point on, love seems to push the lovers closer to love and violence, not farther from it. Romeo and Juliet are plagued with thoughts of suicide, and a willingness to experience it: in Act 3, scene 3, Romeo brandishes a knife in Friar Lawrence's cell and threatens to kill himself after he has been banished from Verona and his love. Juliet also pulls a knife in order to take her own life in Friar Lawrence's presence just three scenes later. After Capulet decides that Juliet will marry Paris, Juliet says, "If all else fail, myself have power to die" (3.5.242). Finally, each imagines that the other looks dead the morning after their first, and only, sexual experience ("Methinks I see thee," Juliet says, ". . . as one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.55–56). This theme continues until its inevitable conclusion: double suicide. This tragic choice is the highest, most potent expression of love that Romeo and Juliet can make. It is only through death that they can preserve their love, and their love is so profound that they are willing to end their lives in its defense. In the play, love emerges as an amoral thing, leading as much to destruction as to happiness. But in its extreme passion, the love that Romeo and Juliet experience also appears so exquisitely beautiful that few would want, or be able, to resist its power.

Text Exercise

Make a list of all the different types of love in the play and which characters they involve.

Individual versus society

Much of *Romeo and Juliet* involves the lovers' struggles against public and social institutions that either explicitly or implicitly oppose the existence of their love. Such structures range from the concrete to the abstract: families and the placement of familial power in the father; law and the desire for public order; religion; and the social importance placed on masculine honor. These institutions often come into conflict with each other. The importance of honor, for example, time and again results in brawls that disturb the public peace.

The enmity between their families, coupled with the emphasis placed on loyalty and honor to kin, combine to create a profound conflict for Romeo and Juliet, who must rebel against their heritages. Further, the patriarchal power structure inherent in Renaissance families, wherein the father controls the action of all other family members, particularly women, places Juliet in an extremely vulnerable position. Her heart, in her family's mind, is not hers to give.

The law and the emphasis on social civility demands terms of conduct with which the blind passion of love cannot comply. Religion similarly demands priorities that Romeo and Juliet cannot abide by because of the intensity of their love. Though in most situations the lovers uphold the traditions of Christianity (they wait to marry before consummating their love), their love is so powerful that they begin to think of each other in blasphemous terms. For example, Juliet calls Romeo "the god of my idolatry," elevating Romeo to level of God. The couple's final act of suicide is likewise un-Christian. The maintenance of masculine honor forces Romeo to commit actions he would prefer to avoid. But the social emphasis placed on masculine honor is so profound that Romeo cannot simply ignore them.

It is possible to see *Romeo and Juliet* as a battle between the responsibilities and actions demanded by social institutions and those demanded by the private desires of the individual. Romeo and Juliet's appreciation of night, with its darkness and privacy, and their renunciation of their names, with its attendant loss of obligation, make sense in the context of individuals who wish to escape the public world. But the lovers cannot stop the night from becoming day. And Romeo cannot cease being a Montague simply because he wants to; the rest of the world will not let him. The lovers' suicides can be understood as the ultimate night, the ultimate privacy.

Fate

Another major topic of *Romeo and Juliet* is **fate**: the belief that an individual's life has been decided for them and there is nothing they can do to change it. This is used right from the start. Romeo and Juliet's ill-fated lives are described as 'death-marked', and they are a 'pair of star-crossed lovers'. The idea of fate works on several levels. Shakespeare sets the two families against each other, and there is nothing Romeo and Juliet can do about this.

The couple have a feeling that things will go badly for them. Romeo thinks something is 'hanging in the stars', while Juliet says a 'faint cold fear thrills through my veins'. This is far more mysterious for us. In Shakespeare's time, fate was taken very seriously. An audience would have appreciated what he meant by all these references.

Time

There are many references to time, such as in Act 3, Scene 2 with Juliet is waiting for the night and the arrival of Romeo. Plus, the whole play covers just a few days, and the pace changes frequently.

Early in the play, Romeo is painfully aware of the passage of time as he pines for Rosaline: "sad hours seem long". Mercutio is the first to address the problem of "wasted time", and after his complaint, a sudden shift occurs and time quickens to rapid movement. Capulet laments that the years are passing too fast and Juliet cautions that her love for Romeo is "too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden...too like the lightening". Soon time begins to aid in the destruction of the lovers. Capulet rushes ahead the marriage date, insisting Juliet wed Paris a day early and thus forcing her into swift and, ultimately, fatal action. "

The fast-paced world that Shakespeare builds up around his characters allows little possibility for adherence to Friar Lawrence's counsel of "Wisely and slow." In such a world to stumble tragically is surely no less inevitable than it is for Lear to go mad in the face of human ingratitude." As with Shakespeare's manipulation of the theme of light, it can be said that his reliance on time as an increasingly menacing force against the lovers is immature and artificial.

Time is also crucial to the plot: the plans for Juliet's marriage are brought forward, the sleeping potion only lasts a certain time, and Romeo kills himself just before Juliet wakes up. Even her death is related to time - she says she will 'be brief'. The audience might well feel the two lovers are racing to their deaths and there is nothing anyone can do to stop this.

Romeo and Juliet the musical legacy

Here are just a few of the ways in which Shakespeare's play has been remembered in music.

Romeo and Juliet Dire Straits (1981) - covered by The Killers (2007)

The Montagues and Capulets from Sergei Prokofiev's ballet, *Romeo and Juliet* (1935)

The You and Me Song - The Wannadies (1994) part of the soundtrack of Baz Luhrman's film of *Romeo and Juliet*, starring Leonardo di Caprio

Romeo and Juliet Rhianna (2002)

Romeo and Juliet - an Overture Fantasy by Tchaikovsky (1870). It's a symphonic poem in sonata form, which follows the moods of Shakespeare's plot.

West Side Story (1957) by Laurents, Bernstein and Sondheim

Character Breakdown

Romeo - The son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague. A young man of about sixteen, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, and sensitive.

Juliet - The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet.

Friar Lawrence - A Franciscan friar, friend to both Romeo and Juliet.

Mercutio - A kinsman to the Prince, and Romeo's close friend.

The Nurse - Juliet's nurse, the woman who breast-fed Juliet when she was a baby and has cared for Juliet her entire life.

Tybalt - A Capulet, Juliet's cousin on her mother's side. Vain, fashionable, supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent, and quick to draw his sword when he feels his pride has been injured. Once drawn, his sword is something to be feared. He loathes Montagues.

Capulet - The patriarch of the Capulet family, father of Juliet, husband of Lady Capulet, and enemy, for unexplained reasons, of Montague.

Lady Capulet - Juliet's mother, Capulet's wife.

Montague - Romeo's father, the patriarch of the Montague clan and bitter enemy of Capulet. At the beginning of the play, he is chiefly concerned about Romeo's melancholy.

Paris - A kinsman of the Prince, and the suitor of Juliet most preferred by Capulet.

Benvolio - Montague's nephew, Romeo's cousin and thoughtful friend, he makes a genuine effort to defuse violent scenes in public places.

Prince Escalus - The Prince of Verona. A kinsman of Mercutio and Paris. As the seat of political power in Verona, he is concerned about maintaining the public peace at all costs.

Friar John - A Franciscan friar charged by Friar Lawrence with taking the news of Juliet's false death to Romeo in Mantua. Friar John is held up in a quarantined house, and the message never reaches Romeo.

The Apothecary - An apothecary in Mantua. Had he been wealthier, he might have been able to afford to value his morals more than money, and refused to sell poison to Romeo.

Peter - A Capulet servant who invites guests to Capulet's feast and escorts the Nurse to meet with Romeo. He is illiterate, and a bad singer.

About the staging...

Set Design

Directors and set designers work very closely together to make their ideas for the play become reality. Below is a photo of Helen Goddard's original drawing and model box for the production:





Design Exercise

Take a close look at Helen's design. Think of specific examples of how the set reflects Rob's decision to set the play in modern day.

Use your answers to this (and the directing question) to draw your own set design. Where would you set the play and who do you think the characters could represent? On a separate sheet of paper write a paragraph that explains your choices.

Interview with the Director Robert Icke

What originally attracted you to the play?

Reading it again, I realised that I didn't really know it. It's a play which pitches opposites hurtling toward each other - fate and coincidence, violence and peace, sex and death, comedy and tragedy - and I got very excited about the idea of trying to preserve those opposites and contradictions rather than (as I'd often seen in the past) examining only one half of a balanced pair.

Your concept is very interesting, where did you get your idea from?

The play is famous - but not well known. That means that while people can quote 'Wherefore art thou Romeo?', they often misunderstand its actual meaning. So conceptually, I wanted to generate the energy that comes from people being surprised that they don't know it as well as they think. And I tried to focus on the bits I felt I hadn't seen in productions before - the play's examination of dreams, of time, of coincidence and chance (rather than fate) and hoped to underline the fact that in this play, unlike many of the other major tragedies, up until the final moment it could still turn out OK. Things fall out unluckily - but they could as easily have turned out well.

How did you work with Helen Goddard to come up with set design?

Helen and I talked a lot, looked at images, films, drew pictures, and kicked around lots of different ideas of how the play might be designed - from teenage bedrooms to Italian architecture. We also considered the practicalities of staging a multi-locational play and how best to achieve a variety of settings in a single construction which could also be easily toured.

Interview with the Set & Costume designer Helen Goddard

What originally attracted you to the play?

Romeo and Juliet is one of my favourite Shakespeare plays. It is a challenge to align elements of violence; serendipity, dreams, innocence, sex, capitalism and love into a robust and fine tuned vision.

Love and youthful abandon are the plays resounding life force. As our teenage years are truly indulgent in emotion, it's energy can be both liberating and cruel. I'm fascinated by Shakespeare's concerns and deliberate text exclaiming children as the unfortunate victim in society's wheel. Romeo and Juliet make the ultimate sacrifice in their families unwavering feud. This feature of the play feels particularly relevant. It is freedom from constraints that keep love alive.

Your concept is very interesting, where did you get your idea from?

Rob and I looked toward modern Verona for ideas. We were keen to describe the city's classical architecture and its cosmopolitan flair. Contemporary Italian architecture inspired the new money world of The Capulets. The concrete viewing gallery has a reality in the Capulet fortune and frames a continual stream of scenes; sound bites and visions much like an episode of 24.

How did you work with Rob Icke, director to come up with set design?

I offer things, Rob offers things and we meet somewhere around the way.

Describe the role of a set and costume designer.

Working with the rest of the creative team we hopefully bring clarity and the plays world to life. The aim is to create a space where an audience can dream and be enriched.

What do you enjoy about your job?

Being part of creating something that will only be seen as a live piece of drama. When an actor delivers a performance in harmony with what I have done I get very excited.



Credits

Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare

Cast

ROMEO	Daniel Boyd
JULIET	Catrin Stewart
CAPULET	Keith Bartlett
FRIAR	Simon Coates
LADY CAPULET	Caroline Faber
MONTAGUE / APOTHECARY	Stephen Fewell
PETER	Daniel Hooke
BENVOLIO	Danny Kirrane
PARIS	Tunji Lucas
TYBALT	Okezie Morro
MERCUTIO	Tom Motherside
PRINCE	Matthew Spencer
NURSE	Brigid Zengeni

All other roles played by members of the company

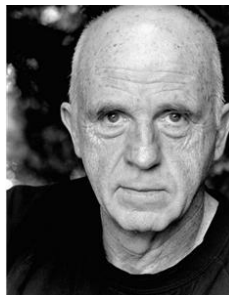
Creative Team

DIRECTOR	Robert Icke
SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER	Helen Goddard
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Johanna Town
MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGNER	Tom Gibbons
PROJECTION DESIGN	Louise Rhoades-Brown for Knifedge

Cast Biographies



Daniel Boyd plays Romeo. Daniel will be seen in Rupert Goold's upcoming film version of Richard II due for release in 2012.



Keith Bartlett's theatre credits include New World (Shakespeare's Globe) Henry VI parts 1,2 and 3, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV pt 1 and 2 (RSC) A Lie in the Mind (Donmar), Glengarry Glen Ross (Donmar) and Macbeth (Cheek By Jowl). Television and film credits include New Tricks, Silent Witness and Truly Madly Deeply.



Simon Coates' theatre credits include Tartuffe (ETT and Liverpool Everyman), Plenty (Sheffield Crucible), The Prince of Homburg (Donmar), The Hypochondriac (Liverpool Everyman/ETT) The Constant Wife (Gate Theatre Dublin), Translations (National) and Coriolanus (RSC). Television and film credits include Doctors, Holby City and Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Working Title)



Caroline Faber's theatre credits for Headlong include King Lear and Paradise Lost. Other credits include Hangover Square (Finborough), The Norman Conquests (Birmingham Rep), Keepers of the Flame, Edward III and The Malcontent all for the RSC. Television credits include Merlin, Holby City and Foyle's War.



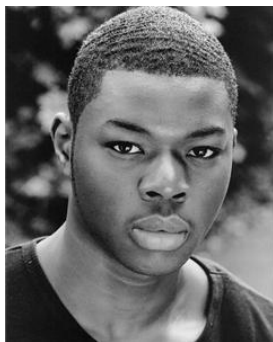
Stephen Fewell's theatre credits for Headlong include Enron and Paradise Lost. Other stage credits include The Tempest (Barbican), Wiff Waff/Things that make no sense (Latitude/TheatreUncut), Henry IV pt 1 and 2 (Bristol Old Vic) and Lady Windemere's Fan (Royal Exchange).



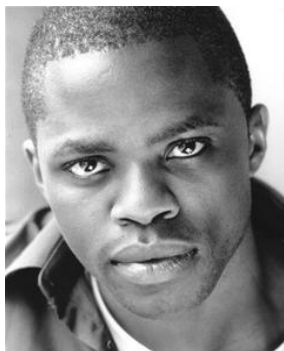
Daniel Hooke's theatre credits include Squirrels (Vivid), The Duchess of Malfi (Vivid), Comedy of Errors (Queen's College), Oklahoma! (Cambridge Arts Theatre) and Twelfth Night (Arden). Film includes: A Moment's Silence (NightThief Films), Artist and Athlete (NightThief Films).



Danny Kirrane's theatre credits include Jerusalem (Royal Court/Apollo), Tarantula in Petrol Blue (Aldeburgh Music) and The History Boys (NT Tour). Television credits include Hustle, Casualty, The Inbetweeners, and Skins.



Tunji Lucas's theatre credits include Greenland (NT), Eleven and Twelve (Barbican), Gone Too Far (Royal Court) and Small Things (Paines Plough). Film and television credits include Gone Too Far, Raising Baby Rio, Taking the Flak, The Bill and Bike Squad.



Okezie Morro's theatre credits include The Riots (Tricycle), As You Like It (Rose Theatre), Innocence (Arcola), Ruined (Almeida) and Rum and Coca Cola (ETT). Film credits include Red Tails (Lucas Films) Gulliver's Travels (Fox), World War Z (Paramount). Television credits include Outnumbered, Placebo, Batch.



Tom Mothersdale's theatre credits include Iphigenia (Theatre Royal Bath), The Phoenix of Madrid (Theatre Royal Bath), The School of Night (RSC), An Ideal Husband (Vaudeville), The Comedy of Errors (Shakespeare's Globe) and A Thousand Stars Explode in the Sky (Lyric Hammersmith).



Matthew Spencer's theatre credits include This Happy Breed (Theatre Royal Bath), War Horse (NT/New London), People are Stupid (Arcola Theatre), Nicholas Nickleby (Gielgud Theatre), Bent (Trafalgar Studios) and Tartuffe (Watermill). Television and film credits; My Family and The Trap.



Catrin Stewart plays Juliet. Catrin's stage credits include Buried Child at the Leicester Curve and The Lady from the Sea at The Royal Exchange. Television credits include Doctor Who and Misfits



Brigid Zengeni's theatre credits include The Duchess of Malfi (Greenwich Theatre), The Hypochondriac (ETT/Liverpool Everyman), A Christmas Carol (Rose Theatre), The Two Gentlemen of Verona (RSC), Julius Caesar (RSC) and The Winter's Tale (National Theatre). Television credits include New Tricks, Silent Witness and William and Mary.

Robert Icke is Associate Director at Headlong. He most recently worked alongside Headlong's Artistic Director Rupert Goold in conceiving and developing *Decade* at St Katharine Docks. Icke founded the Arden Theatre company in 2003 and over five years as Artistic Director directed nine productions for the company: *Julius Caesar*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Hughie*, *The Zoo Story*, *Richard III*, and *Journey's End*.

His other directing work includes *Catalyst* by Allister Bain (Oval House), *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson, *Motortown* by Simon Stephens, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Swan Theatre Company) and *Coat* by Rory Mullarkey (Edinburgh Fringe). His credits as an Assistant and Associate Director include *Blithe Spirit*, *The Misanthrope* and *As You Like It* for Director Thea Sharrock and *Measure for Measure* for Michael Attenborough.



Director Robert Icke

Romeo & Juliet: Rehearsal Diary

Week 1

On a Monday morning in early January, still in the shadow of Christmas and New Year, the company gathered for the first time. Apart from a few individual conversations and some preliminary work with Robert, our director, it was the first time most people had met each other, so over tea and cake everyone tentatively introduced themselves. There wasn't much time to soak in the ambience as introductions were sped along by a speed dating game, in which the company were split into pairs to gather as much information about each other as possible to be fed back to the group. With the ice broken, and safe in the knowledge of who was a big fan of cryptic crosswords, and whose hero is Ryan Gosling, the company was encouraged to talk about their responses to Shakespeare. It was interesting to see how strong many of their likes and dislikes were, influenced in turn by some of their best and worst experiences in the theatre. It was soon clear that everyone was singing from the same hymn sheet and that we all felt a responsibility to work hard to make the production exciting and innovative.

Robert is allergic to tables and dislikes a traditional read-through, so the company were soon up on their feet and working with text to get everyone comfortable with the language and verse of Shakespeare. There was a large range of experience, from those with many Shakespeare productions under their belt to those who had never spoken verse before. Everyone became a beginner again, united in a crash course on a little known speech from *Richard II*. Over-acting it to free up the text, beating the pentameter into the floor, and bullying each other to find the flow of the argument. As well as ensuring everyone got used to working in verse, the exercises were especially good for encouraging good verse-speaking habits, enabling a better understanding of the language. After a quick break for lunch, the afternoon session saw the cast discuss their response to the play, with particular attention to the cut we are working from - a creative and very unique version of the original. However, mystery remained as Robert kept his cards close to his chest with regards to specific details, collecting the thoughts and ideas of all present on the various themes that pervade the play. Finally, the company was introduced to the ancient sport of 'ninesquare', a ball game which got the competitive juices flowing and started a tradition with which each subsequent rehearsal would begin.

The rest of the week saw the actors working on the text. Having split the entire play down into bite-size chunks the cast was called in groups to work on certain scenes, explore and talk through relationships, and get the play on its feet. This was in no way prescriptive and the actors were encouraged to explore different variations and choices, to try things out and introduce ideas, and to play around with the text. Objects of all shapes and sizes: wheelie-chairs, footballs, cutlery, sofa cushions and a tea trolley, were pulled out of cupboards and off shelves and handed over to the cast. Scenes and soliloquies were occasionally hammered out to the strains of Goldfrapp or Marvin Gaye. The aim was to encourage freedom to explore the text and to ensure that all the actors had a strong understanding of the meaning, arguments and ideas therein. The results ranged from the perverse to the brilliant, and gave the company a solid foundation and understanding of the text from which to work before building up to staging.

By this time, the production office was in full swing and the stage management team were on hand to ensure the whole show was running in a smooth and organised fashion. Kala, our

deputy stage manager, had her hands full noting down any changes, additions or requests made in the rehearsal room - to send to the production team and keep them updated - as well as cataloguing props, costume and other items we might need. By mid-week the cast were all very comfortable with each other and enjoying the opportunity to explore their characters and scenes in great detail, and with even greater freedom. The world of the play and the relationships within began to solidify as the actors became more confident in their discoveries - developments greatly helped by the fact that by now many of the actors had learnt all their lines and were able to rehearse off-book.

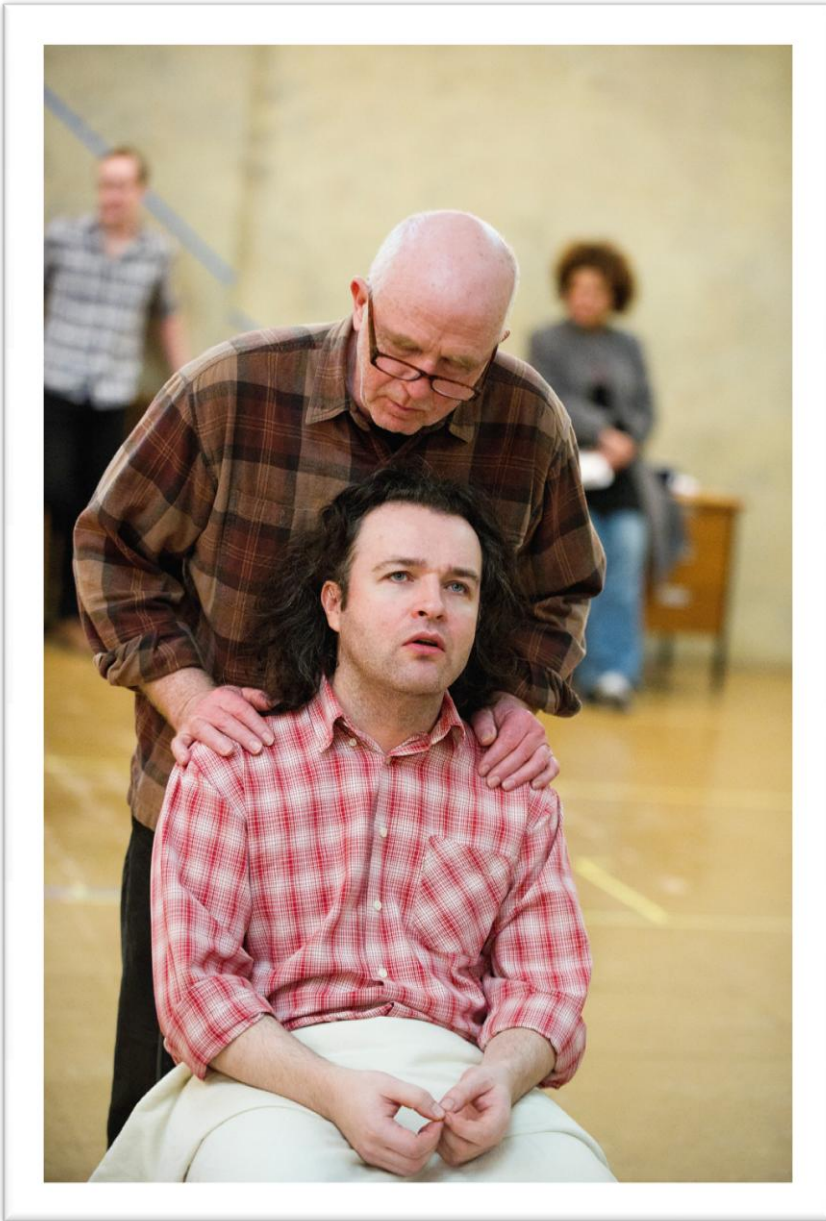
On Friday evening, the Headlong team, along with the producers from Nottingham Playhouse and The Nuffield, Southampton descended on the rehearsal room for a meet and greet. All were intrigued to learn about the process so far, and the company were eager to share their stories of the week and the progress that had been made. The highlight of the evening was the presentation (by Helen, our Designer) of the model box, a scale mock-up of the set. This allowed the company to see the space in which they would be performing, and ask any questions about it. After a week of working on the play without any concept of spacing or blocking - focusing only on the text - there was a thrill of excitement from the actors when they saw what they would have to play with. By the next morning, a plan of the set had been taped out on the floor of the rehearsal room so that they would be able to stage scenes with the correct blocking, safe in the knowledge of where all the doors and walls would be when it was eventually constructed. The realisation that the elements of the show, which had been worked on separately for months, were beginning to come together - particularly in the presence of all the people who had worked so hard to make it happen - provided a truly exciting end to the first week.

"To hear the latest from the rehearsal room go to www.headlongtheatre.co.uk or #starxlovers

Rehearsal Photos



Daniel Boyd & Catrin Stewart



Stephen Fewell
&
Keith Bartlett



Catrin Stewart
&
Brigid Zengeni



Brigid Zengeni, Tunji Lucas
&
Simon Coates



Catrin Stewart

The Cast of Romeo & Juliet



Tour Dates

Thursday 2 February to Saturday 18 February 2012

The Nuffield Theatre

Tickets: 023 8067 1771

www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk

Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 February 2012

Yvonne Arnaud Theatre

Tickets: 01483 44 00 00

www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk

Tuesday 28 February to Saturday 3 March 2012

Salisbury Playhouse

Tickets: 01722 320333

www.salisburyplayhouse.com

Tuesday 6 to Saturday 10 March 2012

Cambridge Arts Theatre

Tickets: 01223 503333

www.cambridgeartstheatre.com

Tuesday 13 to Saturday 24 March 2012

Nottingham Playhouse

Tickets: 0115 941 9419

www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk

Tuesday 27 March to Saturday 7 April 2012

Hull Truck Theatre

Tickets: 01482 323638

www.hulltruck.co.uk

ROMEO AND JULIET - Trivia

It is thought that Romeo and Juliet was written in 1595. There are 3,003 lines in Romeo and Juliet (although the First Folio has 3,185) and 24,023 words. Measured by number of lines it is the 12th longest play (Hamlet is the longest at 3,834 lines and 29,844 words)

86.9% of Romeo and Juliet (2,610 lines) is written in verse; 13.1% (393 lines) in prose. (Richard III, King John and King Edward III are written entirely in verse; while The Merry Wives of Windsor has only 12.5% of its lines in verse.

In the original text Romeo speaks 617 lines and Juliet speaks 542.

Up to the year 2000, it is thought there have been 479 films based on, or adapted from Shakespeare's plays. Of these the number one title with 77 versions is Romeo and Juliet. (Hamlet is second with 75, and Othello third with 43)

Probably the two most well-known versions are William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet (1996) starring Leonardo di Caprio, and Leonard Bernstein's brilliant musical West Side Story (1961). Us oldies all remember seeing Franco Zeffrelli's 1968 version - which was beautifully shot - starring Olivia Hussey as Juliet.

The part of Romeo is the 19th largest male role in Shakespeare's canon at 617 lines (Hamlet's the longest at a whopping 1,506). Juliet is the 5th largest female role at 542 lines (Rosalind in As You Like It is the largest at 685 lines).

There are 24 scenes in Romeo and Juliet (excluding Prologues) making it number 10 on the list. The play with the most scenes is Antony and Cleopatra.

In a famous production of Romeo and Juliet at the New Theatre in 1935, Peggy Ashcroft played Juliet, but Laurence Olivier (Romeo) and John Gielgud (Mercutio) famously alternated their parts at each performance.

Romeo and Juliet opens with a Prologue (in fact it also a sonnet, which is very clever!) spoken by Chorus. There are seven other Shakespeare plays which open with a Prologue: Henry IV Part II, Henry V (Chorus speaks before each act), Henry VIII, Pericles, Troilus and Cressida, The Two Noble Kinsmen and The Winter's Tale. In Hamlet, there is a Prologue spoken in the play within a play: The Mousetrap!



Further Resources

Preface to Romeo & Juliet by Harley Granville Barker

The Actor Speaks by Patsy Rodenburg

The Actor and the Text by Cicely Berry

Playing Shakespeare by John Barton

Manga Shakespeare: R & J by Sonia Leong

Shakespeare on the web

www.jc-schools.net/tutorials/eng9/romeo.htm

www.absoluteshakespeare.com

www.rsc.org.uk

www.bloggingshakespeare.com

www.nosweatshakespeare.com

Education Pack written by Tim Ford

WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE FROM HEADLONG ON REQUEST. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR THEATRE OR CALL HEADLONG ON 020 7478 0275 / www.headlongtheatre.co.uk