

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

Report by - Veronica Lake – 2010 Churchill Fellow

Purpose: To study Theatre Companies and their methods of connection between the works of Shakespeare and young people of today.

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Signed Veronica Lake

Dated 30th August 2011

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INTRODUCTION

I have been a teacher of English Literature, including the works of Shakespeare, for most of my lengthy teaching career. I developed concerns regarding the lack of student and teacher connection with these works as a source of learning and extension of the use of language in the general school environment. In 2008 I worked with Bell Shakespeare Company as an intern, observing and watching the company prepare an original production for performance, as well as for their in-class touring package for schools. In 2009 I completed a post graduate certificate in "Teaching Shakespeare the Royal Shakespeare Way" at Melbourne University. These experiences determined my resolution to investigate other sources and methods not available in Australia, for bringing Shakespeare's drama to students in a positive way.

The works of Shakespeare have often been perceived as a "sacred cow" by students and teachers alike. Many students have suffered from the dry and tedious "reading around" of Shakespeare in the class room. Such experiences have often blighted student engagement with the text and generated negativity toward embracing Shakespeare's drama and all that it has to offer. I firmly believe that Shakespeare's writing is an important source of human commentary. His characters are vibrant, his stories are enchanting and entertaining as well being powerful and confronting of problems which remain relevant to society as it changes and evolves. In an age when language appears to be shrinking, I view the richness and diversity of language to be found in the poetry of Shakespeare's writing as a source of inspiration. He remains fundamental to western culture, both historically and socially and his global influence continues to spread.

The opportunity granted to me by the Winston Churchill Trust to travel and be able to see some of the best theatre companies in the world perform Shakespeare's plays as well as to meet and talk with their Education officers has been extraordinary. The range of programmes on offer for students is diverse and stimulating. I will forever be grateful to the Winston Churchill Trust for selecting me for inclusion as a Fellow. The experience has allowed me to see a rich pageantry of Shakespeare's plays that was astounding and rekindled my enthusiasm for the teaching of his work. I will always remember it.

I would like to acknowledge and thank both my referees, Dr Carmen Lawrence and Maureen Lorimer during the application process, and my mentors Alan Balgaeich and Alan Genoni as well as my friend David Combe, post application. These people encouraged me, supported me and helped me overcome a number of organisational difficulties, thus enabling this wonderful experience to take place.

Finally I would like to dedicate this report to my daughter, Emily Mills, who always believed in me and without whom I would never have applied for a Churchill Fellow at all. Our mutual love of theatre, especially that of Shakespeare, was probably the inspiration that emboldened me to apply. The various theatre companies and schools I visited must be acknowledged for their generosity with both time and information. The education officers, production managers and teachers to whom I spoke were enthusiastic and supportive of my investigation and generous in sharing their ideas, information and experience. They see Shakespeare as a vital component of the English language and work hard to promote its inclusion in the lives of young people everywhere. To meet like-minded people who actually promote what I believe in, is inspirational and will stay in my heart forever.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Veronica Lake,
8 Arundel Street,
Fremantle W.A. 6160
Applecross Senior High School
(W) 08 9314 9393

I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study international theatre companies and their approaches toward making modern, vibrant and meaningful connection between the works of Shakespeare and young people in the 21st Century.

Highlights:

- Two days- performances and interviews, **Propeller Theatre Company** – Plymouth - *Caroline MacKay – Production Manager*
- Two days visit and viewing of classroom activities at **Winchester College** – Winchester. *Dr Ralph Townsend-Headmaster*
- Six days including performances, student workshops, lectures and interviews with the **Globe Theatre Company** – London *Fiona Banks – Education Officer*
- One day visiting **Eastside Educational Trust** - London *Rakhee Jasani*
- Five days including performances, workshops and interviews with **The Royal Shakespeare Company** –*Tracy Irish - Education Officer & Rob Ellington-Warwick University*
- One day meeting at **Kingsbury High School** - London *Jasilene Sangha – Classroom Teacher*
- One day visiting **Creation Theatre Company** – Oxford - *Sam Knipe*
- Four days of performances and workshops – **Dublin Players**, Trinity College, Dublin. *Gavin Carberry – Student Artistic Director*
- Visit and interview **Abbey Theatre Company** - *Andrea Ainsworth – Education Officer*
- Four days of performances interviews and workshops – **Stratford Theatre Company** – Stratford, Canada. *Pat Gillespie - Education officer*
- Visit and observe classes and methodology at **College Avenue Secondary School**, Woodstock. Canada -*Bryan Smith - Head of English*
- Visit and interview **Soulpepper Theatre Company**– Toronto, Canada – *Farwah Gheewala Education Officer*
- One day's participation in **Melbourne University's Graduate School of Education Teaching Shakespeare Course** - Melbourne. *Professor Jonothan Neelands & Dr Richard Sallis- Course Conveners*

Recommendations:

- That the Departments of Culture and the Arts and Education and major businesses be lobbied to support the development of Education departments within theatre companies, to target, support and develop student audiences
- That the many Arts Festivals around Australia be lobbied to include at least one Shakespeare play in their programmes
- That the opportunity provided by the new National Curriculum in English includes the study of Shakespeare's plays
- That local theatre companies be supported in presenting Shakespeare's plays in their artistic programme each year by funding bodies
- That financial support be made available to develop 'short' versions of Shakespeare's plays within theatre companies, specifically for school performance
- That theatre companies develop investigative workshops to explore Shakespeare with schools
- That dedicated studio space be created to implement such workshops

Implementation and Dissemination:

- Discuss and share experiences with colleagues and interested English and Drama teachers at my place of work
- Disperse and share information through state and national English and Drama Teacher's networks via journals and conferences.
- Run local workshops for teachers demonstrating techniques learned and encourage teachers to participate in such workshops to broaden their own teaching practice regarding Shakespeare
- Join the board of the Western Australian Youth Theatre Company to remain involved with youth theatre in this state
- Work with Deckchair Theatre Company to develop facilitators for in school Shakespeare workshops for students
- Work with the ARC Centre of Excellence at UWA on their project to enhance the use of the New Fortune Stage for future Shakespearian performance
- Run school camps focussing on Shakespearian text and putting into personal practice the methods observed while travelling
- Raise money to form and direct a Perth based Shakespearean Youth Theatre Company based on those methods, including performance
- Organize a local or school festival to celebrate Shakespeare

Summary:

From visiting the theatre companies of England, Ireland and Canada, I found the interaction between those companies and young people to be intensive, inclusive and inspiring. All of the companies believe that young people should and can be switched on to Shakespeare – the younger the better. They believe the best acting is mandatory for engaging young audiences. Their attitude is conducive to building and fostering audiences for the future. They all run educational programmes to sustain this idea and they also offer considerable support to teachers through their outreach programmes and teacher specific courses. Each company had created dedicated space in order to facilitate these programmes. Imagination and a sense of play are the keys they utilised to open the various activities and connect students, Shakespeare and meaning. Literacy and curriculum goals are achieved by participation in these programmes, as well as a sense of identity and connection with humanity and its history.

These companies are nearly all heavily supported by their respective governments and arts councils or big business. Each country sees Shakespeare as a valuable resource for tapping into the creative energies of current and future generations and for bringing communities together. They demonstrate this by supporting the companies' ideologies through funding and belief. Funding for education through the arts is the core expression of their support and they give generously.

PROGRAMME

MAY: ENGLAND

Visit Propeller Theatre Company – Portsmouth

Visit The Globe Theatre Company – Southwark, London

Visit Winchester College – Winchester

Visit Eastside Educational Trust – Shoreditch, London

Visit Royal Shakespeare Company – Stratford on Avon

Visit Kingsbury High School - London

Visit Creation Theatre Company – Oxford

Attend diverse productions of Shakespeare's plays – Barbican Theatre, Wyndham's Theatre, London

JUNE: IRELAND & CANADA

IRELAND

Visit the Abbey Theatre – Dublin

Visit The Shakespeare Summer Festival – Trinity College, Dublin Players, Dublin

CANADA

Visit Stratford Theatre Company - Stratford

Visit College Avenue Secondary School – Woodstock

Visit Soulpepper Theatre Company – Distillery District, Toronto

Attend community theatre productions

JULY: AUSTRALIA

Visit Melbourne University - Melbourne

MAIN BODY

"The play is the thing"
Hamlet (Act 11, Scene 2)

The works of William Shakespeare have informed the cultural ideology of English speaking nations for centuries. There is no doubt in the minds of educator's, that Shakespeare's plays are worthwhile and should be included in every child's experience of the English canon as taught in schools and yet the language of Shakespeare creates something of a paradox in that the very richness and complexity fundamental to its beauty is also the stumbling block for young people in their initial encounter. Many teachers are both ignorant and afraid of approaching Shakespeare in the classroom. They need to understand that in the 'doing, viewing and speaking' of Shakespeare, the plays come alive.

In today's world, our ways of relating to each other is based more and more on internet technology, 'texting' and management jargon. It has become a world of minimal communication. Emotions and the imagination have little place in the virtual world of technology. Our children speak that language and often lack available words to express emotion or enquire imaginatively into the nature of our being. Bringing Shakespeare alive for young people opens them to the development of their own means of communication. Cecily Berry, voice coach of the Royal Shakespeare Company for over thirty years, asks *"If we do not/cannot express our inner selves, how do we know what we think or what we feel?"*¹ Exploring and listening to the work of Shakespeare allows us to develop and expand our imagination, our vocabulary and to connect the two.

Our first acquaintance with a play is commonly from reading it, either alone or in a group. During this process we concentrate on making sense of it, which can prevent us from really listening to what the sound and texture of the language are telling us. The world of a play is created by its language; the imagery, rhythm and speech structures all contribute to its representation of reality. Every play has a very specific world and conveys that world through the language. The sound, the shaping and rhythm of the speeches, the images and the spaces in that language give it meaning. It needs to be spoken, shouted, whispered and so realised to make any sense. *"Shakespeare was not a writer, he was a playwright. Give children the chance to play with words ideas and stories and boredom has no place."* Tamsin Grieg (Actor)² Language resonates within us in deep and unexpected ways and voicing the lines of a text aloud, combined with physical activity or play, opens a fresh way into understanding their full meaning.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare's work is alive and well in the theatres of England, Ireland and Canada. From the tip of Cornwall, through Portsmouth to Stratford on Avon and again Dublin, Toronto as well country towns in Canada, acting companies, (professional and amateur) embrace the writing of Shakespeare and include it as part, if not the focus of, their artistic programmes.

¹ Berry. Cecily, *Text in Action*, London. Virgin Publishing Ltd, 2001

² Grieg. Tamsin, *Stand up for Shakespeare Manifesto*, 2010

My Churchill Fellow travel experience began in England, the home of Shakespeare. As I walked the streets of London, I saw posters advertising performances everywhere. Professional theatre companies, amateur companies, opera and dance companies constantly celebrated his work through performance. The many drama performances I was lucky enough to see were also a celebration of Shakespeare's language and storytelling. They each reflected a modern vision, were highly relevant, fast-paced and full of a vibrant, compelling energy. It appeared to me, as if the word 'accessible' was indelibly imprinted across the heart of each company, in what was presented to willing, involved and diverse audiences. If Shakespeare is going to appeal to young people, then live performance remains the best and most elementary method of inclusion.

I saw a production of Macbeth when I was a very small girl. It completely hooked me on Shakespeare. That was 63 years ago." Dame Judi Dench³

Propeller Theatre Company illustrates this lively and robust approach in its presentation of Shakespeare's plays. I was able to view two performances by this 'all male' theatre company in Portsmouth. The theatre was sold out for both *A Comedy of Errors* and *Richard III* and here was where I first noted the diversity of audience members, which ranged from high school students through to mature middle aged and elderly adults. These performances were full of vitality and vigour, with complete faithfulness to Shakespearian text. The artistic director of Propeller, Edward Hall, is adamant about staying true to the text. He believes in the power and poetry of the language and whilst his interpretation of place and action often demonstrates a modern aesthetic, that which is spoken remains true to Shakespeare's words. Hall and his company work as a group to deliver the lines in a totally natural and so relevant manner; thus the plays are fluid, fast paced and connected to modern audiences. The company as a whole, work to "*do the plays with great clarity, speed and full of as much imagination in the staging as possible.*"⁴

The company also has a definite approach to the inclusion of school students as part of their audience. Ms Caroline MacKay, Production Manager of the company explained to me the programmes for liaising with schools and teachers. For each performance there are comprehensive packages available to teachers on line. These contain plot synopsis, notes, discussion, reviews, production photographs and statements regarding artistic vision. More importantly, each package also contains a range of sample exercises which engage students directly with the text, drawing on their creativity and imagination as they participate. These exercises are a wonderful resource in that they involve the student in the process of creating the play. Rather than passively watching or simply accepting notes as information for essay responses, students are engaged.

The exercises are easily introduced into the classroom and include:

Script Exercises; the script is read by students in a variety of ways moving from poetry to prose and trying various approaches. A number of reflective questions are included for teachers and students to map the proceedings.

³ RSC Shakespeare in Schools Manifesto, 2011

⁴ Hall, Edward, About Propeller, <http://www.propeller.org.uk/>

Understanding the Character; students follow the process employed by the actors to create the personality of a character and how it will be realised on stage.

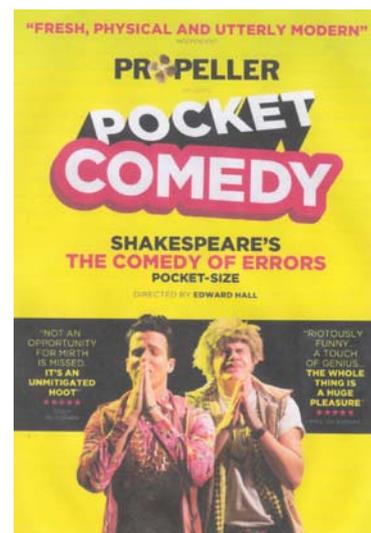
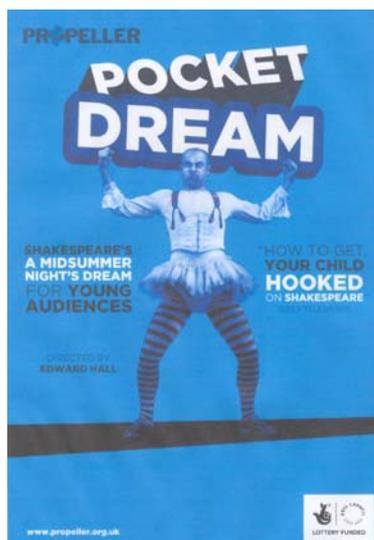
Improvisation & Thought Tracking; students engage directly with the text working in small groups to read a scene and then perform improvised scenes based on the ideas of the written scene. Onlookers are involved with questions, freeze-frames and the opportunity of reflection.

Acting as Action; students work through the words of the text and suggest actions to support these and the ideas they represent. Close attention is paid to the use of verbs in this exercise. The students are interpreting language.

Design Exercise; students choose a character and design a costume which reveals qualities inherent in the character

The Great 'Mnd' Quiz; students work through a series of simple questions which explore the order of events and behaviour within the play.

The company is available for specific school performances. Over the past two years, Propeller has developed shortened versions of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Comedy of Errors" based on the full length shows. These are entitled 'Pocket Dream' and 'Pocket Comedy'.



Hall states that the process of creating the pocket versions allows for a 'concentration' which may reveal the essence of the work. The actors of these shows are the best, allowing young audiences an experience of Shakespeare at the highest level. This first and perhaps most vital taste of Shakespeare should be of the best quality so they will contribute to the audiences of tomorrow. These 'pocket' versions of the more lengthy plays allow students accessibility to the text without any 'dumbing down' of the language. They are breathtakingly lively, comical and engaging, while maintaining the words of Shakespeare's text at their core. Each show lasts for one hour and is able to be delivered during school time, as well as allowing for post-performance discussion. Members of the company speak directly to students about their experience pre or post 'pocket' performance to discuss interpretation, purpose and meaning. They are open to questions about why they did something in such a way and what they were trying to say at that point. They connect the students with the text. The fact that the Pocket editions of the plays have a sense of completeness about them is an important contributing factor for the engagement of students. Excerpts from plays, (a

more common practice seen in Australia) while providing useful ways into a text, lack the totality of a complete play.

The company has recently launched an interactive web-site, where students can blog, tweet, deliver opinions, post questions and maintain on site discussion regarding current work in performance. Young people today commonly engage in such networking and feel confident stating opinions using electronic means of communication. Propeller adapts to suit the times and audience. Propeller also travels around the country, bringing their performances to smaller towns, as did the players of Shakespeare's time. Likewise, they perform their plays in repertoire. The fact that the company is currently all male is a fortuitous, though not deliberate, link to the Elizabethan companies of actors. Having all male actors on stage allows for a particularly physical and robust style of theatre performance while still allowing for more sensitive and delicate portrayals of female characters. Students, particularly male students, respond most positively to this group while in performance, workshop or discussion. Musicality is also important to Propeller's interpretation and presentation of Shakespeare's plays. Nearly every member of the cast plays a musical instrument, and these are used to create a wonderful ambience and background texture that heightens emotions and adds colour and depth to the entire experience of each play. Propeller is definitely a proponent of including young people as part of their audience for Shakespeare.

Creation Theatre Company is a much smaller enterprise based in Oxford. They too have an education officer, Sam Knipe, who is also an actor. In order to involve students with the work of Shakespeare, Creation offers drama clubs around the Oxford area. These clubs are manned by facilitators who work with about fifteen to twenty children in a club to introduce them to Shakespeare and the art of story telling. The ethos behind these clubs, "*Encourages independent creativity and takes the mystique out of Shakespeare.*"⁵ The clubs cater for varying age groups ranging from 5-7 years, 8-10 years, 11-13 years and 14-16 years. Each club employs two facilitators. The activities presented include physical drama, storytelling and performance. The workshops begin with physical activities and add original text over time. Club Members are also taken on trips to see performances and actors of the highest quality. The clubs continue to expand in number with 158 members, and fifteen clubs presently operating successfully. Ms Knipe stated, "*engaging students through story telling was the first step in forging strong links to Shakespeare's work.*" This is the basis of Creation's workshop ideology.

I discovered a similar operation to that of Creation at the Eastside Educational Trust in London. This trust works among poorer local communities and is about allowing students the opportunity to experience theatre through practical and physical involvement. There are group poetry readings, simultaneous readings (reading Shakespeare at the same time in different spaces) and creative writing drawn from key lines of the text. The workshops run by the Trust employ actors as facilitators and the different schools come together in performance at the end of several weeks of preparation. Students learn about leadership, co-operation and return to their schools as part of a sharing wider community.

The English curriculum of the United Kingdom has made the study of Shakespeare mandatory in Years Nine and Eleven. As part of my investigation I visited Winchester College. Here the male students are steeped in the traditional use of beautiful, powerful

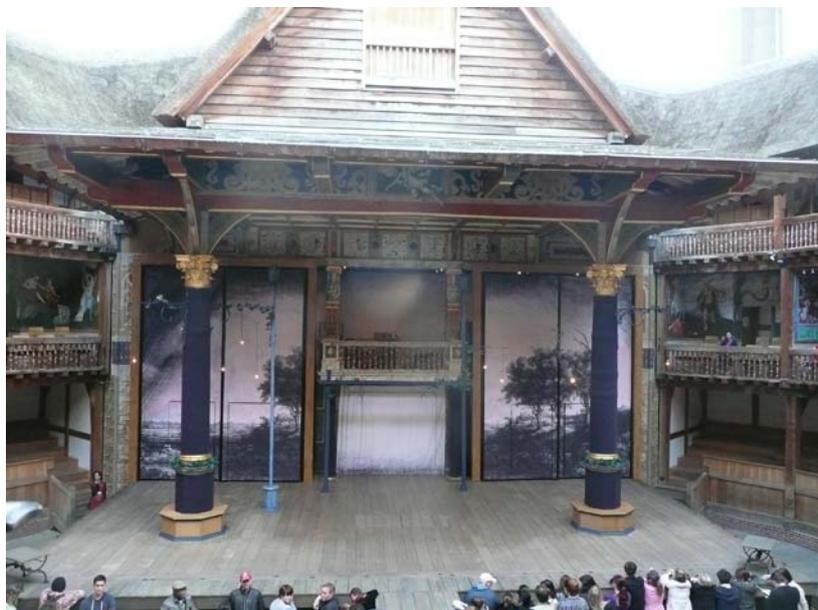
⁵ Creation Theatre – Advertising Pamphlet

language. They constantly hear English spoken aloud at the highest level by their teachers, who read aloud from the bible in chapel, deliver lectures on diverse issues to the student body and who read and speak well in the course of ordinary lessons. The students are encouraged to participate in many theatre excursions and at the time of my visit, had just been to see a production of *The Tempest* by Cheek by Jowl Theatre Company. They are given the opportunity to perform Shakespeare on stage, write their own theatre and participate in oratory competitions as a matter of course. In 2011 the boys performed *Measure for Measure* in their school theatre. This performance was not a part of the drama curriculum but an extra-curricular activity.



The English Head of Department and the Drama teacher have both participated in Shakespeare productions out of school time, at the Minmac Theatre in Cornwall. The Head of English was also about to participate in one of the workshops offered by The Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford during his holiday time. With staff members such as these, the boys are able to hear at first hand the language of Shakespeare spoken fluently and with eloquence. The richness of language is naturalised and entrenched in their school English experience. For some students, their contact with the work of Shakespeare can include up to nine plays. The most rudimentary experience within the school allows for at least three of the plays to be read, discussed and absorbed in various degrees of complexity. Shakespeare is seen as a valuable resource and is strongly promoted within the school.

One of the largest companies I visited was The Globe Theatre Company. This is a fully independent company (not government funded). It offers one of the most comprehensive educational/theatre fusion experiences I was able to see. To begin with, the company allows for the 'total' Shakespeare experience. Every day there are lecture tours of the theatre, allowing for 'up close' inspection of the stage and seating areas. School groups, from primary school to senior school, flock to these tours where the traditional aspect of Shakespeare's theatre can be experienced in the flesh. The history of the original globe, the rebuilding of the new globe and the exploration of the costume archives are all included in the package. This kind of 'reality' experience immediately immerses students in the historical context of the plays connecting them to the plays when in performance.



I was able to see four performances, done in repertoire, during my visit. As with Propeller, the Globe presentation of the various plays was imbued with energy and colour. The plays stayed true to the text, and to the traditional times of the play's settings, yet there was a distinctively modern flavour to delivery of lines and action. The Globe plays were also filled with music, drums, pipes, singing, dancing and movement. There was nothing staid or static about these productions and the language rang out clear and strong every time. The actual theatre, a replica of the original Globe, added to the overall experience. If it rains, the audience is wet and the show goes on. Again, I noted that the age of the audience was mixed. Many high school students were present, standing in the pit, as well as younger students present with their parents. The Globe presents matinees and these are well patronised by schools during term time. It seems as if the connection between the young and Shakespeare is vigorous and healthy in this company.

The company is dedicated to bringing the words of Shakespeare and his contemporaries to life. As part of their 'Read not Dead' programme, I attended one of a series of lectures where an informed reading was given, of a play rarely performed. The sounding of the words into air in front of an audience is an integral part of their power and the company recognises this fact. This belief informs many of the workshops offered by the Globe's Education Department to schools, teaching staff and University students.

Education and the engagement of students is a major concern of the Globe Theatre Company. "*Globe Education seeks to invigorate the study and enjoyment of the plays of Shakespeare, whether working with pre-school children, high school students or post-graduates.*" Patrick Spottiswoode, Director of Globe Education⁶ Globe Education celebrates performance and "the soul of lively action" (John Marston, playwright) with play-filled and theatre centred programmes. Their education staff is comprised of a team of nine fulltime



education officers plus an extra sixteen facilitators (actors who teach) who come and go as required. Separate to the theatre and dramatic performance, the company is also privileged in that it has a dedicated studio space where workshops are offered to schools on site. The Sackler Studio is close to the Globe and contains four studio spaces where actors can rehearse and students can attend workshops for learning and self-discovery. At times over 600

students a day, pass through these workshops focussing on individual plays or even scenes and speeches, as required by the different schools. The physical involvement of the students is directly linked to the language and so builds confidence and understanding. These workshops are undoubtedly a success. Local, national and international schools avail themselves of this opportunity to investigate the text of Shakespeare based on the student's ability to create and sustain different characters through performance based activities.

Globe Education works directly with Southwark schools, teachers and practitioners connecting the key characters of plays under exploration directly to literacy work in the classroom. The Southwark Project is broken into key stages, developing on prior experience

⁶ Spottiswoode. Patrick, Director Globe Education, www.globe-education.org

and adding layers to the learning process. From pre-school through to university bound, all levels are catered for.

Story Telling Module: involves five practical in-school sessions and one session at the Globe where the children explore the theatre space and dynamic of telling stories. Students learn through developing their own ideas rather than note-taking and discover their own answers through practical and ensemble activities. These activities work to connect children directly to the stories of Shakespeare, through their own telling and interpretation. They are involved in the creative process rather than mere observers.

Behind the Scenes Day: This day uses Shakespeare's plays and the Globe as a stimulus. Here students are encouraged to develop information gathering skills and to consider how context encourages multiple interpretations of a text. The Globe theatre space provides real context. The workshop connects directly with school curriculum and makes the plays into a natural and practical tool of understanding.

Out Reach: Every year, Globe Education works with a diverse range of organisations across England and internationally. From Cyprus to the United States, they offer workshops and projects tailored to the needs of each particular group. Some sessions can last for a day, or an hour, while others can be extended into a definitive project. These are available under the heading, "Bespoke Projects and Residencies". The outreach programme is focused on demystifying Shakespeare's language, stories and characters for students. Practitioners or facilitators travel to various schools and work with teachers and students on site. Jasilene Sangha, a young teacher at Kingsbury High School, is able to work with such a facilitator for one day during the school year. She stated that, *'the experience is important to both students and teacher and opens up opportunities to explore the text in fresh and exciting ways.'* She now tries to include in her programme a day of Shakespeare readings, where her students select and read aloud a particular speech from a play in other teacher's classrooms.

Students are also invited to create their own theatre through the **Making Theatre with Young People** programme. There are three theatres available in Suffolk where students convene for workshops which lead to eventual performances on stage. This opportunity teaches co-operation, fosters confidence and talent and explores the rigour and discipline of acting while directly involving students in creative thinking.

Globe Education has many learning resources available for teachers and students. There are a number of printed publications of text books, lectures and notes for investigating various texts. Much of their material, including interviews with actors, blogs and lesson plans is available on line and can be downloaded. The **Globe Education Shakespeare** series are textbooks which are "A powerful, theatre-based approach to the plays of Shakespeare, direct from the Globe.", and are aimed at older students in high schools. There is an online version of these texts which allows students to work with video clips and script machines. The **"Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank"** website offers a collection of free online resources aimed to support the study of Shakespeare through a variety of creative ways engaging with language, character, themes and performance. Currently available is Macbeth and more plays will be added over time. This resource is also available to Australian teachers. Everywhere and in every way, Globe Education offers a multitude of activities designed to engage the students directly with the text of Shakespeare's plays and be able to apply what is learned to desired curriculum outcomes.

Finally, the Globe offers **Specific Productions for Young People** a programme that runs over two weeks in March at the Globe Theatre. Over 19,000 free tickets are distributed to schools to allow for their attendance at these performances. Inclusion is an enormous component of demystifying the culture of Shakespeare. Once students see a play, they become drawn in to the world of theatre.

Working on a similar level of involvement with students, is The Royal Shakespeare Company, based in Stratford on Avon. The entire ethos of the company, from the artistic director down, involves an ensemble approach to performance, learning and management. Theatre is viewed as “*a force for regeneration, connection and collaboration.*”⁷ Performance is once again the initial key to engagement and I was able to attend three, two at the newly rebuilt Royal Shakespeare Theatre and one at the Swan Theatre. Both these ‘thrust stage auditoriums’ are designed to bring audiences and actors closer together during live performances. Everything was about making connections. As with all the performances I saw in England, these were full of high energy, music, colour and true to the text. The pace of each was breathtaking and swept the audience deftly into new and invigorating interpretations of the story. *Macbeth* startled and disturbed, with children playing the three witches, *The Merchant of Venice* provided a modern yet sad vision, by shifting the scene to Las Vegas and *Cardenio* resonated with beautiful, sombre music and a rich tapestry of colour that augmented the language. Once more, the audience was diverse. Young students were present by the busload and loving the experience. I found that very exciting.

Programmes offered in 2011 embrace public involvement, including young people and family. There are a number of ‘**Family Workshops**’ exploring Shakespeare’s characters, themes and language of specific plays. There is a ‘Family Day’ where members of the Acting Company and Creative Team explore the story of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* aimed at children from the age of 9 upwards. (This includes a matinee ticket for the real performance.) There is ‘The Story Garden’ targeted at children from 4-8 where the stories of Shakespeare are retold in an appealing way. Such projects naturalise Shakespeare in a child’s experience and allow for further engagement when older.

For Children and Young People, there is “**Play in a Day**”, a practical day long workshop focussing on one play with a family performance at the end of it. (Different age groups on different days), “**A Play in Two Days**” reworking *Macbeth* and performing it on an open air stage (15 to 18 years) and ‘**Summer Skills**’, a series of practical workshops lasting for one week and exploring performance skills with RSC practitioners. There are morning sessions (8-11 years) and afternoon sessions (12-16 years). Students can explore movement, stage fighting skills, voice, text and creating a scene. The company runs other activity days for adults and students over 18 of a similar nature; “**Making Shakespeare Days**” and “**Making Shakespeare Week**”. The policy appears to be; “involve everybody at every age” and high attendances verify that policy. I was able to attend three such workshops and was totally stimulated and engrossed by the activities on each occasion. I wanted to make Shakespeare performance myself, and I am definitely not an actor. I was the only Australian present. Participants included locals, Europeans, Americans and Londoners. There were several teachers present, a fact I found heartening.

⁷ Boyd, Michael, Artistic Director’s Report, RSC Annual Report and Accounts, 2010, page 4

The company also offers the public a chance to participate in Director and Post Show Talk Backs, which discuss creative choices made by the director and actors, Unwrapped, which demonstrates various production skills, The Play's the Thing, a series of informal discussions looking closely at the current season's plays and finally the RSC Summer School, a series of lectures and talks from academics and creative teams working to enhance understanding of the texts in performance. All of these more adult activities are available, of course to students and teachers. The open engagement with the public helps the image of the company and promotes genuine interaction and ongoing interest in Shakespeare's work.

Michael Boyd – Artistic Director of RSC actively cares about education and Shakespeare. The company is closely linked with Warwick and Birmingham Universities, offering post graduate support and practical involvement for students. The company maintains a strong Educational Team of nine full time staff and various support staff and volunteers. Their programmes also embrace school students, teachers and undergraduates.



I was able to attend three “**Practical Workshops**” where the facilitators worked with classes of students from Singapore (aged 15) on Romeo and Juliet, local primary school students (aged 11) on Macbeth and students from Germany (16-17) on Midsummer Night's Dream. Students were up on their feet, demonstrating ideas from the plays, speaking lines from the plays and engaging directly with difficult concepts. They were “doing”. *“My dad said Shakespeare was boring, but he's got it wrong! I'm gonna*

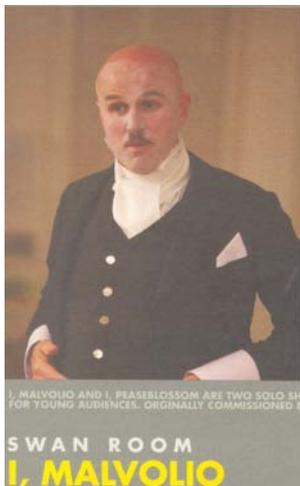
tell him about Hamlet. It's got murders and ghosts and castles and stuff and that's not boring. What are we doing next?” Ben, age 8 Stokeinghead Primary School, Devon after doing a unit of work on Hamlet. ⁸These two hour workshops were carried out in a dedicated space similar to that of the Globe. Known as the Waterside Space, and across the road from the two main theatres, the space contains three studios that function to house the numerous student visitors who flock to participate in such workshops. Australian companies do not seem to have this luxury. The company offers many opportunities for students including Theatre Days, Post-Show Talkbacks, Inset Days (prior to approaching a given text) and various conferences ranging from a Sixth Form Conference over one week to a Two-Day Conference focussed on specific texts. There is also a Young People's Shakespeare Week aimed at exploring Taming of the Shrew for 2011. Students are also granted the opportunity to attend “Is All Our Company Met?” where students work as an ensemble of actors. These sessions entitled ‘Hunt It, Find It, Make It, Do It’, are run over a series of four weeks developing student skills in research and performance. Students may also participate in the Shakespeare Challenge, where they are asked to engage with the language creatively and research a character and their connection to Shakespeare. Success in this challenge allows students to be awarded a Bronze Arts Award, recognised in England.

Teachers are not forgotten by this company. Specific courses are offered to develop teacher skills, knowledge and confidence in using active, rather than static approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare. I have attended these courses in Australia and can testify to their impact upon my own teaching and subsequent student reaction to the text. They lift

⁸ RSC Shakespeare in Schools Manifesto, 2011

participants out of their seats and onto their feet, sharing ideas, demonstrating emotions and creating imaginative responses. The RSC sells a toolkit for teachers as a resource, which contains lesson plans, activities, suggestions and direction for work in the classroom. There are classroom resources available online, which offer information about past and present productions, taster activities and schemes of work. www.rsc.org.uk/educationresources

The RSC presents shorter complete versions of the plays for school groups, much like Propeller. This company also believes that the best actors and performances have the most impact and engage the wider audience. Students are the winners from this ideal, as they are able to see wonderful acting first hand. In 2010, over 3,300 8-12 year olds saw one of the Young People's Shakespeare productions in their school. Hamlet and The Comedy of Errors toured to primary and secondary schools in the Black Country, London and Newcastle upon Tyne. The understanding by students is apparent in the following comment "One year 5 student responded to a viewing of Hamlet with the comment, Hamlet's killing of Claudius was a good thing, as Hamlet's madness only affected the court, but as king, Claudius' behaviour was 'infecting' the whole country."⁹ In 2011, *Taming of the Shrew*, *I Malvolio* and *I Peasblossom* will be available for young audiences and for touring to schools.



The theatre companies I investigated in England actively seek involvement with school students. Their educational programmes are diverse and continually evolving with the times, engaging students on many levels. Each company knows that young people are tomorrow's audience and have made determined efforts to capture that audience for today.

In Ireland, I visited the city of Dublin in order to investigate The Abbey Theatre. While this theatre company is not devoted to Shakespeare, it is the premiere company of Ireland and nearly every year the artistic programme includes some Shakespeare. The education programme for this theatre is mainly directed at teachers who are given the opportunity for professional development regarding the teaching of Shakespeare. Andrea Ainsworth, the education officer, runs day long workshops based on the RSC practical courses, which allow teachers to experience the plays and new methods of involvement with the text to pass on to their students.

Quite by chance I encountered another group in Dublin, based in Trinity College. The Dublin Players is an enthusiastic university student group that organizes and runs an annual

⁹ RSC Annual Report and Accounts, 2010, Page 21

Shakespeare Festival over eleven days in June. The festival involves traditional repertory performances of selected plays (*Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night* by GB Theatre Company) in the forecourt, or Front Square of Trinity College, with the Campanile as a permanent backdrop. Entitled '*All the City's a Stage*' the festival utilizes a variety of city spaces including the university forecourt, parks, cathedral crypts, rotundas and gardens, bringing Shakespeare to the people. The public space performances offer 'tastes' of Shakespeare, including dance, singing, public poetry readings and snippet interpretations of scenes from the plays. I was lucky enough to see 'The Weird Sisters', a performance centred on the witches from *Macbeth*. It was presented in the crypt of Dublin Cathedral and was intense and effective. The setting heightened the drama and generated excitement and involvement within the audience, which was made up of a lot of teenagers keen to explore the vaults and darkness of the crypt. I also attended a garden workshop and dance performance in St Stephen's Greene - the city gardens. The garden workshop was aimed at young children and allowed them to 'play' with the characters of *Macbeth* under the guidance of the young actors. All these public performances were free and very well attended.

The company is made up of students who volunteer their time to rehearse and create this vibrant cultural experience. They also run a Community Outreach Programme, going into schools and presenting one hour performances of plays, with an additional one hour workshop to follow, involving children in participation activities based on the text. Two performances have been commissioned *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* for 2011. I spoke with Gavin Carberry, the student director, whose infectious enthusiasm for spreading Shakespeare to the world was palpable. The festival allows for young student actors from the Shakespeare Summer Institute to participate in an intensive series of master-classes by leading theatre practitioners over the course of the Festival. Balancing a combination of rehearsals and practical workshops, the institute students prepare a Shakespearian performance delivered on the main stage in Trinity College Front Square. These students move out into the world with invaluable experience and are willing to pass that experience on in schools. www.dublinshakespeare.com

In Canada, Shakespeare was almost more popular than in England. There are a number of festivals across the country focussing on his work and the most famous is that held in Stratford, Ontario. The town of Stratford is a country town, more reminiscent of Australian country towns. It is situated in what was originally a tobacco growing farming district: hardly a place for culture and the works of Shakespeare! Nonetheless, Stratford has become a dynamic centre for theatre and each year hosts the Stratford Shakespeare Festival from April until October and has been doing so for over fifty years. The company employs over a thousand individuals, utilizes four theatres in the town and presents its festival programme of twelve plays, with four or five different works by Shakespeare at the heart of the season: it is the largest Arts organization in Northern America. I was able to view three of those chosen for the 2011 festival; *Twelfth Night*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Richard 111*. Once again I was impressed by the quality of the acting, the powerful energy of each performance and the diversity of audience. As with the artistic directors from England, Antoni Cimolino, (General Director) and Des McAnuff (Artistic Director) believe that the best acting is the best way to involve students with Shakespeare, but the company also has plenty of other opportunities on offer.

There is a team of 6 people working in education. These are co-ordinated by Pat Gillespie and together offer a comprehensive range of educational opportunities designed to involve both teachers and students. Ms Gillespie stated quite frankly that many of the active

workshops were imported from the RSC and the Globe, in that their focus is on text and movement, and adapted to suit the various needs of schools. The education programme offers a number of choices for students from different age groups. Over the summer, Stratford is able to offer a Residential Shakespeare School for students aged between 13 - 18.



Students board in the town and work on the Festival Theatre main stage (see above) while they participate. There are 25 students in each group and the times offered for participation move from one week, through to three weeks of intensive workshops for University bound students. These students are able to see all 12 performances from the festival, work on stage with real actors, directors and facilitators from the plays, explore specific Shakespearian text through ensemble work and eventually perform themselves on the major stage of the Festival Theatre. About 170 students are lucky enough to participate in these workshops.

Stratford is also available to students and teachers through the medium of modern technology. The Festival Online section of the website offers a multitude of avenues into the exploration of the plays. There are **Scene Notes**, a monthly **e-newsletter**, containing interviews with artists, and inside information, **Video Clips** of current productions, **Webisodes** – mini documentaries, featuring interviews with actors and directors and a **Photo Gallery**, containing slide shows of rehearsal and production shots. Also available is the opportunity to join the Stratford Facebook, Blogs and Discussion forums online with members of the company and staff plus fans (www.facebook.com/StratfordFestival) . Twitter is also available online for comments reviews and post-performance discussion. (www.twitter.com/stratfest) . You tube is another instance of technology that has been turned into a resource by the company – (www.youtube.com/stratfordfestival) . For more traditional

methods of support, there are many print resources which include house programmes, study guides and resources, which are available to download and print.

For teachers, there is a three day workshop offered, focussing on Shakespeare's plays and especially the ones in production. They are able to work with practitioners or providers, who are also real actors. Eighty teachers participate in these workshops each year, and when they are complete, the teachers are accredited with a new qualification and paid for it when they return to their schools. In August/September there is a teacher's conference inviting guest speakers from all over the world, including academics, actors, directors and theatre-makers to present and discuss Shakespeare. There are also physical workshops where teachers are involved directly in bringing the words of Shakespeare's plays to life.

I spent time at College Avenue Secondary School observing and attending classes with Mr David Smith His experience was perhaps the best I observed where a company and school came together to make meaning from Shakespeare. The school is situated in the small town of Woodstock – a thirty minute drive from Stratford. Each year, when the Stratford programme appears, Mr Smith selects a Shakespeare play for study with his students, chosen from that programme. This year he chose Richard 111. As well as reading through the play in a traditional way and completing a variety of in-class projects, students were able to attend the theatre, listen to a Lobby Talk, a pre-performance talk by David Prosser (Director of Communications), view a truly remarkable performance and participate in a Stageside Chat, where a post-performance discussion of the play took place. The cost of such an experience is \$25-00. The school could also choose to engage the company in a School's partnership programme, where the company visit the class on 3 separate occasions to explore the chosen play via scenes, specific speeches, and performance/meaning discussion. In the past, the company has done a one day session with drama students, ending in the performance of a scene. They brought with them costumes, a make-up artist and practitioners, so students could experience the reality of bringing the work to life.

Many schools avail themselves of the opportunity to complete theatre and archive tours of the company. They get to look at the amazing collection of costumes, props and programmes as well as discovering the history of the theatres and festival. The company has created a new opportunity for young people to maintain their contact with the theatre in performance. Play On, has been devised so young people from the ages of 16-29 continue to attend theatre productions at the reduced price of \$25-00. This social group is the one which falls away from theatre experience and the cost is often a real factor in loss of audience. The Stratford Company is aware of the importance of including and connecting young people to the theatre and works hard to meet those demands on a number of levels.

My final visit in Canada was to Soulpepper Theatre Company, situated in the Distillery District of Toronto. While this company is not dedicated to only Shakespeare, at least one of his plays is included in each year's artistic programme. The ensemble team presents its programme in repertoire, performing 8 plays, or 6 plays simultaneously, as well as contributing in a major fashion to the amazing youth programmes offered by the education branch of the company. Soulpepper relies on a broad range of revenue sources and for every dollar gifted to the company, 61 cents goes directly to the art, artist training and youth education and outreach programmes. To date, I have never seen anything like this as part of an Australian Theatre Company's manifesto.

Free programmes are offered as part of the Youth Outreach Programme

For youth aged between 16-19 years

Scotiabank Youth Mentorship Programme

- Spend six weeks in the summer exploring various art forms and creating a final showcase
- Mentorship by a member of the Soulpepper Company
- Receive \$20-00 per day to assist with transit and food
- Program Dates: July 4 – August 12, 2011

Scotiabank Youth Leadership Programme

- Open to alumni of Soulpepper Youth Outreach Programme
- Meet for five weeks in summer for creative exploration of theatre, art and our community
- Receive \$20-00 per day to help with transit and food
- Programme Dates: July4 –August 11, 2011

Telus Youth Outreach at Soulpepper:

March Break Intensive

- Spend March Break exploring various art forms in a safe and creative environment
- Receive \$20-00 per day to help with transit and food
- Programme Dates: March14 – March 18, 2011

Curtain Up

- Participate in a workshop and see a Soulpepper production
- Receive transit tickets and food at each session
- Spring Dates: March 5, April 9, May 7, 2011
- Summer Dates: July 27, August 3, August 10, 2011

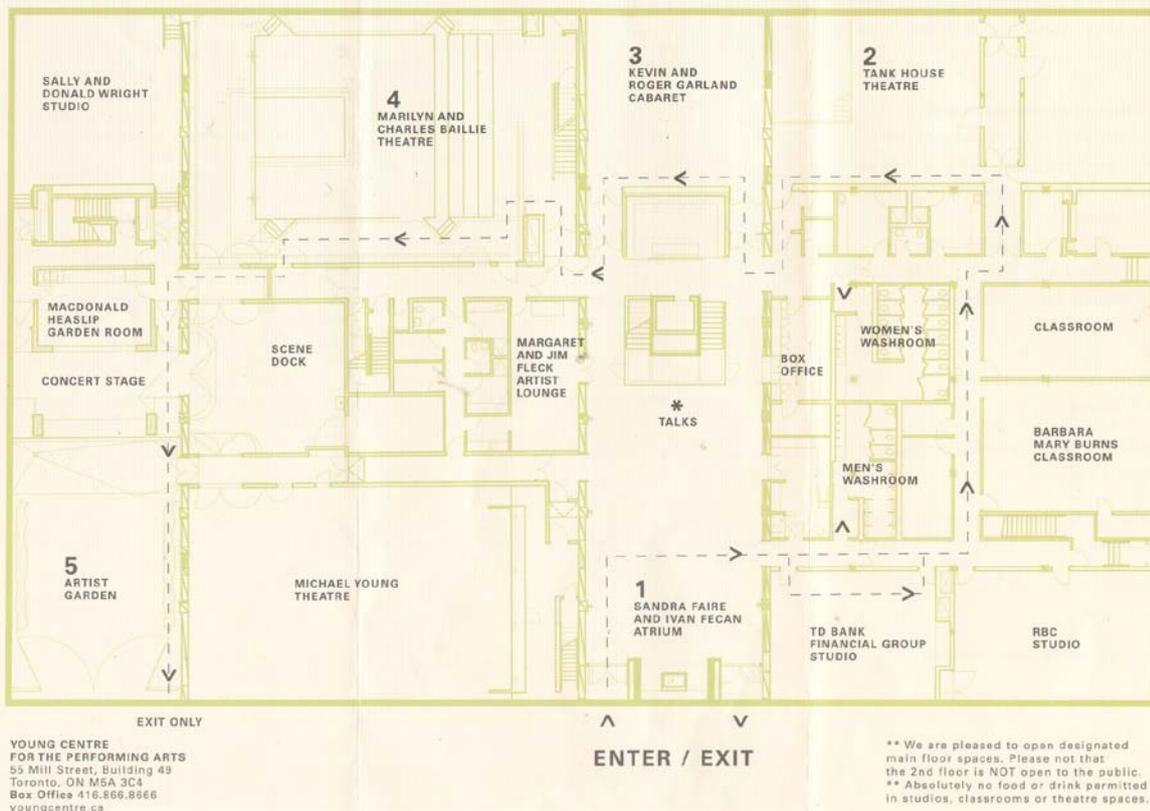
Leading Ladies

- Participate in an open and creative all girls programme
- Explore various art forms and work collectively with like-minded young women
- Receive transit tickets and food at each session
- Programme Dates – Fall 2011

Young Artists

- Explore the art of comedy acting and improvisation
- View performance and have a private talkback with the cast
- Receive transit tickets and food at each session
- Programme Dates – Fall 2011

Soulpepper has a dedicated space for these programmes.



The Young Centre for the Performing Arts, is a building composed of two renovated 19th century tank houses, built by the labourers who worked in the distillery warehouses. It contains five fully flexible performance spaces ranging in size from 90 to 400 seats. It has four studios and two classrooms – all wired for film and DVD/Video capacity. It has a central lobby with bar, café, bookstore, and reference library as well as production and administrative facilities. There is also an outdoor garden, which can be used as performance space (weather permitting) The centre is not for an elite, paying group of students. It is not about privilege. No experience is necessary to join the programmes and the payment and provision of transit fees and food, ensures everybody has a chance to participate.¹⁰ Farwah Gheewala, the education manager said, “the programmes are incentive to promote participation in the arts.” Their first graduate from a 2006 summer programme, has just joined the actual theatre company as part of the ensemble troupe. Not all of these programmes are focussed on Shakespeare, but their structure and organization would support any adaptation to a specific concept. This Youth Outreach programme is fully supported by the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. There is nothing on offer in Australia to compare with Soulpepper’s programmes.

¹⁰ Soulpepper Outreach Programmes Brochure 2011

Conclusion:

In my travels, I found some common beliefs rooted in the heart of each company I visited.

- Youth is important to the arts and should be included at every opportunity.
- Shakespeare and young people work powerfully together.
- Language combined with imagination are the keys to unlocking creativity in students.
- Allow children to see the very best in performance, play with Shakespeare's words, experience the text in a physical and safe context and they will make understanding, enrich their expression and enjoy Shakespeare all their lives.

Canadian, Irish and most English companies had strong government financial and ideological support. There is a plethora of excellent Shakespeare in performance, which is well attended and supported by diverse audiences. Each company had an education department strongly focussed on including school students as audience and engaging their interest in the language and understanding of text. There were many youth outreach programmes and drama clubs supported by the companies.

By comparison, there is not much available in Australia although some companies are trying to implement new directions for young audiences. In Perth there is one Youth Theatre Company where the last Shakespeare play performed was *The Tempest* in 2003. Recently this company has introduced Shakespeare workshops in the evening for interested young actors. Black Swan Theatre Company, does include one Shakespeare play in its annual artistic programme and sends notes to participating teachers and schools. This company has one education officer. Bell Shakespeare tours the entire country presenting Shakespeare in performance as well as visiting schools to give a 'taste' of Shakespeare through performed extracts of some of the more well-known plays. As far as I know, it is the only Australian company to visit country schools on tour. It has an education department that liaises directly with schools and is also the only theatre company to offer Shakespeare workshops to teachers.

Ironically, in our vast country, there is a lack of studio space available to the companies, which can be used for student workshops. There is also a seeming lack of financial support for workshops connecting students to any theatre, let alone Shakespeare. What focus there is on theatre in Australia is mainly on "new work" and installations using multi-media.

My travels revealed opportunities, enthusiasm and engagement with young people and Shakespeare everywhere I went and I believe this should be part of Australian cultural development for the future. The experience of the Churchill Fellow has opened my eyes as to what can be done, and I intend to encourage similar enterprises in my state and country wherever I can. I am very grateful to the Churchill Trust for allowing me this life-changing experience.

Recommendations:

- That awareness of the importance of Shakespeare be raised in the public consciousness
- That the Departments of Culture and the Arts and Education as well as major businesses be lobbied to support financially the production of Shakespeare in performance within the theatre Companies of Australia.
- The creation and maintenance of education departments within theatre companies be encouraged to target, support and develop student audiences
- That the many Arts Festivals around Australia be lobbied to include at least one Shakespeare play in their programmes
- That the opportunity provided by the new National Curriculum in English includes the study of Shakespeare's plays
- That local theatre companies be supported in presenting Shakespeare's plays in their artistic programme each year by funding bodies
- That financial support be made available to develop 'short' versions of Shakespeare's plays within theatre companies, specifically for school performance
- That theatre companies develop investigative workshops as part of their programmes to explore Shakespeare with schools
- That dedicated studio space be created to implement such workshops

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