

In 1949 Sam Wanamaker came to London for the first time expecting to find a Globe Theatre on Bankside. Nothing was there. His Playhouse Trust was established in 1970 with the aim of raising funds to rebuild Shakespeare's Globe and work on the six metre deep foundations began in 1987. By 1993 the construction of the theatre had started.

The Society of Teachers of Speech and Drama has made donations to the Globe Theatre and so has the Surrey Conference; these are permanently recorded at the Globe Centre. Sadly Mr. Wanamaker, whom members of the Conference met, died in 1993.

Two years ago Mark Rylance was appointed Artistic Director of the Globe. Each year a theatre company will assemble in the spring and summer months to perform in the Globe and Inigo Jones Theatres, discovering a method of playing Elizabethan and Jacobean works suitable to the particular demands of the two spaces. A brief introductory season in the autumn of 1996 gave Gabriel Egan an opportunity to see three companies in operation at the Globe. We are grateful for his critique of the theatre in operation.

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Underlying the project to construct a copy of the Globe playhouse on Bankside is an artistic principle which has yet to be validated. It is hoped that Shakespeare's plays will reveal more of their full potential effect and meaning when performed in the kind of theatre for which they were written than in theatres of more recent design. If it is discovered that this is not the case, perhaps because other factors are more important than the configuration of the playing space, the project will have established a sterile fact – that venues are not so terribly important – at extraordinarily high cost. The total bill so far is £20.5m. There is considerable pressure upon the project to produce an artistic return on this capital, in the form of new insights into Shakespeare's plays, and the so-called Prologue season which ran from 21st August to 15th September 1996 was the first opportunity to do so.



A workshop season in autumn 1995 permitted leading theatre practitioners to experiment upon a temporary stage erected where the finished version would stand. The mock-up stage was complemented with a mock-up cover and posts as shown in Figures 1 and 2. The posts became a point of contention: the theatre practitioners found them too large and their positioning obtrusive, the academics asserted that these details were as authentic as possible. Peter Hall complained that the posts were too near the corners of the stage, making it impossible for a large group of actors, such as might represent an army, to enter at one door and sweep across the stage in a puissant manner¹. The posts made them look rather like schoolchildren on an outing, walking in single file around an obstacle. Hall's demand that the posts be moved upstage and brought closer to one

another could not easily be met because the immense stage covered need to be supported at its gable end, near the eaves. If the posts moved closer together the eaves would have to follow and the sides of the stage would be exposed to the elements. If the posts moved upstage the gable end would have to follow and the front of the stage would be exposed.

Figure 1

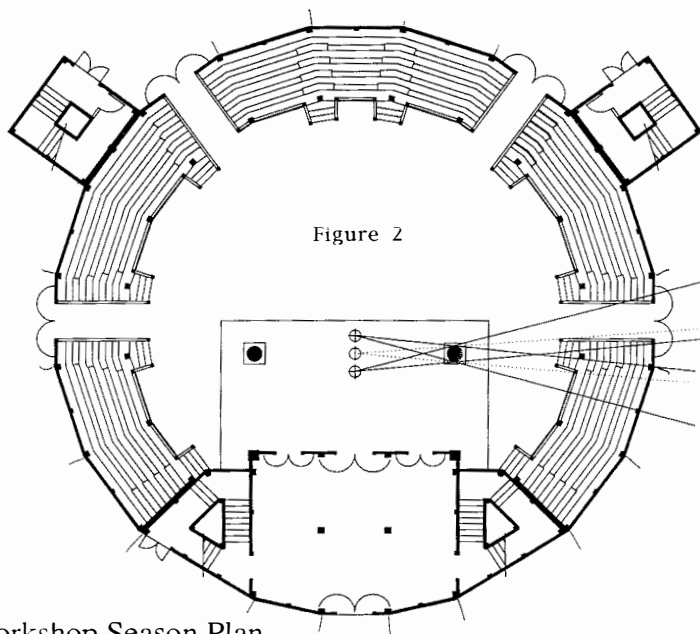
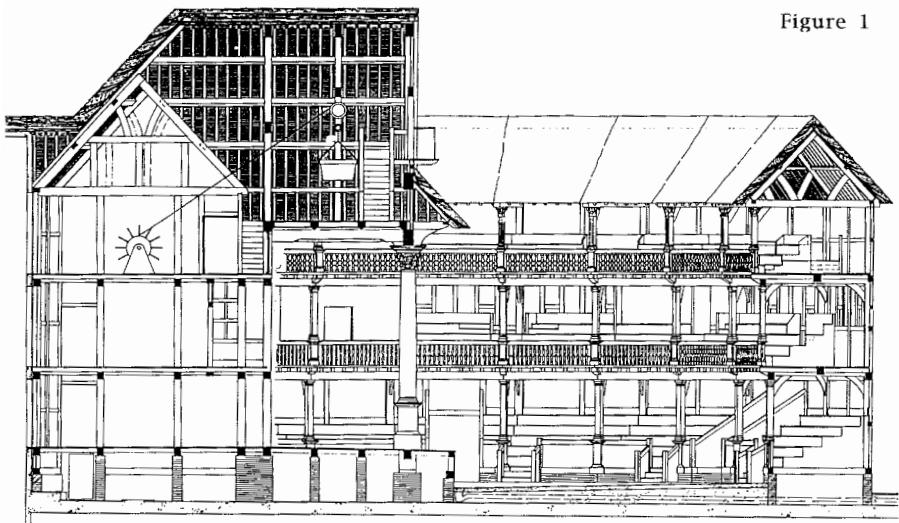
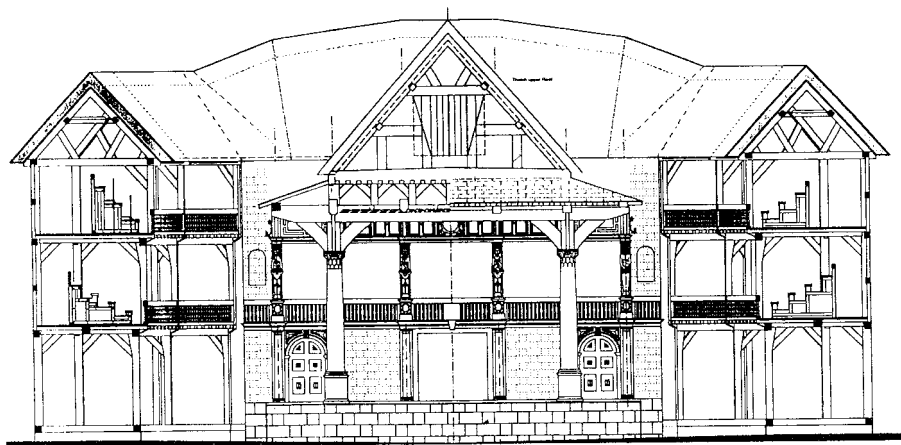


Figure 2

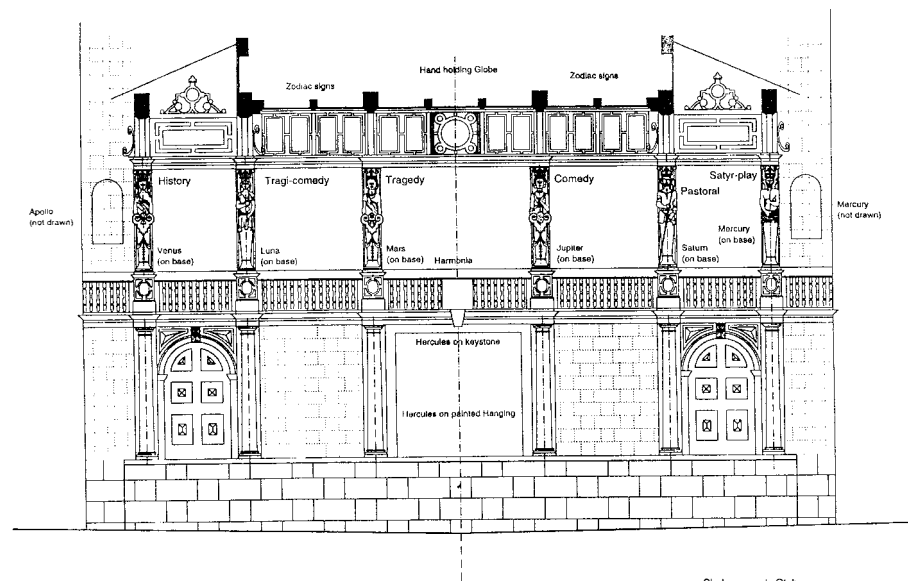
Workshop Season Plan



Shakespeare's Globe

Cross Section

August 1996



Shakespeare's Globe

Frons Scenae

August 1996

Figure 4

The eventual solution, shown in Illustration 3, was to chop off the bottom of the cover so that each eave met the gable end at a point directly above where Hall wanted a post, and to fill the gap to the three exposed edges of the stage with a lightweight 'pentice' apron. This arrangement was defended as a solution that Peter Street, builder of the original Globe, might have used had his clients made the same complaints.

For the Prologue season of late summer 1996 this solution was fabricated in lightweight materials and decorated in the style intended for the final version, as shown in Illustration 4. The main show was the resident company's production of Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In addition there were two single performances by visiting companies; Northern Broadsides performed their travelling production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on 3rd September, and Gaynor MacFarlane's as yet unnamed company performed Richard Edwardes's *Damon and Pythias* on 10th September.

The decision to open the new Globe with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is odd since the play was written in 1590 or 1591, when Shakespeare was still learning his craft and the Globe had not yet been built. Perhaps the new Globe company wished to begin with a play to which an audience brings the minimum of expectations; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is seldom performed and even less often done well. The play is only known to us from the Shakespeare Folio of 1623 and the text contains numerous inconsistencies, loose ends, false starts, and excessive improbabilities for the elimination of which director Jack Shepherd might have hoped to earn credit. The value of the authentic venue was diminished, however, by Shepherd's decision to use modern dress which looked particular strange against the Elizabethan decor of the Globe.

In this early play Shakespeare fails to make his characters convincingly human and one often feels that their actions are driven merely by necessity of plot. To counter this the main actors, especially Mark Rylance as Proteus, slowed their delivery and attempted to act a complex psychological sub-text to lend realism to the improbable words. Parting from his love Julia, Proteus is strangely reluctant to kiss and for this early warning of their alienation Rylance developed a slow lugubrious vocal style which deepened as he came increasingly to loathe himself for his duplicities. This psychological homework made sense of the character at the expense of slowing the pace, an un-Elizabethan trade-off which is not suited to Shakespeare's language. It is likely that non-realism was a price Elizabethan dramatists were willing to pay for rapid action and exciting plots. It took Shepherd's company nearly three hours to perform one of the shortest plays in the canon.

At the beginning of the run it appeared that the audience was being 'seeded' with *agents provocateur* instructed to hiss the villains and cheer the heroes. Several reviewers sensed that a few individuals were responsible for all the calls from the yard and disapproval of audience manipulation was expressed by Stanley Wells amongst others². Unfortunately for almost a year before the beginning of the season, Mark Rylance, as the Globe's Artistic Director, insisted that audiences would be encouraged to be rowdy and, if they wished, to launch non-lethal projectiles at the actors to express dissatisfaction³. Because of this pre-publicity, there was no way to tell if we were merely seeing the completion of a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Franklin J. Hildy pointed out at an academic conference that took place at the Globe Education Centre during the season, audience participation at the new Globe might easily be rediscovering the 1960s and 1970s, not the 1590s⁴.

By the end of the run the pantomime atmosphere was oppressive. The actors were timing many of their lines for an expected response, and when it was received the line was often repeated for effect. This tended to render the efforts at psychological realism pointless, since the audience had ceased to be concerned with complexities of motivation. The repeated ‘dumbing down’ of artistic effects is debilitating to an audience if the play is more subtle than mere pantomime. In the final scene three men treat Silvia as an object: Proteus tries to rape her, Valentine gives her to Proteus as a reward for repentance, and her father the Duke finally gives her to Valentine. Throughout these transactions she has no lines, and a sensitive audience might well consider the Duke’s commodification of his silent daughter to be as disturbing as the behaviour of Proteus and Valentine. The new Globe audience, after nearly three hours of binary responses – hiss or cheer – was in no state to make fine distinctions, and the Duke’s gift of his daughter was received with noisy approval.

To speak of the Globe audience in the singular is, of course, an over-simplification. The major distinction which emerged during the Prologue season was between the yard, containing lively spectators keen to comment on the action and willing to move around to obtain the best view, and the galleries, containing seated spectators less likely to comment. It was noticeable that if the actors play to the yard, those in the galleries might not only feel neglected but might also resent the considerable power of the yardlings⁵.

In sharp contrast to the in-house production was the single performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Barrie Rutter’s Northern Broadsides company. This touring production is frequently adapted to the exigencies of unusual one-night venues (barns, halls, etc.), and just one afternoon’s rehearsal at the Globe was allocated to plan entrances, exits, and blocking. This presented the company with the same problems of adaptation which must have faced Elizabethan travelling players arriving in a new town. During the open rehearsal it became clear that Rutter was treating the three portals as symbolically equivalent. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* the central opening was largely reserved for the ceremonial entrances of the Duke, and later the pastoral Duke-like outlaw Valentine, which might indicate that Andrew Gurr’s theory of its special significance had filtered through to the theatre practitioners⁶.

Northern Broadsides have an easy, inclusive, relationship with the audience which allows for radical sub-textual undercutting while resisting the temptation for easy laughs. The knowing audience, having witnessed the cause, laughs at Lysander’s sudden devotion to Helena, and in this production she at first responds to his attentions in a spirit of playfulness keyed to the audience’s response. This suggests that a distinction is being made between the reality of plot, which will demand that she be outraged, and the reality of the performance, which allows an ironic distance from this absurdity. Here is seen in action Robert Weimann’s model of two sources of authority in dramatic discourse: the *locus* (the power of the represented event, person, location, etc.) and the *platea* (the power of those doing the representing)⁷. This ‘bifold authority’, as Weimann calls it, was also beautifully illustrated during the scene of the mechanicals’ first rehearsal of their play. As Rutter was leading *his* actors through a rehearsal of this scene, he noticed that the keystone of the Globe’s central opening shows Hercules underneath his burden. Rutter directed Bottom to spot this just before delivering his line “I could play ‘Erc’les”, and to demonstrate his confidence by raising and supporting his stool in a like manner. The other mechanicals were to look back and forth between the ideal – the picture, validated by its being part of the fabric of the Globe – and the boastful clownish claimant to this role. By locating authority for his claim to mimetic excellence in what should be, but never is, an invisible feature of the playhouse fabric, Bottom’s claim reaches beyond the

amateur dramatics of the playworld to appeal to the highly professional dramatics within which it is framed. Such inspired directorial leaps are exactly what the Globe should be capable of promoting.

No such inspired complexities enriched the single performance of Richard Edwardes's *Damon and Pythias*. The all-female casting of this production could have produced something of the homoerotic frisson of early modern drama's all-make casting, but the odd mix of styles – Damon and Pythias in kilts, others in teddy-boy suits – dissipated this energy by overlaying additional pointless cross-dressing. That real men can wear skirts, if they are Scottish, and that teddy-boys, although effeminately self-conscious about their appearance, carry razors, is not an insight into Elizabethan drama. *Damon and Pythias* was written for indoor academic performance and any appeal to popular tastes which a director manages to crowbar into a production of it must perforce work against the grain of the text. As with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the actors paused to acknowledge any response from the yard and, if possible, build upon it. It was clear that the audience was responding to the style of delivery, and not the content, when the obscure Latin phrases in the dialogue were received with laughter. Creating a party atmosphere in which anything seems funny does not help rediscovery of the original significance of plays, although it might form the basis of a commercially viable, but intellectually pointless, theatre project.

The main lesson which must be drawn from the Prologue season is that making early modern drama fun to watch is easy, but making it intelligent is difficult. The evidence for rowdiness is not reliable and it must not be assumed that the yard was simply a place of carnivalesque release. The plays demand serious attention, and this cannot be given in the atmosphere in which most of the performances at the Globe took place this season. Something of the complexity we find when reading Shakespeare's plays must have been achievable in the original performances, since Shakespeare made no effort to have his works published. Whatever he intended could be realized by the actors at the original Globe. The company at the new Globe must set itself the target of reproducing in performance the intellectual complexity, and not merely the emotional intensity (this year laughter, perhaps next year, tears) which we find in the plays.

Notes

1. Reported and fully discussed in John Peter, 'Dramatic conflict', *Sunday Times*, 1st September 1995.
2. Reported in Maurice Weaver, 'Rowdiness at the Globe "would be bad for the bard"', *Daily Telegraph*, 23rd August 1996.
3. Rylance's attitude was reported in Marianne MacDonald, 'Globe director looks forward to the bear pit', *Independent*, 2nd August 1995, and has been expressed in many interviews since.
4. Franklin J. Hildy, 'Why authenticity?' Paper delivered at 11.30 on 11th September during conference 'Shakespeare and Tudor Theatrical Traditions' held at International Shakespeare Globe Centre, London, 10th - 11th September 1996.
5. Pointed out by Martin White in 'Authenticity: A Panel Discussion' at 16.00 on 11th September during conference 'Shakespeare and Tudor Theatrical Traditions' held at International Shakespeare Globe Centre, London, 10th - 11th September 1996.

- Gurr recently advanced the case for attaching special significance to use of the central opening in 'Traps and Discoveries at the Globe', The British Academy Annual Shakespeare Lecture delivered at 17.30 on 25th April 1996 at 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London.
- Robert Weimann, 'Bifold Authority in Shakespeare's Theatre', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988), 401-17.

We are indebted to Jon Greenfield of Pentagram Design Ltd. for the line illustrations.

GABRIEL EGAN is completing a PhD at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford on Avon. His thesis concerns the original staging of Shakespeare's plays at the Globe, and the value of new evidence arising from the Wanamaker Globe project.

The Servant of Two Masters: Assessment and the Arts

David Wood

A school inspector was in a music lesson and asked a pupil, 'What have you got out of your music course?' The boy replied, 'I got a B'. In another class the inspector asked a teacher, 'How do you go about assessing something like performance?' 'Out of 20', the teacher replied.

These examples, whether apocryphal or not, illustrate what a blunt instrument assessment in arts subjects can be in the wrong hands. Unless we are careful, our students can regard themselves as 'doing assessments' rather than undertaking a course or a syllabus; they come to see themselves working for awards, exams or levels rather than developing new skills, maturities, understandings or qualities. Despite this, the trend in education is to assess more and more frequently, and to try to be more precise in this assessment. In a complex world of assessment with its criteria, its grade boundaries, its norm references and so on it is easy to lose sight of what the ultimate purpose of assessment might be.

When I assess them, I am trying to find out how my students are doing; what they know, understand and can do. As a result of finding this out I can plan what they should do next. This is a function of assessment which is often overlooked. When our pupils don't tackle a task well, we may be covering their syllabus too quickly, or pitching it too high. Moreover, we might need to go over some ground again, possibly in a different context. A great deal of education planning at present makes the simple assumption that we learn in a progressive, sequential way. Sometimes this is the case, but we also learn in more complex ways, for example through so-called 'spiral' curricula. It seems axiomatic that learning in the arts is not logical, and sequential, so we need to assess to find out

