



INTERVIEWS WITH THE WHITE COMPANY

The 1999 Season

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General Preface

Mark Rylance welcomed members of the Red and White Companies for the start of rehearsals on April 6, 1999. In his opening remarks to the acting companies he described the 'pursuit of eloquence' as his primary aim for the upcoming season. Mark had read a definition of the term 'eloquence' in the Oxford English Dictionary that had inspired him as an actor and as an artistic director: to speak or move or act with force, fluency and appropriateness; to move the emotions and affect the reason. Mark asked the members of both companies to consider this as a shared aim. The plays are written with extraordinary eloquence, he noted, and actors need to find a love of eloquence, in every action, in every movement, to match the plays. Mark stressed the need for clear and involved storytelling – something he described as “a simple truth easily forgotten”. Central to this storytelling has to be an attention to antithesis: Shakespeare loved antithesis, said Mark, because it represented a “marriage of opposites which can create something new”.

I took Mark's opening address to the companies as the starting point for a series of interviews. Actors, stage managers, Masters of Play, musicians and even a playwright generously gave of their time to talk to me about what that “pursuit of eloquence” meant to them. The resulting discussions touched upon related matters from verse speaking and physicality, to tiring house practice and authentic clothing. These diverse responses were, without exception, sensitive, informative and freely given, in the spirit of continued learning about this remarkable space.

The interviews were conducted in late August and September 1999, at the end of the 400th anniversary season. I am indebted to all those who took part in the interviews, as well as to the staff of the Research and Theatre departments of Shakespeare's Globe.

NB: The majority of actors in the 1999 White Company played several roles over the course of the season. In the interests of brevity, I made the subjective editorial decision to list a maximum of two roles for each actor, though I realise that this in no way reflects the diversity of work undertaken by each actor.

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Playwright, Augustine's Oak

On the Workshop period of rehearsals for Augustine's Oak

The workshop period of rehearsals for Augustine's Oak was very useful. We began the workshop with draft 3 or 4 of the play. It was really the whole of Act V that changed most during the workshop period. Basically, the action unfolded as it now does, except that the baptism of Tata and Edwin's child was originally reported as Tata's conversion to Christianity in the midst of her contractions. Edwin's reaction to this news was something that the cast couldn't really cope

with. They felt it was all too sudden and too glib. We realised that we had to have Tata and Edwin go through more of a struggle towards conversion.

Also, Mark Rylance said that he wanted to have Act V take place on a mountain, and I think he was quite right. Since the first two parts of the play are firmly grounded in natural surroundings (the beginning of the play takes place by the sea, and then we move to the forest), it makes sense for the third and final part of the play to be located in a different, strongly described, natural setting. Since Act V takes place in Northumbria, the mountain was an obvious choice. Initially it was a little bit of a struggle to make the action actually happen on the mountain: Tata's presence on the mountain during the ninth month of her pregnancy seemed problematic; I wondered too how she could plausibly give birth on the mountain. We thought we'd give it a try.

Also in the workshop we did a lot of experimentation (through improvisation) with the idea of converting people. Rob Pickavance began by telling stories to the actors playing Northumbrians, to tell them about Christ. At first, the Northumbrians laughed, and put up a lot of resistance to his ideas. Rob then changed his tactics, and approached them saying something to the effect of: "I feel that my beliefs are very close to yours, and I'd like to talk to you about them". This time he was able to get his point over without interruption. Rob then told the Northumbrians how interested he was in their religion, and this made them more eager to learn about his. So, this is how the discussion developed, and out of that workshop grew the beginning of Act V as it stands now.

Similarly, we thought it would be good to include some pagan rituals within the piece. During one of the workshops Tim (Carroll) asked the actors to split into groups and to improvise different pagan ceremonies. As a starting point he gave them ideas such as the sowing of the first seed, the equinox, and so on. As a result of this workshop I then had the idea of including a human sacrifice in Act V.

In turn, these two episodes became linked by the idea of Paulinus interrupting the pagan sacrifice and getting the Northumbrians to cease their activities voluntarily, not by upbraiding them, but by showing an interest in their beliefs, which the Northumbrians could not justify to themselves in his presence. The episode is also inspired by Bede's story of Cuthbert (chronologically somewhat later than the events of Augustine's Oak), who it is said went out among the most isolated villages in the mountains of Northumbria, to people who had never heard of Christianity. At the sight of Cuthbert, it is said that these people came running to him to confess their sins. He was so transparently holy.

Verse versus Prose

Apart from differentiating the Latin speakers from the English speakers in the play, I find that using verse gives me a much greater range, obviously. For a start, you can move from prose to verse, rather than work solely within the range that prose gives you. Verse gives you another dimension.

However, since the Globe is a "popular" theatre, there is a slight paradox at work: we have verse plays here, but we may not think instantly of verse plays as the easiest things for most people to connect with. That's the paradox of Shakespeare. The fact that I was also using verse that was in places quite heightened took the pressure off my prose; I could use very down to earth prose, with a lot of colloquial expressions and intonations, which I think puts people at ease. Hopefully, this "natural" prose helps put people in the mood to enjoy the verse too, on a very natural level. If I hadn't had the convention of the verse representing Latin and the prose English, I would probably have chosen to write Ethelbert's speech to the gods (Woden, Loki, Freya) in verse. Though I don't regret the fact that this speech is in prose, I do feel that if that speech wasn't taking place during a verse play, it would be very hard for the spectacle of those gods appearing to have any degree of credibility. To me, there is an incantatory quality about verse, which

makes it possible to have episodes such as the appearance of spirits, angels and ghosts, without wrecking the play's structure and balance. Even though Ethelbert calls up these spirits with prose, I think he is helped by the fact that this happens within the setting of a verse play. Also, the prose in this instance is fairly rhythmical in itself; it's not a particularly "realistic" speech.

Another function of verse is that it helps you to maintain pace with stillness: you can have a very "still" scene, and the pace of the play is maintained by the verse. The scenes between Lawrence and Augustine may be examples of this idea; it might have been much more difficult to have them talking together in that way if the whole play had been in prose. Without the verse, it would be difficult to come to a point of stillness, but to keep the tension going, rhythmically. As I said before, I have a strong belief in the incantatory powers of verse to lift people into a different state. The rhythms of verse are linked to the heartbeat, and are intended to excite people. I believe these powers stem from the original use of rhythmic speech in ceremonies, rituals to summon spirits. "Summoning spirits" can mean the raising of all the participants to a different plane of awareness.

To write an iambic pentameter, you have to get rid of everything that is unnecessary. Anything extraneous very quickly reveals itself as such. This makes for a very strong incentive to over-write, or over-revise, to avoid that happening.

Words and Images

It's difficult to tell, but I'm pretty sure that when I write, the images must precede the words. Usually there's one word that springs to mind, and then the rest of the line is built around that. Certainly, I think myself into a scene by imagining what the characters might be seeing. For example, when Augustine looks out over the seashore, this is a very conscious attempt to imagine what he might be seeing for the first time. I think it's a lovely thing for the theatre, to see an actor standing completely alone, with nothing around him, saying "I can see..." – it really invites the audience to imagine.

In the case of the more interior scenes in the palace, the emphasis shifted to trying to think how the characters are thinking, and trying to put those thoughts into images, to give strength and emphasis to what they're trying to say.

Characters

To me, the characters in Augustine's Oak started out as embodiments of different passions; I set up the play in my head as the conflict of different passions, or different degrees of conviction. That was the basis on which I was trying to create the play.

The Space

Because the Globe feels like an outdoor space, it invites you to describe natural scenes, to set scenes in the open, and to try to make the audience feel like they are actually there. What it doesn't encourage you to do is focus solely on dialogue, to the exclusion of everything else. So, when I was writing Augustine's Oak I definitely had the Globe specifically in mind. Because the space is so open, and the audience is kept aware of each other, the focus can be easily compromised. When you write for the Globe you always have to imagine some kind of "confrontation" between that audience and the words they hear. Otherwise, you find yourself writing what is really a letter, or a story, instead. As with all kinds of dramatic writing, you have to write at the appropriate level of intensity to maintain that audience's interest, and so the audience is invariably on your mind.

The Audience

I don't think that Augustine's Oak has found its audience at this point. The best that can be hoped for is that audiences will be very excited at the idea of a new verse play in a venue that was designed for the writing of new verse plays. The worst that can be hoped for is that audiences will think that the play can only be a bad imitation of Shakespeare.

This is an anxious time, as it's totally new ground that we're breaking. The play may even be slightly bewildering to "potential theatregoers at large"; it is a new play, with a historical setting, in this new-old theatre which specialises in historical settings of plays written 400 years ago. Those factors make for a complex layer of specifications, which makes it impossible for anyone to come and see Augustine's Oak as simply "a new play", as they might see a new play anywhere else. This is a new play that, as a verse play, comes from an interrupted tradition. It may take several years' trust in the theatre-going public generally, before we can really say that this is something new and alive, and so we may not achieve that at the first attempt.

I think that this situation can never be repeated. Once a new play has been put on here, and over the course of its run – a short run of 20 performances – somehow or other, the fact that this has happened will have some kind of effect on the potential audiences to follow, on the critics... towards the end of the run perhaps we'll find out whether the "world in general" thought that it was a good idea. That would be some kind of foundation upon which to build. This was totally new ground, which in theatre entails no end of problems, but once that that ground has been broken, and if it has been felt to have been worthwhile, then you'll get a lot of goodwill behind you. At the end of September, I'm not sure where we'll stand.

Having said that, considering what a difficult "first attempt to land on the moon" this was, the preparations were impeccable, and the commitment of the theatre was extraordinary. The amount of time that Mark Rylance put into the play, the whole workshop period, the theatre agreeing to my choice of director (which made things much easier) and the hard work from the actors, made this an extraordinary experience.

The only surprising let-down was the failure to paper the Press Night. So, we had a half-full yard on the Press Night, which everyone is a bit cut up about. The play is entirely different when played to a full yard, as we have found. The yard is a part of the drama. If you can activate the power of the groundlings, they will help the play along, and the actors can shift gears incredibly. It can make all the difference – the yard has the power to do that, more than any seated audience could ever have. Conversely, to play to a half-empty yard when the actors perform so well is heart-breaking, really.

Interview with Tim Carroll

Master of Verse, The Comedy of Errors

Master of Play, Augustine's Oak

I originally came on board to develop, edit, and possibly even direct a workshop performance of a play that Peter was working on last year, called Mavria. We had a rather unsuccessful reading of it, after which Mark (Rylance) expressed doubts about the play and its likelihood of becoming a Globe play. He sent us away to think and work on it. Peter (Oswald) very bravely took the decision to scrap the play, and to start again. I phoned Peter, to follow up a 10-page letter I had written him, detailing how I thought it the play could be salvaged, and he said "Thanks for your letter, it was very good, and I've decided to scrap the play"! He then told me that he wanted to write something about Bede. He sent me a synopsis, which was meticulous in its historical detail, containing every event in Bede, and which would have run at least 7 hours! I told him

that I thought there were at least 4 plays in his synopsis, and that he should pick one of them to develop! He did a first draft of Augustine's Oak which was beautifully written, beautifully characterised, with many wonderful things which were gone by the second draft, with great reluctance. We liked these elements in themselves, but there was a such a lot of "meat" in Bede already, that we knew we were going to have to say goodbye to a lot. There was a fabulous scene in the first draft, of Laurence being flagellated by the ghost of St. Paul, for instance! (The cast of course was furious to learn that they had been deprived of the opportunity to see Paul Chahidi flogged on stage!) The whole process of "editing" really was that – a process of taking things out. Only as we got further into rehearsals did we realise that we had to actually add things, as a result of discovering interesting moments or elements that had come to light and deserved further development.

At a specific point in the workshop, I asked the cast to write down what they would wish to include as one extra scene in the play – not necessarily for their own character – if they were allowed to invent such a scene. Of course this resulted in some useful suggestions, as well as some (quite frankly) extremely bizarre suggestions in reply! Then, throughout rehearsals, certain ideas would emerge out of a particular line, even: an actor might ask "But why do I say that?" Sometimes we might find that the moment that explained or fed into the line in question had been taken out in an earlier draft; in other cases, the moment would be in Bede, but had not been included in the play. On the other hand, it might never have been obvious that such a moment was necessary, and it took rehearsals for us to realise that the character couldn't plausibly enter a scene with that particular attitude, without showing some idea of where he got it from.

Rehearsals

Though each play I work on is in one sense a specific, discrete entity, there are inevitably certain elements common to all pieces of my work. For instance, I like to approach most work in such a way that there is a sense of flexibility in the lines. The line might not be what you say; the line that is said is only one of many things that might have been said, and it is only at the moment of speaking that this line is chosen. When words are said, too, they change any given situation, and you can't take them back. This kind of approach is, I feel, quite important for this play because there were in fact occasions when an actor would tell us, "If that has been said, I cannot really say this". It's all very well saying to an actor, "Well, that's the line", and if we were dealing with a dead author we would have to find some kind of solution. In our case, however, it was nice to be able to think it over, and to be able to be honest enough to say, "You're right, you wouldn't say that, or just carry on at that level, once that line had been let out of the bag." I could then talk to Peter, and ask his opinion about the line in question, and he would say either, "Oh yes he can say that, because...", or he'd say, "O.K., I'll do something about that line". It's allowed us to see whether the play was working or not. I think that even with Shakespeare, it's not a bad idea to try to maintain that sense of "disrespect" for the text; one must try to treat the text as a plaything, before you finally settle down and declare it as the text. If I was a really brave director, I would absolutely not allow any line to become fixed, and instead I would keep everything very fluid, and concentrate solely on making sure that every actor understands who they are, and why they're there. I would leave all the rest up to the actors' instincts. When I'm on form, that's how I work. I'm always aware that when I don't do that - when I suggest a way of saying a line, or fix a piece of staging – that is a compromise because I haven't succeeded in some other way.

The Globe Space

In some ways the space does not aid attempts at spontaneity in staging. You have to take quite a kind of "puppet-master" approach to staging. You (as Master of Play) are the only one who is thinking about the audience, and about who hasn't seen anything in the last 30 seconds, and

who consequently needs to see something pretty quickly, before they get bored. You need to be precise in staging; it's not like three-sided theatre, when you can very often just rehearse a scene, and never mention staging, and have it be all right when the actors get up on the stage. Experienced actors in those situations are able to make changes to their blocking on any given night, without the overall staging suffering, because they understand the essential rules of that kind of space. You could take the same approach to the Globe, and identify the places to avoid on the stage, and, once you've explained why these are not good places to stand, simply leave the actors to get on with it. However, I wouldn't feel confident doing that - not because of any lack of faith in the actors - because I think it's a very complicated algebraic equation, actually. And actors have enough to think about when they're on stage, to simply get the story across, without having to work out the moment-by-moment sightline issues for the entire audience. It would take a lot of play, and years of experience, before that kind of awareness could become instinctive. That's why I had to do more "left a bit, right a bit" directing than I would normally do elsewhere. I left the specific blocking work - telling people where to stand at a particular moment - as late as possible, until the last week of rehearsals. However, I was continually aware of staging considerations, and when there were "optional" scenes being tried, I tended to favour the ones that suited my scheme. So, by the time that I said, "Well, this is how we should stage this scene", most often it was 80% done. It then becomes a question of pinpointing exactly how long an actor remains in one position before moving to another, and so on.

Lights and Focus

The lighting that we used in Augustine's Oak is actually more like a method of painting the set, and less like stage lighting as it functions in conventional modern theatres. The lack of general stage lighting at the Globe removes from you the ability to tell the audience where to look. You can of course do more to establish a mood, power or status with lighting, but the crucial thing is that you can't just move the audience's eyes immediately to that place where you want them to look. That means, again, that you have to be a little bit more old-fashioned in your staging. You have to pick particular points of power, particular moments of staging where all the bodies on the stage lead the eye to the pinnacle of power (which is not always necessarily downstage centre, although it sometimes is). For instance, an obvious example would be the "Oak scene": you put a throne in the middle, and have the monks line up behind Terry (seated on the throne), and then all the focus is on Terry (as Augustine). Similarly, in "Thanet", the focus is clearly on the line (of communication) between Terry (Augustine) and Martin (Ethelbert). With the arrival of Eumer, for instance, we are actually suggesting - by placing him in the archway of one of the flanking doors, and having him speak rather quietly - a kind of equivalence to the backlighting of a conventional theatre.

I think the thing that is certainly true of the Shakespeare plays is that you have to treat any line that describes the setting as having great significance. You have to do this because you realise that that line is telling the audience something that you cannot otherwise show them. That was a nice rediscovery for me, and something that Peter was very aware of when writing the play. Peter realised that in writing Augustine's Oak for the Globe, he would have to set the scene much more explicitly than if he were writing a play for the the Royal Exchange, for instance. Directing at the Globe is, in one respect, not entirely unlike directing in the round; you have to welcome and embrace a kind of "democracy of the stage". You have to understand that the audience really will look wherever they want to, no matter what you say or do. There are, I think four levels of control over an audience, for a director. The first, or ultimate level of control, is to make a film. Then you have proscenium arch directing, where (as with the Lyttelton) almost all of the audience has the same perspective, and you can control almost everything that they see, and you can shine a spotlight on the person you need them see at any one particular moment. Next, you have theatre in the round, when occasionally sections of the audience will not be able to see the person who is speaking, so they might look at the person who is listening.

Nonetheless you can still use lighting to direct their attention to where you think they should be most interested. And then you come to the Globe, where you're almost in the round, and you don't have lighting! One of the nice disciplines about that is that you have to really have to work in an ensemble way; you have to make sure that whoever is sitting in the audience, wherever they are sitting, they have something interesting to look at. Everyone on stage must be in some way in their own story, and this must contribute to the life of the bigger story. When you look at someone on the stage who is listening to the person speaking, you should get not just a response, but the response to the story, as they see it – you should get a new perspective on what is being said. Depending on who you can see, you're getting a very different perspective on any given scene, and that is a kind of richness and multi-layered effect that is almost peculiar to the Globe, I think.

Interview with Colin Cassie

Stage Manager, White Company

When I arrived here it was as “technical stage manager”, and I was rather confused at first as to what that might refer to. I knew there were no lights, and no sound, and so no requirement for a “techie” as such. Pam (Vision) was in charge of Errors, with Jayne (Aplin) doing the props for that show. Rowan (Walker-Brown) helped Jane, and I dropped into the role of “prop-maker” – whether that involved wrapping bits of string around sticks, or full-fledged iron soldering. In the Globe's kind of set-up, that was the equivalent of a “technical stage manager” role. Because it happened that way, by the time we got to rehearsing Augustine's Oak, Richard (Howey, Production Manager) had noticed that this is where my interest lay, and so I ended up building most of the set for that show. Once the shows were up and running, it was my responsibility to fix anything that was broken. In a conventional theatre, broken items would simply be noted in the show report, to be passed on to the relevant department. I like the Globe's way of working, because I think if something can be fixed there and then, you should fix it, rather than simply note it in the show report, and rely on someone else to fix it before the next show.

For the first two shows of the season, the entire wardrobe and props teams are still on hand, working on the second shows of the season. These teams are able to respond to situations as they come up, and so the need for stage managers to do so is less at the start of the season. However, once the second shows open, the props makers and wardrobe assistants leave, and there are far fewer people around to help. For that reason, I do think it is necessary to have at least one, if not two members of each stage management team who are capable and willing to turn their hands to fixing things on the spot. Practically speaking, the stage management teams have to be able to maintain their shows, from that point on. It's a good idea therefore to involve those stage managers in making and maintaining props etc., from the start. It's especially important for those involved with original practices to know how things were made, if they might be called upon to fix them at a later point. Stage managers here have to be flexible. They're needed in rehearsals and for the running of shows, so obviously they cannot specialise to the point where they are responsible for one specific element within any production. For Augustine's Oak I very rarely came to rehearsals, because I had to spend so much time building the set. However, I'm not the kind of person that needs to spend all of their time in rehearsals in order to prepare myself to run the show, understand what is going on when, and when the actors' cues are. I don't need to know the characters and plot inside out, as long as another member of the stage management has been in rehearsals from the beginning. That way, I am able to consult with that person, and gain all the knowledge I need to be able to run the show.

Here, everyone allows you to focus on and realise your own strengths, for the good of the whole. It's very much "back to basics". During technicals you don't have to stop to re-focus a light, you don't have to allocate extra time to get radio mikes working. There are no interruptions of that kind, so technicals can be devoted to the fine-tuning of blocking and door-paging. You're still working on the play, right through technicals, which is something I'm not at all used to. Previews can then be used for the real fine tuning, and ironing out any remaining problems. The stage managers and the actors need previews to consolidate where they should be and when. Here, there is much more personal responsibility placed on each actor; in some theatres I've worked in, the actors completely rely on the stage managers to tell them where they should be next. Here, I think the actors are more responsible.

Turnarounds

In most theatres these would be the responsibility of the technical staff and crew. The stage managers would be free to leave the theatre as soon as their show report was completed. Here, because the stage management and crew are all thrown in together, we all do the turnarounds, which I find quite refreshing. There is no sense of an "external crew" that come in to do the turnaround – the "family" does it all. We all very quickly discovered the best and most efficient way to manage the turnarounds, without a formal meeting to designate tasks. Marion (Spon) was able to leave us to our own devices instead of needing to delegate tasks among us, because she could see how well a working practice of our own was evolving. As far as learning to work well together, it was a necessarily quick learning process! It seems to me that being successful in your work here has a great deal to do with "fitting in", whatever your job here is.

In most theatres, many suggestions you make simply dissipate and disappear, usually because of a lack of resources, personnel or interest. Suggestions here are listened to. Richard Howey and I discussed the set building for Augustine's Oak frequently, and he welcomed all of my ideas on that subject. I know that other people here have had similar experiences in other areas of the productions too. The meetings we have at the beginning and the end of the season are marvellous, in that they allow everyone to voice their views. It's very fortunate that the Globe listens to the voices of those who work there, who make the theatre work. That the Globe then acts upon the feedback that is offered makes it practically unique. There's no standard hierarchy here, and no standard "Globe practice" either. I hope there never will be, as that sense of the Globe as a constantly changing, ongoing experiment is definitely part of the beauty of the place. I have been constantly striving to master new technology (whether it be lights or sound) up to this point. Coming here gave me the opportunity to put all of that to one side for six months, and go back to the drawing board once more, and get back to the basics of my craft. The whole experience has forced me to take a fresh look at what this profession is all about.

Interview with Bill Lyons

Music Director, White Company

The two "authentic" productions have a different ethos (in terms of music) to Comedy of Errors and Augustine's Oak. The music for the Red Company (especially with Julius Caesar) is fixed in the period of the play. That can be a slight restriction, in as much that they have to try to use music that will fit in with what we know of the authentic working practices of the musicians of the day, and the music's involvement in the plays of that time. The White Company musicians have a different agenda, and are not quite so restricted – well, that is the wrong word, as it sounds negative – we are "freer" in the sense that we're not tied to what we know of performance practice in Shakespeare's time. Hence the underscoring.

Underscoring for The Comedy of Errors

Nobody really knows what, if any, kind of underscoring went on in the plays of Shakespeare's time. There isn't a great deal of underscoring in the other plays, but in *The Comedy of Errors* the underscoring is essential. It sets the "magical" scenes in their place, for example, when the strange land suddenly starts taking hold of people, and Dromio and Antipholus are trying to work out who said what to who. Then there's the whole idea of seduction on top of that, and the idea of him being drawn into this strange world, and almost entering into it willingly. That's when the underscoring becomes quite powerful.

It's very simple, what's going on. It's just a sort of drone, overlaid with hints of various thematic musical elements connected with Adriana and the "strangers" Antipholus and Dromio. I think what Mia (Soteriou) was doing was establishing themes for each of the main characters, and then developing this magical side to the underscoring. The underscoring tends to fall in when Aegeon or Antipholus and Dromio become involved in this rather strange, rather sinister environment. It's a comparatively modern concept for the score of a play.

I think that in Shakespeare's time people were quite familiar with this idea of strange, far-off lands. It's a biblical thing too; Ephesus and its environs were thought to be occupied by sorcerers and magicians. I think the extent to which most people were familiar with the texts of the Bible would probably have been greater than it is today. So I think they would probably have had an implicit understanding, therefore, of what the play was about, without the need for musical enhancement of these themes – I don't think that music had the same role within the theatre at that time, as it does now. I'm pretty sure it didn't. They had interludes, jigs either side of the play, pre-show music, interval music, songs, and flourishes on the cornets and trumpets (which were pretty well marked in, most of the time), areas where Shakespeare expected music to happen. I think the concept of a composer working in conjunction with the director or author is a rather more modern one. That is what we had for *Errors* and it worked very well. Certain specific situations – for instance the "Doctor Pinch" episode, with the concept of madness being a temporary fever from which it was possible to recover with time – are treated in a different way than perhaps they might have been in Shakespeare's day, to make them more amusing for a modern audience.

The music serves a useful purpose, I think, in creating an atmosphere that might have been assumed in Shakespeare's day. It is supposition, of course, to rule out the kind of underscoring that we used, but I do think it is a peculiarly modern, filmic idea, rather than a strictly theatrical one. The adaptation of Plautus' comedy has resulted in a very "English" play, reflecting Elizabethan, English preoccupations and issues, rather than geographically specific references and issues common to Asia Minor. So I would imagine that any music that accompanied the original performances of *The Comedy of Errors* would reflect these concerns; in our production the music tends to reflect and suggest the atmosphere of Asia Minor. In Shakespeare's time the people hired to play the music for *Errors* wouldn't necessarily have any familiarity with that part of the world, except perhaps some exposure to the ethnic communities that lived in London at that time. It is doubtful that they would have decided to hire a Turkish lute player, however. In other words, from what we know of original practices for musicians in the theatre at that time, we can assume that we would not have heard then the kind of music that we play in our production in 1999.

Performing at the Globe

Generally, musicians in the theatre today seem to be regarded as best heard but not seen. Usually, you're in a back room and the music is piped through to the stage. This is the most "present" that a musician can be on a stage in London, at least in mainstream theatre. At the Globe your visibility creates a unique attitude among the musicians, and a unique involvement

with the play. The musicians can see the play from that wonderful balcony, the extension of which has made vast improvements to the acoustics this year. You can see the audience, and work with their reactions, and you feel very much an integral part of the performance. Part of this is down to the composer, who has done a great job in bringing a very good feel to the music, which suits both the comedic and the mystical elements of the play.

Because the traditional music of Turkey and Greece has an element of improvisation within it, we are likewise able to improvise to an extent within the score that Mia has given us. For instance, the long chase scene is largely improvised. Being so aware of, and working with the audiences' reactions makes you play differently each time, and encourages exactly this kind of improvisation. Even though this is a contemporary use of music within this Shakespearean setting, nonetheless the musicians play differently than if they were in a "modern" soundroom. In many ways, modern music for the theatre is almost like a radio for the stage, in the way it is regarded, and I don't understand why that is. Even just having the band to one side of the stage, dressed not in costume, but in black, makes a big difference – people, audiences like to see musicians! They're always very keen to see what instruments are being played, because in all the productions there are strange or unusual instruments being played, even in Augustine's Oak, which features an unusual mix of instruments from different periods and cultures.

Conducting

I conduct both bands, using mainly visual cues to do so. I use a script and a score in both cases, but the job of conducting the band for Augustine's Oak is a great deal different from that of Errors. The band for Augustine's Oak accompanies a singer on several occasions, and so needs conducting in a systematic way – the band cannot see the singer on the stage from where they sit on the balcony. For Errors I cue the musicians, conduct one song and set tempi for the pieces. I like this way of working, because then if the cue is missed, I know that it is me who has mucked up. In other productions where musicians have been dotted all around the theatre, the MD doesn't have the kind of control that I have enjoyed on these productions. For this reason it is good, from my point of view, to be up on the balcony.

I have no doubt that the spatial arrangement of musicians would have been different in 1599 – probably trumpets up top, main band on the balcony as we are, and occasionally, for a song, the odd instrument on stage – but as yet we don't know for sure. But in terms of the dramatic effect of the music, it is more aural than visual, so the band being up in the minstrels' gallery would have been the norm. I'm not quite sure of the original set-up of the musicians' room itself (up in the Lords' Rooms), I'm not sure that the band didn't play behind downstairs, behind the tiring house wall, for instance. In the covered playhouses, quieter music would have been more effective, and it seems that concerts of music on quiet instruments would occur before or during performances in these theatres. The musicians employed would have been the local Waits, and they would have been well versed in their own tradition, and so should have turned their hand to most things; if they were required to play on stage, then I'm sure they were able to. But the idea of dotting the musicians around the theatre is again, I think, a more modern idea. But that's just my idea, and I can't really support it with any hard evidence as such.

Music provided interludes, effects, largely martial effects actually. Apart from the songs, musical references within the texts seem to be to trumpet or drum calls, for example. Also, the positioning of the musicians at a remove, in the balcony, is a concept which predates this kind of theatre, and dates from the Middle Ages. The musicians, being from a lower class than their employers, were visible only because this made a statement about the status of the person who hired them. They were not considered part of the actual gathering, so to speak. Most medieval dining halls will have a minstrels' gallery at one end. The musicians' galleries in the Elizabethan playhouses were perhaps a natural extension of this idea.

Augustine's Oak

There was a completely different approach to the music for Augustine's Oak. I think it was a very bold idea to use a composer who came from a very different background and had never written for the theatre before, could not write down music, and didn't have the kind of classical training which is often assumed in the theatre. It was therefore an interesting challenge for me, to hear the music that Tim (Arnold) had created, and then to transcribe it for the band. There was no score as such, and this of course added extra time to our preparations, as I had to write one. However, it meant that I got much more involved in the creative process for Augustine's Oak, which I liked.

The numerous and frequent text changes that went on in rehearsals could have been very frustrating, of course, for the musicians, but I think the atmosphere was good, and Tim Carroll kept an even line throughout. The music is good, there are some nice songs. The only thing I worried about, with this sort of "organic approach" (which you have to have, in a new production) was when it was decided at some point that we had to have "more music". I think that some of the music cues in the production are just a little bit too short, and occasionally gratuitous. That's where inexperience in writing for the theatre really showed, I think. I think the music works, and is interesting, but it was a different experience, as I say. It was very revealing, and rewarding too!

I get the impression that in Shakespeare's day the music in the "original Globe" had to be quite loud to make a dramatic effect, and I think this is why there are so many references to the use of shawms, trumpets, sackbuts and drums. The musical cues are written for loud wind instruments, rather than for viols or lutes, for instance. Paradoxically, the band for Augustine's Oak is often told it is playing too loudly. The drumkit, obviously, will always be heard, but I think that the tabla and harp are quite subtle, and so they need to be positioned with care if they are going to be heard. I'm playing folk instruments in the midst of this mix of Eastern and Western classical instruments, and I really like the sound, the effect that mix creates, but I'm not in a position (as the audience is) to tell how well it all works.

Something about the acoustics of the Globe seems to prevent the various sounds from becoming muddy. People "tune their ears in". The beginning of the play, when Aneirin walks in, is always one of the most difficult moments, acoustically. Half of the audience doesn't seem to notice him at all. We started with the harp just playing his chords, but people weren't picking up on that, so we introduced a cymbal which draws their attention, and then dropped into the harp, and I think that works. I suppose that, really, any instrument can be used effectively at the Globe, provided it is positioned carefully, and it is used at an appropriate part of the play. In *Errors*, for instance, we have to use loud wind instruments for the chase sequence, because the audience and the cast are screaming their heads off!

Augustine's Oak has been such a different experience from *Errors* in so many ways: the feel of the play; the direction of the play; the music. But I think they both work. I don't think the music in Augustine's Oak is anyway near as integral to the play as is the case with *Errors*. There are set songs, the underscoring isn't terribly present, and the little end-of-scene cues are so short as to be over in an instant, and I don't really know what effect they have, other than punctuation marks. I don't see them as terribly effective, to be honest.

Tim came up with music that has a Celtic, folky, New-Agey type of feel, which a lot of people can connect to, and I think a lot of people reacted very pleasantly to the music –they like the sound of it. And having said that the underscoring isn't terribly effective, I think the underscoring in the final scene works very well with the harp. I think that with more time to integrate things the music could have worked very well indeed. It works fine at the moment, but I think that there are perhaps some things that have been developed as a compromise, because of the lack

of time. I suppose too that this happens in most productions, in some way.

Like the costumes, I don't think the music particularly lives in the same world as the characters of the play, but rather suggests an image of what we think the Dark Ages were like. The costumes have a modernistic ideal and the music is the same. There's no point in trying to pretend that "this is what that period looked and sounded like", because although the play features specific historical characters, on another level it deals with much more universal concepts: faith; love, etc. The music works fine for that purpose – you have the Celtic influence of the harp, for instance, you have the ethnic "otherness" of the tabla, and yet you also have the percussion which gives it a contemporary feel, and the bass which gives it an orchestral feel. It's a very good choice of instruments, I think, that has a far greater range than medieval music could offer. I think the music helps that "quasi-Medieval" world come about.

Apart from maybe at the beginning and the very end, the music does not create a great deal of "atmosphere"; the function of the music changes to one of punctuation, scene-change music. That's fine, but it "changes its attitude" so to speak. When the music is involved, in the songs, for instance, then that link with the text and the design of the play becomes closer.

Interview with Marcello Magni

Both Dromios, The Comedy of Errors

Lilla, Augustine's Oak

What I feel is happening, is that a very strange attitude is beginning to develop amongst actors; there seems to be a belief that the director has to show the actors what the mission of the show is. I'm not saying that people are not committed, but I wouldn't say that people felt able to throw themselves into the material. It's like they're just playing with a dough, and they're making little, finger-tip-prints into the play. And I feel that if there is something to learn, it is nothing to do with people old or new to the Globe. There is a need for the Globe to find actors who feel empowered to challenge themselves in the rehearsal time, so that when they come to the space, it is not a shock for them.

It's not a space where you can be too subtle in your energy and commitment– I'm not saying in your theatrical gestures, I mean I know I shout a lot, but people don't have to shout! What I'm talking about is the intensity with which you reach the other actor. Perhaps by visiting the theatre, by asking people maybe to do physical sessions and vocal sessions on the stage, the actors will realise that they have to "play big" (not hide). It's in the rehearsal time that the director has to (somehow) call upon both a detailed work and preparation that is large and released. For example, while Mark (Rylance) runs around the stage (as Cleopatra) he is very loose, relaxed and playful; maybe in the rehearsal space at the time it looked like he was taking up too much room? When he brought that dynamic to the performance space of the Globe, that kind of movement was fine, and natural. Very often, actors in rehearsal play to the director who is just in front of them, and that is fine. However, what happened in Augustine's Oak was that we often found ourselves kneeling down in the centre of the stage, and in that space you have to be able to take in the whole theatre, not just the equivalent of the rehearsal room space. An imaginative leap needs to be made, in terms of the actors' required energy, and I feel that we haven't quite grasped that need fully. Actors don't yet understand the gap between a rehearsal room, "normal" theatre, and the Globe. It's an extra leap. Normally, a big leap is required between rehearsal space and a "normal" performance space; well, the Globe requires another leap onto a whole new level.

Movement

Personally, I didn't understand the dancing this season, because it didn't liberate me. Instead, the dancing gave me a form, a form of movement, but didn't give me the fullness of being alive. Again, I use Mark as an example of an actor whose movement on the stage is full. If you form an exercise that is based on your feet – essentially we were working on the patterns of our feet – we were not learning anything about chests, or our expressiveness in the top half of our bodies. It didn't liberate my sternum, it didn't make me be wild, joyful and powerful; it made me be formal in a dance. But movement is not only form. It has to go from form to expressiveness, or vice-versa. As fire has no shape, or as wind has no shape, or as water has no shape, we as human beings have to free ourselves to be as free as all these elements, and not remain as “formal” as (to use another element) earth is. Earth is composed. I felt that in our posture, and in our movement forward and backward, I never leapt, or turned sideways. I never moved chaotically, sideways and back, so the dancing didn't help me; there was no wildness in it. The company has to be able to move with wildness as well as with form. They taught us to be elegant, but movement doesn't have to be elegant – it can be detailed and delicate, but not elegant. Elegance is only one kind of beauty, and in power as well as in delicacy it is possible to find great beauty. I like to learn a pattern of movement, and then be able to enjoy myself within it, by making it very austere, or making it very rough, or making it very formal, or very vulgar, or very earthy and meaty – all in the same step. We were not exercised to be agile in our bodies in that way. For example, once we had learned it, we didn't try it with different tasks or stimuli. We didn't play with it.

Voice/Speech

When we used our voice in rehearsals, we were always pushed towards projection and articulation. We were never asked to explore texture in the voice. Not for the sake of it – like coloratura, for example – but to take our time in certain sections, and pick up speed in others. We are given the mechanics of how to speak, rotating our R's, for example, or how to say an H, but not how to enjoy the release of a word.

I feel like I hit a note, and then maybe I'm stuck in it, when I speak. I can't differentiate enough. And also, we need to remember that when we speak we are not alone, but we are answering another person. Too often, exercises in speech are connected to our own persona, and not to others. In practice, in performance, we speak to either the audience or to our fellow actors, so we need to activate that muscle, not exercise in a vacuum. We are talking to people, not to something that exists in our sound alone; being in relation to somebody else will change the way we speak.

As audiences change from day to day, we have to be aware as actors that we cannot say things the same way every performance; if I am losing an audience I have to do something different to change that. I feel at the moment that I need to work to find the same variety of energies with the language of Shakespeare that I have with my own language.

Listening to each other, playing together, prepares you. Very often when we get to the text we “fix”. If there was a period (like during the workshop period for Augustine's Oak) where we played around with the situation and with listening to the matter of what is being said, and playing with that, maybe we would go further. That way, we would have a personal, individual approach to the situation: “I'm desperate”, so I would find my “desperation”. But when we go to words, we go “formal”, we become kings or queens, servants or judges or nobles, for no other reason than the belief that this is what we are “supposed to be”.

(Dealing with words is like dealing with the by-products of the situation – trying to breathe life into the shell of an idea, rather than trying to use our own raw materials, and play the scene before the words) I think we need to work much more on what we are doing, and what we want,

and less on what we are supposed to be or what we're trying to represent. An actor has to be increasingly alert and alive to an environment that changes constantly, i.e. the Globe. I say this, because I personally felt the need of such an exploration.

So I know that when people spoke from the audience, they were "freezing" us. We should be so alert and so awake and so rough and unashamed, that we could take those "interruptions" in, in the game. But that muscle is not used, because the actors are used to seeking out a form, and once they've found it, quickly going towards it. Let's do it one day very violently, the next very lovingly, and keep that muscle more and more alive. It seems to me that in trying to release the words we fix our bodies. When you fix the body, you fix everything, and everything becomes repetition. I think if there is one thing that has to be alive in this theatre, it is that expressiveness which allows you to be full and changeable.

I'm alarmed about my own lack of suggestions on how to change this. I didn't provide enough different interpretations of my own – I think that deep down we all suffer slightly from a kind of fear of our audiences. That is why it throws us when they speak to us. So, what I am saying is that we should be in a frame of mind where the actor changing, or the audience changing, is actually part of the game. But we are not yet in that frame of mind.

It is true that we have to agree on what the situation is, and we can't change that every time, but I wonder sometimes... by asking the actor to always do things the same, we are blocking the spirit of the actor. In *Comedy of Errors* we became more and more controlled in how we delivered the text, and more and more accomplished; the notes that Kathryn gave in the middle of the run were along the lines of: "let it come out, do not remember how you said it before".

Athleticism and Performance

I remember Enzo saying one day, after three performances of *Errors*, "God, we are performing *Errors* really well now". Sometimes our performance ran: *Errors*, Augustine, day off, Augustine, *Errors*, and the gap between the performances of the same show could be as much as five days sometimes. On the other hand, if we performed the same show three times, we experienced a fantastic "build" in that show. I think if we care about our audiences, we should recognise that our capacity to perform doesn't remain on some vague level. We must underpin our performance of a show we're returning to (after a break) with a line runthrough, a physical warm-up. When we came back to perform *Errors* we were like athletes who were not prepared, totally out of breath and physically unprepared, with a danger of hurting ourselves seriously. The Globe is an actor-athlete's space.

I feel that for we actors who have very strong "thinking bodies", the preparation that they have here, through dancing, is not a storytelling preparation. The actual physical training of the actor can't be connected to simply dancing – it has to be connected to a story. So, when you prepare someone in physical storytelling, you have (and this is a good exercise that Tim Carroll made us do) to tell the story totally without words. Not pantomime it, but to stay in the mood. I noticed in that exercise that a lot of actors started to mimic emotion. They could not sustain the physical reality of the story. We should not have recourse to indication, for instance. Their physical expression of their state was banal. You have to find your situation for yourself in your body, and not indicate "I am angry now" with stock gestures.

What is the physical language that matches your situation? We have to prepare people to be eloquent in this way too. Mime would be a bad solution, but maybe it is a phase we have to travel through, en route to finding a more eloquent physical reality. Then you have to go through a more masked way, a more urgent and desperate way, then a very lyrical way. And eventually, by going through so many times, you may find a balance that will release you. We use voice all the time to express these different states, but very rarely do we use muscle

to make our physical vocabulary larger. What I feel Kathryn did was to create for us an environment that was believable, that supported us as actors for a long time. I feel that in other shows, I didn't believe that they were in the world that they said they were in. They reached a physicality that was more stereotypical, especially when they played big clichés, such as soldiers or priests or monarchs. They only released the form. Frequently we say, "go to the end of the line", but we don't say enough "go to the end of your physical expression or gesture".

It is difficult to reach the level of eloquence we attempt here – even more difficult than it would be were we supported by lights and sound, for instance. The exploration of what is the way or form of how you are going to release your priest (for example) doesn't only support itself in being the idea of a priest. Mark (Rylance) found some slightly "strange" elements in his Queen, and at first one might think "what is he doing?" but he finds an internal logic to this character, and this is sustained. I wonder if we have to go through the level of cliché in order to break through into a real physical exploration. That kind of provocation, the physical provocation, has to be bigger, always in theatre anyway, and especially here at the Globe. Here we have to believe that the performer on the stage is totally fulfilled. We can't fall back on the idea of being a soldier, or the idea of being a priest or a servant, we can only fall back on being fully alive as people. Fully mobile. Fully expressive. I wish that there was more time to explore the story from moment to moment, to be in the situation and to stay in it, and physically find the fears and the joy and the trouble and the anger of our characters. So much has to be done for every single character, so that we come to the stage where we don't simply think "Oh I can stand here on my two feet, and that will be enough". We have to be fulfilled because we are observed from every single angle. It is a strange habit of the actor's to assume that you cannot be seen except when you want to be!

I think we have to be slightly more generous than we are being at present. We have to try to tell the story in a way that will pull us into the brains of everybody in the audience, and into the actual physical état, the state ... it pushes you into enormous abysses, to enormous joys and enormous pains. The commitment to engage oneself to the release of this story must be slightly bigger than usual (when we assume too much that the audience has come to look and listen to us). In this theatre you have to tell your audience "I am here to give it to you". The gesture is not "they come to me", but rather, "I have come to them".

You have that strong muscle there for the verse to echo and vibrate in your body, and in the bodies of the audience. Something has to happen, it can't be enough simply that you are listening to the other person talking to you. You have to give to them the stage of your process. Shakespeare is so eloquent in the dynamic of the verse that he uses. He was aware of the movement of the elements. He was aware of the effect of challenges, of the effect of provocation, on other people. We also have to be aware of these things.

Interview with Jules Melvin

Luciana, The Comedy of Errors

Olwen, Augustine's Oak

Verse work

What I found most useful this season was the addition of a Master of Verse overseeing the play. Both companies have been able to really clarify what they're saying. I found this completely invaluable and started to question why I hadn't done this kind of work in any sort of depth when I was at drama college. I don't think I went to a bad drama college, but I can't remember anybody ever teaching metre to us. When I began working I sort of picked it up naturally, but I'd been making a lot of mistakes for years and years.

I have found myself getting into a pattern as I learned my lines this season, particularly with Augustine's Oak. As I first started to be off-book in rehearsals, I was very conscious of myself "saying the metre". I could hear myself marking the end of the line, but that's where you have to start from, and it's okay to have the words sound a bit strained to start with. Because I was actually taking account of what I was saying for once, the important words in the lines came out much clearer to me, and that in turn sparked off my imagination.

Imagination starts from the word, for me. Working with a Master of Verse has therefore helped me to tell the story with greater clarity. I think I've been more aware that there are rhythms in the plays like tides in the sea. Being more sensitive to those rhythms which are directly in the lines, really helped me to understand the story to be told.

Augustine's Oak

Opening Augustine's Oak was very scary because I think we all felt that rehearsals were incredibly laid back, and we just didn't know if it was going to work. I thought the language was beautiful, and it was somehow important to me that it was a verse play. Verse sings through the building; this is really a place where verse "lives". Here you get a sort of elongation to the words, space and air between the words, which seems natural if you're speaking verse. Peter Oswald's language works very well in the Globe because his imagery is very "outdoorsy", directly concerning Nature, and the connection between godliness and Nature – whether that's Christ or Woden.

Having the workshop for Augustine's Oak before we began rehearsals for Errors, we were able to get the play up on its feet, see problem bits that arose, and have Peter go off and work incredibly quickly to sort all of that out. The play was our baby, a work in progress, and it had to be looked after and pampered, even if that meant cutting it.

The Globe stage

I first stepped onto the stage at the Globe when I was in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside in the first season. It was empty, and I can remember thinking, "Oh my God, this is going to be terrifying," Because I was more used to a black box, the idea of being able to see everybody in the audience was terrifying; it was completely unknown territory. However, when I first stepped out in front of an audience, I thought almost immediately, "This isn't frightening at all". The experience was like (it sounds really corny) a huge embrace. The audience and the actors have to make the circle meet themselves, and it's this two-way process that makes the Globe such an extraordinary place to work in. As an actor you have to be present, and the audience has to engage, because without one or the other, it doesn't work. I work in a very different way from how I would in a conventional theatre, and I'd describe it as "surrendering" to the building, not trying to fight against it. It is a sort of living, breathing thing that, if you allow that to sort of encircle you, it opens out the voice. It makes for a clarity of movement too, if you open out physically, playing the amount of space and not shying away from it. If you embrace the space, and dare to look up to the top galleries, you start to realise where you can direct it, not just vocally, but physically as well. You don't need to move an awful lot. You begin to find that you don't need little fiddly gestures, and you don't need to run around a lot. You need to be able to stand your ground and be able to express whatever you're expressing truthfully.

Less is more.

Interview with Sean O’Callaghan

Edwin, Augustine’s Oak

On the Workshop period for Augustine’s Oak

The workshop period resulted in many changes to the play’s earlier drafts, mainly in terms of the ending of the play. Originally, the ending had problems because Edwin’s realisation of the angel’s identity came too quickly and too glibly. The trouble was that, while trying to shorten and condense the play as a whole, we wanted to avoid making it glib or uncomplicated, in terms of character. This problem didn’t vanish completely with the next draft, so we decided to improvise the whole of the last Act, and this seemed to provide a lot of solutions in the end. Tim (Carroll) suggested scenes, and we acted them out, like a pagan dance, which eventually became the Northumbrian sacrifice scene. That scene, with its confrontation between Paulinus and the Northumbrian pagans, developed into a nice counterbalance to the scenes with Augustine and the Kentish pagans and the Welsh bishops.

I approached work on Augustine’s Oak in much the same way as I would any other work. The only aspect that might separate it from certain other plays would be the verse, but then again, verse speaking is something that I think is dangerous to get “precious” about. Ideally, you’d approach all work in roughly the same manner. The language of any play is specific to that play, and the important thing is try to avoid imposing your own rhythm, your own verbal idiosyncrasies, on the language. You have to be really open if you are going to find out what is truly unique about that play. What I find unique about Peter’s language is a kind of delicacy and fragility in the poetry, which I have to be careful not to destroy by putting too much pressure on the language. Projecting Peter’s language around the Globe space, therefore, is not about force, but about trusting in the text and in your technique, so you don’t have to push it.

You also have to learn to trust in the power of the stage itself; the Globe stage puts you in a fantastic position to talk to people. The thing that hit me most after the first performance was the power of directly addressing a visible audience. What you find is that you’re genuinely sharing with them, as you can see them, they can see you, and you’re speaking to them. There’s a very fine line between the rhetorical and the actual question under these circumstances, and so when you ask questions, you’re half-expecting a response. That’s when you realise that, with material written specifically for the Globe, a potential response is always written in. In other words, if the audience interrupts you, your next line will usually be a suitable response to that interruption. What might otherwise be an abstract idea in a text becomes suddenly very real when spoken to or shared with tangible, real people. It’s a very human space.

Here’s an example of a moment from Augustine’s Oak where I can leave the door open for an audience response: How can I stem this wound, stop this bleeding?/Simple. Sit down, and never move again. The pause there allows the possibility that I don’t have the answer for a second, that somebody in the audience might offer a response to the question.

Edwin is a historical character as far as the social context for the play goes, but I wouldn’t limit myself to thinking of him as a historical character per se. The play presents a Christian ethic, which, as an atheist I don’t necessarily sympathise with; however, the idea of questioning and then finding faith is something I understand, coming from a Catholic Irish background. Finding faith, and finding out what that faith means to you, and whether or not you can live without faith, these are familiar, universal issues, about which Peter draws his own conclusions. I find the same ideas very interesting, though I wouldn’t necessarily draw the same conclusions, personally. I don’t find Edwin in the slightest bit dogmatic, and I like the fact that he questions his own priorities at the end of the play: which is more important, his love for Tata or his faith?

The Stage and Audience

Since language is all you have to describe whatever imaginary landscape you're in, it has to be tangible to the audience. You can't cheat in this space. It's a cliché but it's true. Because you have nothing else, this space gives you a tremendous relationship with the audience. I think that because of this, you can't fake it, and that any journey you make has to be earned. This really hit me on the first performance, and it was the one thing I was really buzzing about afterwards; with a full house like we had on the first night, there's a wonderful, tangible human quality to the space, and the audience does so much work for you. Telling this story for the first time involves a narrative which is spiritual and emotional, as well as the plain storytelling, so that support from the audience really makes a big difference...although I am sure the same can be said by the actors performing Shakespeare in this space too.

In terms of defining exterior and interior spaces, you have to play with what Tim (Carroll) has given you as your playing area. You shouldn't need to "signal" to the audience as such; it seems enough to let them know where you are, and if you believe it, they will too. There is the scene in Act V on the mountain, however, and you find you instinctively start to use the space, and adjust the size of gesture to give a feeling of the imaginary space you're inhabiting. I hadn't really thought about it until now, but, sitting on the edge of the stage and looking out to the open sky, feels like sitting on a mountain. We instinctively do what people do in those situations; we look out into the distance, and talk to the person next to us without needing to look at them. The open roof is really useful in that regard.

Verse and Prose

Peter's verse is really tailor-made for scenes like the love scene between Edwin and Tata. The scenes with Lilla are in prose, and prose lends itself well to those kinds of exchange. On the face of it, the prose might sound a little more naturalistic, more modern than the verse. It seems that you can play around a bit more with prose, that you can change the rhythm more drastically, perhaps, than you can with verse. However, you still have to be very aware of the inherent rhythms in the prose, as these can help the audience out very much. Rhythm is tremendously important, and if you find the rhythm of each prose scene, you realise that in fact you're not working with a piece of purely modern naturalism after all, but a piece with its own rules and rhythms which open up meanings for the audience. You have to be careful (with verse and with prose) not to simply find a rhythm and make the whole thing the same; it is actually the changes in rhythm which audiences can find exciting. The rhythms of prose may be more difficult to find than those of verse, but it is easier to break those rhythms once you've set them up, which is usually fun for the audience.

When I got here I found that a lot of people were talking about the pillars, and about the consequent need to keep moving around on stage. Personally, I found that this was the least useful piece of advice, because it seems to me that the most important thing to focus on when playing the Globe is talking to the audience and making sure they can hear you. What I have found remarkable about the audiences for Augustine's Oak is that they are so ready to listen, and they pick up on so many subtle things within the language. I'm delighted that they're such good listeners. It seems the Globe has managed to bring an audience along from its classical work, and has introduced it to a new work, and this seems to me to be exactly the kind of process that should be going on here. It's quite important. And the demands of listening to a classical play, they are bringing to a new play.

Interview with Robert Pickavance

Aegeon, The Comedy of Errors

Paulinus, Augustine's Oak

Eloquence

Though I can't say the working processes we've gone through have conscientiously set eloquence as a goal, I can say that one of my personal responses to the work here has been to find some kind of simplicity of utterance. I imagine this is included in what Mark (Rylance) wanted to inspire in us. This simplicity of utterance is something I have tried to achieve here for all sorts of reasons. In the Globe's space, that simplicity is the actor's essential strength, because you have very little else to support you. Also, because the relationship with the audience is such a naked and honest one, I have felt that my essential task has been to refine a performance down to something simple and uncluttered, free and clear.

Storytelling

Certainly one of my responsibilities in the two plays is quite straightforward storytelling. As Aegeon in *Errors* I have a long story to tell. In *Augustine's Oak*, playing Paulinus, I wanted to simplify his spiritual message into something that's just extremely honest, open and graspable. I had to do that for myself because I am not a Christian, and I found the prospects of playing a Christian missionary very, very difficult. I had to reduce the tenets of the Christian faith to something essential and simple that I could wholeheartedly embrace. That was my essential task in the workshops, and again that involved a kind of simplicity of utterance.

Verse and Prose

I think the creation of good verse condenses a story in a way that often even the best prose doesn't. So the processes of condensation and distillation have already been done by the writer, and you have to make that as clear and shiny and undecorated as possible. Prose can take its own time and use its rhythms of natural speech more. Paulinus has a set of doubts and difficulties in his task of evangelizing the English and the British. He's much more "sorted" than most characters I'm usually asked to play, and that is another reason why I have felt the need to "essentialise" and be shingly clear. "Eloquence", in that sense, has been a very useful and enjoyable aim.

Playing conditions at the Globe

It's a heightened space, and quite a stylized space. Obviously it requires a lot of movement because of things like sightlines. It's a space that lends itself to a dynamic movement and constant shifts, but it is also a wonderful space to stand still in, and deliver directly. Maybe that direct-address aspect of it is exaggerated for me, because that is essentially my task in both plays, but that's certainly what I enjoyed most about having worked here this season. It was a daunting task and I was apprehensive about it, because I didn't know how it would work, and in a sense I still remain apprehensive.

I am much more nervous at the top of *Errors* than I am at the top of *Augustine's Oak*, because the first thing I have is that big scene. But I have to say that the space is enormously helpful. Initially it was scary, because I was not used to seeing all those faces looking at me. But as soon as I found some familiarity with that form, it was just so helpful. I like direct addressing, but to do that into a darkened theatre, where you can just about make out people in the front two or three rows, is an act of faith. It's a kind of bluff in a sense, because you're not directly contacting people in the audience. But here, it's like telling a story to a child, or rather fifteen

hundred of them. It's quite difficult too, especially at the top of the show, because there are a lot of people coming and going, a lot of settling down, a lot of people reading programmes. Here, you don't have the luxury of speaking to the darkness, thinking that they're hanging on every word, because you can see that they're not! At the same time it's fine to look at people when they're reading their programme, and if you can't get them to look up then you move your gaze to somebody else, you can see from their eyes that they want to listen, and all that feeds you enormously. We've now performed *Errors* over forty times, something I've very rarely done outside of Christmas shows. In those situations, things often settle down into a kind of treadmill routine, because of familiarity, yet that is something I've never felt here. It is still quite a daunting prospect to launch over four pages of text with very little interjection, but every time I go out, I am directly fed by the clearly visible response from the audience. It's that response that keeps you in the moment, and that response that means the act of storytelling never becomes *predictable*.

Interview with Philippa Stanton

Courtesan, The Comedy of Errors

Tata, Augustine's Oak

Singing on the Globe stage

I found singing in the Globe space very interesting. I warm up with opera – something with as wide a range of high to low as possible, something “big” – and that is amazing to do in the space. The space is huge and it also has no roof, so I could be as “big” as I wanted to, and that's a huge release, which I got a bit of a buzz from doing. Actually the songs (because I had to take the surroundings into consideration) informed how I thought I should be vocally, when speaking. I think I use my voice better when I'm singing, because somehow it seems easier to use it “correctly” then – I suppose it just feels more natural to do that with a tune! I think speaking poetic language like Shakespeare's (or Peter Oswald's) has a good deal in common with singing an aria, or a “number”. I have to be aware of how my voice works, and of how much work I still have to do, and how many habits I have attached to my speaking voice. I regard singing like playing a musical instrument, and perhaps if I regarded speaking as playing a different kind of music on the same instrument, it may help. In a large space it really helps anyway, because it's more inhibiting to be in a small studio space when you're asked to sing. You feel that it is too claustrophobic to sing loudly and openly, whereas it was liberating to sing like that at the Globe. However, I did find I could bring it down, as I didn't need to belt it out as I thought I did at first. I think it is about pitch: if the pitch is right, you don't need to blast it out at all. I think I did blast it out for the first week of performances, partly because I had a cold! When I had the nerve to take it down a bit, my voice just seemed to fill the space, rather than impose. When it was a bit louder, when I wasn't really paying attention to anything more than just getting the song out, it sounded a bit jagged, so when I took it down and focussed on pitch, it seemed to fill the space with a kind of “roundness”. I think I probably visualised that, because I do tend to work very visually, especially with singing. Tim had said to me, “Put breath into what you're doing”, which I did and the breath made it a rounder, less angular sound. I found it really helpful that I had to sing.

I also think the sound changes depending on where you are on the stage. I felt much more comfortable singing towards the centre than I did at the edges. Maybe that's just me. It shouldn't matter really, but the one song that I did sing out towards the edge was the one I was always most nervous about.

I don't know how to describe the acoustic difference between performing in the space when it is full, compared to when it is empty, but it seemed that the sound was "taken" when it was full. When the space is empty there doesn't seem anywhere for the sound to go, apart from the empty galleries themselves. A full house doesn't deaden the sound, it seems rather to receive it. The songs in Augustine's Oak are not written in as "numbers". The songs were both written and directed as things that simply happen within a scene. One audience member told me they wanted to applaud at the end of the songs, but felt discouraged from doing so. I never felt that applause would have been appropriate after the songs – whereas after my belly dance in Errors I really enjoyed the applause. It was my responsibility to push the scene forward at the end of a song to make sure it wasn't interrupted by applause.

At first I didn't really understand the function of the songs in the play. The song that calms Severus is obvious enough, but the first song gave me trouble, and was difficult to stage, because it felt disconnected from the scene and what was going on. I remember asking Tim if I could look out and acknowledge the audience, perhaps refer to specific people during certain moments in the song. Tim thought the song would be less effective if I did that, because at that point I was supposed to be in my own world. I found that quite difficult, because I wanted to present it, or perform it. In Errors, I could interact very easily with the audience, whereas I couldn't as Tata in Augustine's Oak. That could have been a result of my being more nervous about Augustine's Oak, or it could also be that Tata lives much more in her head; to look directly at a person in the audience might be to include that person in something that Tata was working out on her own. However, Lilla and Ethelbert do talk directly to their audience, and that seems to work well also. During rehearsals I wanted to look at the audience more, because I was so used to this from Errors. When it went up, that didn't feel right.

I think the speech I have about my mother's death and Edwin's proposal is one of the most beautiful speeches in the play, but though it is technically a soliloquy I found it difficult to speak directly and specifically to the audience, during it. The ideas expressed in the speech are such that they come into my head at different angles, and I just felt I didn't want to look at people because it was a speech very much to myself, about how I feel and having the elements for support, not human beings. So I didn't feel that Tata particularly wanted to include anyone else in what she was going through. It seemed self-indulgent, in a way, to look directly at someone and say; 'I am a coffin stuffed with wedding flowers' - I felt it would sound like, "Look how sad I am". But that is something I may need to work on – to work with the audience even in these moments. As the Courtesan in Errors I found it very easy to speak directly to the audience, precisely because the Courtesan wants the audience to feel included in what she's going through, and to conspire with her.

Verse and Prose

As Tata speaks both English and Latin, so I spoke in both prose and iambic pentameter in Augustine's Oak. I found the scenes in prose harder to play, actually. The verse didn't really strike me as "being verse", as it was contemporary language, that I felt I understood from the start. It is poetic, of course, but the contemporary nature of the language in Augustine's Oak made me realise that we do in fact ordinarily speak in patterns very similar to iambic pentameter. It seemed very natural. I didn't even have to think about "speaking in verse". I thought "That's what it would have been like for Shakespeare's actors. The playwright would just have chosen the metre that best fits the way his actors spoke", which is exactly what Peter has done. I found the work on Shakespeare's verse much more difficult, but also absolutely vital. The prose seemed more jerky, and I don't really know why. It didn't feel as naturalistic as the verse, strangely enough. The prose seemed more angular and more imposing than the verse. The verse fits absolutely with the Globe's round space, to create images which whizz around, and get picked up. Whereas I think that in a dark space, in a "normal" theatre, those sounds and

images spin out and away, and never come back! The Globe is a very generous theatre to play in, because whatever you put out comes back around to you. Audiences don't just receive here, they give out too.

Interview with Richard Trahair

Messenger, The Comedy of Errors

Osbert, Augustine's Oak

Comparing the experience of Comedy of Errors with Augustine's Oak

I cannot remember having done two plays together where the rehearsal processes were more different. The rehearsals for *Comedy of Errors* were very ensemble-based, with the entire company present most of the time. The rehearsals for *Augustine's Oak* were, by contrast, quite strictly regimented, and the play was broken down into its units to be rehearsed separately. This worked well for me, because if the method used for *Augustine* had been used for *Comedy*, I would barely have been called for rehearsal at all! It was a real eye-opener for me, as a newcomer to the Globe, to see how different projects move from the rehearsal space into the theatre itself.

In *Comedy of Errors*, I am on the stage for nearly all of the second half, despite having very few lines, so I get the impression that I am part of the "storytelling machine" of *Comedy of Errors*, in a physically exciting production. I think that people who come to see *Comedy* know how they feel about Shakespeare, even if they don't know the play itself. Therefore, as a cast, we perhaps feel that we are able to "throw a lot more at it". Whereas, the audiences that come to see *Augustine's Oak* generally have no idea what they are going to see, and have never heard of Peter Oswald. So, with *Augustine's Oak* we felt our job was much more to place the words in the audiences' ears and shape the scenes appropriately. We didn't feel we needed to lay too much on top of that; we were aiming to create, and to simply present, not reinterpret. The script itself changed through rehearsal significantly, and what finished up being on the page was to a large extent what we wanted the audience to receive, rather than a text with an added layer of ideas on top of it.

So, for me, storytelling in *Comedy of Errors* is a very different experience. I see the audience changing through the run of the play so much. There's a much clearer graduation in their reactions throughout the play. Because you can see the audience in the yard particularly clearly, you can see how individual faces change with every passing minute. With *Augustine* – and this is particularly difficult for me because I play two very distinct parts – I have much less awareness of the whole arc of the play. Instead I come on and present a character in a situation, go off, and then come on again and present a different character in a different situation. So for me the experience is more disjointed.

When we first began rehearsing *Comedy of Errors* I heard a lot of talk about the "figure of 8" movement pattern. I was told that it was a good idea to bear that shape in mind, to try to take in as much of the space as possible. I thought at the time, "That's all very well, but how am I going to do that without it looking unnatural?" What I found, to my amazement and great relief, is that it is really quite easy to do just that. You don't have to manufacture reasons to keep turning, and to keep taking in the different angles with the circle. With *Augustine's Oak* I was very aware that the "squareness" of the stage within the circular theatre was very much emphasised by the design, and I had to start all over again. I had to think harder in that production, to generate reasons for taking in the cheaper seats, as it were, whereas with *Comedy* those sorts

of movements had really become second nature. However, I did discover that it is feasible, and that you don't have to be in a play that is all about "mad physicality" to be able to take in the entire space. Once you have the confidence, this is relatively easy. If we had rehearsed and performed the plays the other way around, with Augustine first, it could have been quite a headache, I think. The way that Comedy was directed sort of forced you into that way of moving.

Differences between the two audiences are difficult to discuss without making reference to the difference in the number of groundlings in the yard. Whenever I am asked a question about the audience at the Globe, I cannot avoid thinking about the groundlings. The groundlings really affect the sort of time the actor has during any performance at the Globe. That's not to say that you don't connect with the seated people, but it is the groundlings who primarily dictate the quality of your experience as a performer at the Globe. Between the two shows, the yard has been two completely different animals. What we found very early on with Augustine's Oak is that when the yard isn't packed, it starts operating very differently, and it becomes really quite hard work. It becomes a real distraction, for instance, when people start to sit down when the yard is empty. To begin with, I remember feeling that I was in danger of becoming intimidated by the size of that beast, the audience in the yard; with so many faces, so close, I thought that it might be overwhelming. Of course, I found that not to be the case, and that, like stagefright, the yard was something you could turn around and use to your advantage. When the yard is packed, it is the most friendly band to play to, and paradoxically, it is when the numbers drop in the yard that it becomes intimidating. It is so much harder to maintain your concentration, in comparison. It is fine to have people wandering around in a full yard, but when people wander around in an empty yard, you can just feel the focus of the people above them shifting to the yard, and away from the stage. The focus of the yard space when it is empty could be described as something that bounces around, as if inside a drum. When the space is full, it is like a cake that is setting, it coheres.

In terms of the other differences between the two audiences, I would say that I feel that while they are two distinctly different audiences, I couldn't really tell you why that is so. I couldn't really categorise either group based on my experience playing to them. I just sense that the people who come to Comedy of Errors seem to know that they will very shortly be laughing their heads off, and so they transmit this sense of expectation somehow, and that is what you walk out into, with Comedy. You walk out into a pretty uncertain atmosphere for Augustine's Oak. I would love to know what percentage of the Augustine's Oak are "second-handers", who have come to the Globe hoping to see a Shakespeare play and have had to settle for a new play, as it were.

Verse and Prose

Although Comedy of Errors contains a mixture of verse and prose, the prose tends to sound pretty obscure to a 20th century ear, and so in one sense it starts to sound like verse to us. In Augustine's Oak there are three very clearly different types of writing at work in the play. There's prose for the English speakers, verse for the Latin speakers, and a kind of "pseudo-verse" for the Welsh speakers, which is fairly dripping with images. To be honest with you (though I may be attaching false reasons to this - I'm very happy to believe this because of this theatre), I believe that in a "normal" theatre I would personally feel much happier walking out and speaking conversational prose - it would be something that would come to one's faculties much more readily. To walk out into a "square box" theatre and start speaking verse is a whole extra task. Here, with Augustine's Oak, if anything it was the other way around. Sometimes I would walk out to speak prose, and I'd feel slightly out of place, whereas, walking out to begin speaking Peter's "hyper-verse" felt completely natural for that space. If the language isn't filling the space, then the actor has to start making decisions about where they're throwing their lines.

Are you, for instance, throwing your lines purely to the other characters on stage, and allowing the audience the privilege of eavesdropping on a conversation? Or, are you throwing your lines to the audience, to make them laugh? Most of the prose in Augustine's Oak is the more comedic stuff, so that fact also comes into play. However, when you're out there speaking verse, there's no decision to be made; you know that the audience is as much a target for your speech as the other characters on the stage. It's the difference between the audience being "in the room" with you, so to speak, and the audience being on the other side of the famous "fourth wall", with that lifted out of the way. The glass wall effect is something that doesn't really apply... it's something that you cannot really think in terms of, even if you wanted to, even if you are playing a scene which you want to share simply with the characters on the stage, and let the audience eavesdrop. You have to keep using the same technique that you're using for all the other scenes, because the audience is so close, they feel like they're on your lap. You have to keep using the same technique, and if that technique occasionally "jars", it'll most likely be during a "conversational" prose scene.

History

Augustine's Oak has an epic scale, and moves quickly through generations, which brings limitations as well as expedience to the play; it is this epic scale which results in two of the main characters' disappearance early on in the play. In that sense Augustine's Oak feels like a history play, because it isn't a play where the story comes back to the beginning, in any way. You've really moved on through history, by the end of the play. However, the play has very human concerns too. There seems to be a balance between the public and private dramas in Augustine's Oak, and comparisons between two complex (and in many ways very contemporary) love stories, not just a conflict of theologies. I'd say that Augustine's Oak is a play with historical content, rather than a "history play" – it's a walk through history with some very real characters. The Globe seems the perfect place for those two worlds, public and private, to meet. The Globe is really a microscope under which to examine life's bigger issues; a place where the macrocosm becomes microcosm.

Interview with Yolanda Vazquez

Adriana, The Comedy of Errors

Bertha, Augustine's Oak

Storytelling

Kathryn (Hunter) ensured that the whole cast always knew exactly what was going on with the storytelling process of Errors, so that at any given moment, whether we were a beggar, or listening in from the side of the stage, we were all telling the same story at the same time. We all needed to know the story and hence we did many exercises with her initially where we told Aegeon's story in different ways, through puppetry and through improvisations that could take the form of opera, slapstick comedy, or whatever form we wanted. Then we carried on to tell the stories of the different characters, what happened in the play, in our own words, using our own methods. The personal input of the entire company was very strong and very focused and this united us as a whole. It also gave those people who perhaps didn't have a lot of text the opportunity to say just as much as everybody else during the rehearsal period.

In order to give different characters an idea of where we were within the play, Kathryn gave us all a photograph which we then brought to life using costume and movement. To create the marketplace, each of us would take individual people from the photograph and then put them together in a different scenario. By the end of this exercise we all knew where we were meant

to be. I think that what a lot of people enjoyed when watching the show was that they were transported to somewhere else, to this imaginary Ephesus. There were different pictures all around the stage, which all related to whatever was happening in the centre or wherever the story was being told, but at the same time they each told their own little story.

In Augustine's Oak we concentrated on telling the story through the words. We didn't do as much improvisation during the rehearsal period, although we did workshops on the playtext itself, which was very good. Initially, the text was too long and seemed to be going in too many directions. With Peter and Tim, we tried to make sure that it was compact. As the play dealt with religion we didn't want people to come to the play and leave thinking, "oh, it's all very well if you are a Christian but I'm not, so it doesn't mean anything to me", or "it's all very well if you are a pagan, but I'm not, so it doesn't mean anything to me" - so it didn't adhere to any particular creed. At the same time we tried to make sure that it said what Peter wanted it to say, which was something very spiritual. So we worked hard on the scenes that we did not understand, and were given the chance to speak out if we did not know what we were playing. We were also able to reinstate scenes that had "disappeared" from drafts that we had seen beforehand, if that resulted in the story being made clearer. Peter was brilliant at running off to snip or add to a scene, coming back with something that we could work with. So we played around with those things and then we put the play into the space very quickly and ran around with it on the Globe stage.

I think the story should be told collectively. Too often we tend not to do that and leave the responsibility to whoever is centre stage, as it were. The workshop week really helped to form and unite the company but I also think the company works because of the individuals. I think that the White Company is full of strong individuals who work very well together, who can communicate and are open to each other. Kathryn is just generosity itself, she brings so much into the rehearsals. We were encouraged not to set anything but to just explore and open out. When we had the opportunity to work with Mark (or when Mark found himself having to join the group), though he was a new entity and wasn't sure what was going on, it didn't matter. It fired everybody's imagination, and the audience accepted it and was transported. It was rather moving. The way we had worked in rehearsals helped with this. We were open to anything that was thrown at us. I think it has to be kept that way at the Globe...

The physical demands of the space

It seems to me that the space requires great physicality, strength of movement and physical assurance in what you're doing, otherwise you disappear. The space can dwarf the actor very easily. Stillness does work extremely well on this stage, but it has to be energised stillness (if that makes sense) which helps to pull the focus to you.

Difference between prose and verse

I like working with verse, and I particularly liked working with verse in the Globe space. I did not find prose harder here, but at times it felt awkward – maybe because I'd got used to doing the long speeches in Comedy of Errors. Verse gives you the strength and the form that is necessary to fill the space. Verse lines spoken here seem to have a particular strength of effect, absolutely unlike what we are used to on the modern stage. Maybe it's because here you listen more. Also I initially thought that here you have to project your voice more, because of the fear of not being heard, though I found that this is not so. Diction is very important. We modern actors tend to carry on to the end of lines and drop the last word (take it down) because we are unsure/insecure. If you do that in this space, you don't hear any of it. The whole line goes for nothing. You don't necessarily have to "lift" in the musical sense, you just have to give it its due. When you shout, you can't be heard. On the other hand, when you keep the line endings and hear the rhyme, it is a most satisfying experience.