

“To inhale is to inspire”

On the October 12 and 13 The Berry Theatre became host to the Royal Shakespeare Company who held two days of workshops for The Berry staff and associates. This formed part of our larger *Shakespeare Project* in which various local schools engage with The Berry Theatre’s drama team to develop their knowledge of Shakespeare’s plays. The aims of the workshops were to find new ways to engage young people with Shakespeare and enhance our own practical skills.

The first day focussed on the voice, with specialist voice coach Nia Lynn. Our thoughts were drawn away from understanding the language or definitions of the words; instead we were encouraged to experience the sounds and rhythm. A large amount of time was spent on how we breathe. A lovely notion was that to inhale is to inspire our bodies and voices. We took time to discover the intricacies of Shakespeare’s word choices by separating out vowels from consonants. Consonants form boundaries and rhythm – for example plosive consonants (p, t, b, d) sound vicious, quick or spat. This led us to what can only be described as ‘consonant fencing’ in partners. Vowels on the other hand hold emotion and melody. Nia also emphasised the importance of punctuation, with the wonderful image of literally puncturing sentences with air holes (in other words, a breath). It was intriguing to explore the English language in such detail, in a way that I never had before. Nia described this as finding the macro meaning from the micro of the language.



Day two brought us Associate Practitioner and Director Chris White who gave us ways to direct Shakespeare for young people. Using an assortment of props and costumes found at The Berry Theatre Chris guided us through the events of *Twelfth Night*. As an ensemble, we took on roles within the play, using the props and costumes to help share the story. We played with Act 3 Scene 4 in which Malvolio propositions Countess Olivia, falsely believing her

to be in love with him. We experimented with a few ideas; keeping one character still whilst the other moves, using different props and playing with the entrance of Malvolio. Later, this time unpicking *King Lear*, we uncovered the father/daughter relationship of King Lear and Goneril. We played the scene twice, each time giving the characters different intentions that we decided as a group. The intentions of each character had a clear effect on the overall motion of the scene, the subtext of the relationship and with whom the audience's loyalties may lay. We were often reminded that Shakespeare is all about our own interpretations. If certain words create a particular feeling then we should explore that because it can never be wrong.

The two days were intriguing, enjoyable and exhausting but each participant is now armed with a myriad of new tools to take back to their respective groups of young people. The thought I shall remember most, however, is 'inhale and be inspired'.

"Thank you so much for inviting Ed and me to join you for the RSC workshops. We both absolutely loved them and found them very valuable in many ways. It was great to meet so many of the Point/Berry team. What a lovely, welcoming, talented and fun gang. A brilliant start to the week all round!"

Noël Jones, Discarded Nut Theatre Company

Blog author Lewis Mullins, drama development intern at The Point and The Berry Theatres.

The Royal Shakespeare Company will be broadcasting [Henry V](#) live from Stratford-Upon-Avon to The Point on October 21 as part of our Road To Agincourt project.

Shakespeareance: [Henry V](#) is a new adaptation of Shakespeare's most thrilling history play. Adapted by Daniel Hill, the project sees The Berry Theatre's Creative Learning Team working with students from 10 local secondary schools to bring to life this extraordinary play.

Supported by Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund, both the RSC's live streaming of *Henry*

V and Shakespearience: Henry V celebrates The Berry Theatre's new writing strand.