

Shakespeare Schools Festival

2010 Evaluation



June 2010

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1. Introduction

The Shakespeare Schools Festival (SSF) is a unique arts-education programme that offers young people, from a diverse collection of backgrounds, the opportunity and support to perform abridged productions of Shakespeare's most famous plays in their local professional theatre. We offer something distinct from other Shakespeare providers. Our aims are:

- to enhance and extend the curriculum in English and Drama,
- through the transfer of myriad hard and soft skills, support participants' social, personal and professional development,
- enrich the overall educational experience of all involved
- promote emotional maturity and strong social values.

Since SSF started in 2000 it has involved 100,000 young people from 4,248 schools who have performed in 225 theatres.

We offer a unique project (the 'Festival') to schools and young people.

- It is available to **every** school and **every** pupil in the UK
- It is non-competitive
- It offers a level playing field for achievement and learning
- It gives every participant (teachers and students) skills training to promote personal learning and development
- It is an out-of-the-classroom learning experience with t a workshop and a performance opportunity in a professional theatre
- It facilitates enjoyable interaction between schools, classes and age groups
- It is a valuable addition to the curriculum and provides a unique introduction to Shakespeare
- It offers first-hand experience of working alongside professionals who are passionate about what they do

Over the past 10 years SSF has offered the highest quality of training and opportunity to young people UK-wide. We have a proven record of engaging young people in their education; increasing articulacy, boosting confidence, raising aspirations and fostering academic and practical skills. We have developed a reputation amongst our core consumers for our unique selling point – the training of teachers and the use of professional theatres. As this reputation has grown it has become more important than ever to maintain the high quality service associated with us. Through a team of committed staff we ensure delivery of the process to the highest standards. Each region has its own Festival Coordinator who is responsible for recruiting schools, liaising with local authorities and theatres and maintaining constant contact with schools throughout the project. In 2010 we continued our mutually beneficial partnerships with the National Theatre (NT) and the National Youth Theatre (NYT).

This summary of the 2010 Festival principally measures its impact on teachers and students (Section 6. p.10) using semi-structured questionnaires and interviews to gather information. The evaluation examines the diversity of participants and the educational and social impact on the young people, teachers and schools. 430 teachers responded to this evaluation representing a 69% response rate.

“Lambeth Academy is an inner city school new to SSF. The experience of staging Othello in a professional theatre with three neighbouring schools was a revelation to staff and students alike. The cast’s growing confidence spilled out into their other work, Shakespeare became more accessible generally, and our young Iago qualified for the National Youth Theatre. In short the whole school benefited. We are now a Shakespeare School” - Stephen Potter, Principal, Lambeth Academy, London

2. The Festival programme

The Festival’s extensive process and its inclusive and supportive ethos combines with Shakespeare’s most famous texts to make the project the success it is. Due to the high number of participants it can be difficult to capture individual journeys, but we work hard to find the qualitative and quantitative evidence that we know exists to show that SSF works, and that we do our work well.

The Festival process has a unique impact on every young person who takes part. This can range from a significant boost in confidence and valuable transferable skills, to a deep appreciation of a major contributor to British culture and world literature. The individual journeys made by the participating students underline our belief that *experiencing Shakespeare helps make sense of the world.*

“I’ve been through those things, I’ve been in love, I’ve been sad and I’ve definitely been angry. So I understand him.” - Student, Lea Manor School on Othello, Luton

Shakespeare’s wide range of memorable characters, plot lines and descriptive language enable young people to explore emotions, and develop both empathy and imagination. Family and friends, attending the public performance in a professional theatre, see their young people achieving something entirely positive, often for the first time.

The following quotes give a glimpse of the impact the Festival can have on participants:

“It gives you life skills, working with people and interacting with people, it all builds character.” – Student, The Astley Cooper School, Hemel Hempstead

“I love being involved with this production. Before I did this I thought Shakespeare was boring but now I think the stories are incredibly exciting and I love understanding the language.” – Student, City Technology College, Birmingham

*“Shakespeare Schools Festival was amazing. I honestly think if I hadn’t been chosen to play Hermione in The Winter’s Tale I wouldn’t be the person I am today!”
- Student, Guiseley School, Leeds*

Participants are aged between 11-19 and have varied levels of experience and exposure to theatre and the arts. All students receive a workshop in the weeks leading up to the performance to hone their skills, boost their confidence and give them the chance to share their work with another performing school. Students are introduced to the workings of a professional theatre as well as vital theatrical techniques such as voice projection and effective use of the stage.

Teachers steer the project through in their school, principally as the creative director. They audition, cast and direct pupils in their public performance with our support. All

directors have a CPD workshop with experienced theatre practitioners and trainers. The day is practical and hands-on. Workshop sessions involve up to 25 teachers and focus on refreshing and introducing directorial skills, techniques and working practice. These focus on the students' experience of the production process. Student ownership of the text and production is promoted throughout. The SSF process develops key management skills in teachers that help them grow as leaders in their schools. Teachers are expected to organise schedules for internal rehearsals and for external trips to theatres and workshops, help market and promote the performance, negotiate budgets, motivate other teachers, creatively engage and communicate with students and take overall responsibility for the six month process.

We place the training of, and support for teachers at the centre of our Festival process. Our ethos is to reach out to teachers in schools who fear their students may not be up to the challenge and to prove to them that each and every student can enjoy participation. In answer to a questionnaire, post-Festival, 96% of teachers said that they felt well supported by our team.

"There was always someone on the end of the phone to answer my questions and guide me when I was lost." - **Lizzy Anthony, Teacher, Haslingden High School, North West**

Theatres are booked and managed by us. Local artistic and technical teams hired by SSF run performance days, working alongside in-house theatre technical staff. On the performance day itself each cast has both a technical and a dress rehearsal and watches the dress rehearsal of one other school. Theatre technicians run lights and sound. Live musicians are also accommodated. Each cast member receives the full, professional actor experience utilising backstage dressing-rooms and green rooms. In the evening, each school presents its show to a paying theatre audience (of parents, relatives and friends) for which full front-of-house services are provided. Each school watches two other performances from the auditorium.

"I cannot easily explain to you how as parents we sat in that audience with hearts big enough to burst. To witness these pupils totally immerse themselves into their roles and the belief that they had in their story telling made it totally compelling. On a very personal level, our son was diagnosed with dyslexia when he was only seven years old. Faced with the struggle he was in for academically we took the opportunity to enrol him in a drama group. We are confident that throughout his scholastic career drama and the disciplines learnt helped provide him with the confidence and self-esteem needed to fully participate in school life. University is now looming and he has been able to proudly include in his personal statement one of his top achievements, playing the role of Macduff in your brilliant festival."

- **Jennifer Turner, Parent, Milford Haven School, Wales**

3. Why Shakespeare is the key



"The children like Shakespeare; the stories are gripping, the characters incredibly engaging, detailed and well drawn and they're entitled to it – it's their heritage"

- **Andrew Cooley, Teacher, St Albans Academy, Birmingham**

The Festival introduces a new generation of young people to Shakespeare's work and the magic of live theatre in the most fundamental way. For the majority of young people their first experience of Shakespeare is in a classroom, reading from a book. This introduction often makes the plays difficult to access and dilutes the emotional context of the words. Through performance the students take ownership of the language.

"They learn not be afraid of the Big Bad Bard and take away with them a lasting love of Shakespeare's plays" - **Angela Dennis, Teacher, Bishopston Comprehensive School, Swansea**

Although the idea that a lot of young people find Shakespeare boring is often true, we find that young people taking part in the Festival respect his work and the challenge he symbolises. We give these young people an early encounter with Shakespeare's plays as originally intended - through performance.

"It's a very rewarding experience (for the students). It was enriching for all of them... I was thrilled that my students got to see an excellent version (of another play) on the same night. They were really engaged." – **Gail Borrow, Teacher, Wellington School, Somerset**

For young people Shakespeare is often intimidating because of the language and age of the text. It is a significant challenge to master the language, learn the lines and deliver them live, as part of a team, before a public audience. Such understanding and ownership of one of Shakespeare's plays - even in an abridged form - represents a life-changing relationship with a huge cultural icon. Quite simply – it makes them feel clever. Because Shakespeare represents the best, a successful performance of his work is a momentous experience.

"I don't think we would have aimed this high without it being Shakespeare"

- **Student, Mill Hill County High School, London**

The benefits of watching an excellent production of Shakespeare are well understood and catered for by other organisations. Students taking part in SSF have an altogether different experience as they inhabit Shakespeare's complex and diverse characters themselves, speak his words, feel his rhythm and identify with his themes.

The universality of these themes and the canon's lasting relevance are commented on time and time again. For teenagers, at such a critical phase in their own emotional development, the powerful on-stage exploration of such emotions as love and hatred

(*Romeo and Juliet*), jealousy and manipulation (*Othello*), ambition and crowd mentality (*Julius Caesar*), prejudice and revenge (*The Merchant of Venice*), vanity and betrayal (*Macbeth*) or domestic violence (*The Taming of the Shrew*) cannot be underestimated. Time and again teachers tell us confidential stories of the traumas in their young people's lives and how taking part in SSF is one of the few things bringing them light and empowerment.

"It's difficult sometimes with themes, because they have a lot of darkness in their lives. We looked into the line from Macbeth 'what's done cannot be undone' so the student could think about the idea of 'have you ever done something you wished you hadn't done'. That worked, you find ways that they can relate. I remember one of our students, Mark, pondering that for very long time, and then finally he said 'you can't rub it out' like a mistake in a book. He totally understood that"

- **Pauline Sallis, Teacher, Dorin Park Special School, Chester**

4. What SSF does and why

The act of performing a play by Shakespeare is in itself empowering. Cast members comment on the "rush" and the "buzz" of live performance.

We offer a rare out-of-classroom and out-of-school opportunity that keeps young people focused and positive. In addition to acting, there are also roles for budding marketing students, technicians and producers. But SSF is not all, or even mostly about acting. We provide a holistic, professional experience. Performing a half hour Shakespeare play to a paying audience in a professional theatre is a challenge.

Young people

- Gain vital and lifelong communication and literacy skills
- Engage with the language, the themes and motivation of the characters in an educational context
- Explore emotions, encourage empathy and develop imagination
- Provide concepts, analysis and words with which to explore their own complex lives
- Commit to the end result
- Respect the demands of working within a group and understand the discipline and responsibilities this entails
- Develop a working relationship with their teacher
- Interact with other schools and appreciate their contribution, making up the one 'company' performing on the night

Teachers

- Are trained as experts in delivering Shakespeare
- Gain skills and exercises to use in the classroom and across a range of subjects
- Connect with disadvantaged, disaffected and excluded students
- Provide the practical experience required by the National Curriculum in English and Drama at Key Stage 3, GCSE and BTEC
- Coach other teachers in the transferable skills necessary for personalising learning
- Find new ways to support ethnic minorities, students with English as an additional language, and students with special needs in both mainstream and Special schools

It's also an opportunity for schools to:

- Harness the support of their local community
- Show the general public teenagers striving for and achieving their best
- Offer primary schools the opportunity for engagement with their local secondary school and with Shakespeare at their local theatre

Although some participants have progressed into careers in film, television and theatre (roles as SSF youth directors and volunteer venue managers are also available), many have also used the confidence and skills they've learnt with SSF to pursue careers in science, teaching and law amongst others. The feedback from our young participants suggests the skills they learn when taking part in the Festival prepare them for life.

5. Who takes part

The open-access policy welcomes a range of participation across different demographics, as well as actively encouraging participation amongst groups who don't regularly take part in arts projects.

Types of Teachers

The majority of teachers involved were from Drama and English departments (73% Drama / Theatre studies, 9% English). There is also involvement from teachers from a number of other departments, including dance, language, music and Creative Arts. Year Heads and Deputy Heads also take part. The Festival not only develops teachers' existing specialisms and experience, but also widens access to Shakespeare within the profession.

Catchment Area

46% of schools taking part in the Festival this year were located in urban areas; 21% were located in the inner cities and 33% came from rural areas. Statistics from the Office for National Statistics show 80% of the English population live in urban / inner city areas. The higher than national average up-take in rural areas indicates the reach and popularity of the Festival, and its ability to bring students from different backgrounds, both geographical and social, together. SSF has always aimed to be a project for young people from all areas of the UK, including those facing rural isolation. The high percentage of students from rural areas is encouraging. We assess theatre locations every year to ensure the Festival is staged at venues which maintain this level of access to remote schools.



Gender

Of the 8043 students who took part in the Festival, 37% were boys and 63% were girls. Ofsted reports show that only 36% of the students submitted for Drama GCSE were boys, suggesting lower participation rates among boys in school drama overall. SSF achieved more than this representative percentage.

SSF inspiring boys

Royal Liberty School for Boys in Romford took part in the Shakespeare Schools Festival for the second time in 2010 and decided to perform *Macbeth*. After an initial audition stage attended by more than 40 students, a team of 17 boys from varied year groups committed to a strict rehearsal schedule starting with learning lines over the summer holidays. Over six weeks, after returning to school in September, the students formed a tight bond, supporting and learning from each other and produced a breath-taking piece of theatre.

"We like the action and adventure and the blood." – James, Witch 2

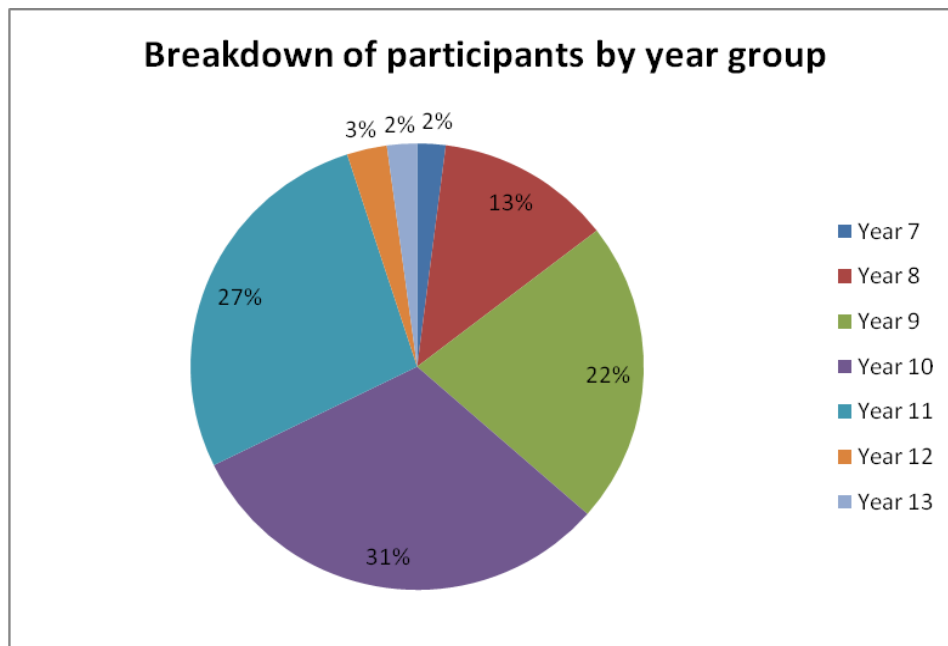
"I couldn't do the accent but it didn't matter because I got the emotion and put my best into it." – Christopher, Witch 1

"We had a lot of young pupils in the cast and as an older member I would help them out and guided them." – Berwyn, Lady Macbeth

"I learnt I could work with others and how to control my fears. I play basketball and we have a team in that but this was so much more because you're responsible." – David, Witch 3

"At the end, when they say 'Hail, King of Scotland' and there's a blackout we're all kneeling. I looked around and I saw 15 of my friends, all with relieved faces, we were so proud. I just knew how I felt at that moment but to see everyone feels the same added to it. You could just feel it." - Joseph, Macbeth

Year Groups



Participants from all year groups within the 11-19 age group are encouraged to take part. The largest year group taking part in the Festival was year 11, followed by year 10 - both GCSE years. Teachers regard the Festival as a way of supporting and enhancing

the English and Drama GCSEs and AS/A2 examinations and course work. Nonetheless SSF is also a rare opportunity for working across year groups:

“One of the most rewarding things for me was watching the Year 9s and 10s observing in awe the year 8s who played the witches (Macbeth). There isn’t much opportunity to work with groups of students from different year groups all at once and this is one of the things I like best about the festival” - Lucy Cearn, Teacher, Charter School, London

School Types

18 different types of schools took part in the Festival in England. The largest number of schools taking part in the Festival were Comprehensive Schools (16%) followed by Arts Colleges (14%). 10% were Technology Colleges and 6% were Sports Colleges. The flexibility of the Festival allows different types of schools to use their speciality in their performance. The interaction between the schools is a fundamental aspect of the celebratory and non-competitive ethos of the Festival. Schools relish the chance for their students to work with young people from different schools.

Ethnicity

It has been argued that some ethnic minority groups find the arts elitist, and feel that access to art forms such as theatre is limited. The Festival has always been representative of different ethnic groups and performances reflect their cultural and political influences.

Festival participants have always been representative of the ethnic diversity of their relevant region. Ethnic minorities represent 9% of the UK population, at 17% the Festival’s representatives nearly doubles this. The majority of students participating in the Festival were White – British (83%). 4% of students came from mixed ethnic groups. 2% of the participants were Black – African, Black – Caribbean and Pakistani and 1% were Indian, Bangladeshi and other ethnic groups including Iraqi, Brazilian and Vietnamese.

Outreach and Inclusion

Social inclusion is key to our ethos, core values and working practice. We have always promoted a non-competitive, open-access and level playing field for participation and achievement.

In line with DfE guidelines, we define Inclusion Schools as those where 30% or more of students are on Free School Meals. These schools often face wider problems, such as lower attainment levels at GCSE, and high pupil non-attendance and exclusion rates. 11% of schools in England are Inclusion schools. In 2010 the Festival matched this percentage in its participants. The benefit of the SSF experience is felt both by the students in the Inclusion Schools, who raise their aspirations, gain confidence and attain a sense of achievement, and by the other schools with which they interact – often for the first time.



Special Schools

In 2010, 8% of final sign up to the Festival was from Special Schools and 21% of all students taking part had disabilities or difficulties. As more Special Schools take part in the Festival and become an integral part of what we do, more mainstream

schools involve students with disabilities and difficulties. Indeed, many mainstream schools now ask to work alongside their local Special School.

Students with disabilities and difficulties rarely get the opportunity to work in a neutral environment with other students in this way. Access to a professional theatre space, both on stage and back-stage, and the chance to develop a close relationship with a local theatre and staff, is an equally rare occurrence. The Festival offers students with disabilities and difficulties both opportunities. To ensure that each school's unique requirements are known and catered for, this year we employed a Special School Coordinator to interface between the school, the theatre and our staff throughout the year. The huge amount of work and commitment from teachers and students results in performances that are often the most memorable for everyone involved.

The term 'disabilities and difficulties' includes both students from Special Schools and students in mainstream schools who have special and particular needs. In total, 11% of students speak English as a second language, 36% of students had a statement of educational needs (SEN), 23% had literacy problems, 16% were Dyslexic, 4% were hearing impaired, 2% were visually impaired, 4% of participants had other disabilities or difficulties which included Aspergers Syndrome, physical disability, Dyspraxia and Attention Deficit Disorder.

Case Study - Bardwell Special School, Bicester, Oxon - performed *The Taming of the Shrew* at Milton Keynes theatre

Bardwell is a Community Special School for pupils aged 2 – 19 years with severe and profound learning difficulties. Pupils have a wide range of needs including sensory impairment, communication or language disorders, cerebral palsy, autism and complex learning difficulties. Bardwell was awarded Specialist Status in Communication and Interaction in September 2010.

Cathy Singleton, parent of Martin, 16 yrs, who played Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, feels that participation in SSF is important. *"You could see that they were all really enjoying being on stage and performing. And the whole audience, even people we didn't know and people who didn't know the students all clapped, cheered, laughed, joined in. And obviously as a parent that makes you feel really proud."* Martin had been the narrator in an SSF production of *Hamlet*, a couple of years before, and since then had enrolled on a performing arts course. As his **teacher, Louisa Hook** says: *"He's a very different boy from when he first joined my senior drama group and we were doing *Grease* and *Romeo and Juliet*".*

Louisa describes the value of acting out emotions for students who have difficulty reading emotions. *"They find it difficult sometimes to act out a feeling that they haven't got. Once they've done it they can remember what it feels to be like that – because it's modelling feelings instead of just talking about them – and then you can say "oh that's like" and then they can talk about another situation – "Oh that's like Kate, oh that's like Macbeth". Because they've practiced and modelled it and gone through it. They can start analysing and judging other people's behaviour and then that helps them analyse and judge their own as well. It's one of the things that's so useful for them growing up. So this sort of opportunity and working with groups of other young people doing the same sort of thing is fantastic."*

Martin's mother is also very positive about the opportunity for interaction with mainstream schools in SSF. *"He just seems more mature. It's helped him a lot with more appropriate behaviour"*. Martin particularly enjoyed the professional experience in the theatre. *"They treated us proper,"* he says, *"like professionals."*

Marion Staples is the mother of another cast member who's been in several SSF performances. It's not only her son who's grown in confidence with Shakespeare, Marion feels that she's benefited also. "I actually understand Shakespeare now which I never used to. Because I think to read Shakespeare is really, really difficult and I haven't got a clue what it's about. When ours came on I knew exactly what they were on about because they were acting it out so lovely. And you got the story. The gist of the story. And they were so enthusiastic.... I think that's the main thing. I do actually understand Shakespeare. I think I'm an expert in Shakespeare."

6. What is the impact?

Greater Exam Success

Although the majority of our participating teachers are from Drama departments, this year the Festival actively encouraged participation from English teachers. English teachers tell us that participating has a positive impact on the way they teach Shakespeare which consequently enhances their students' understanding. An overwhelming 98% of teachers said that the Festival had enhanced their pupils' understanding of their chosen play. Participation in the Festival has particularly helped in understanding character, plot and language.

This greater depth in understanding is starting to translate into grades, with teachers reporting back on how participation is impacting on exam grades:

*"Embedding SSF into curriculum lead to best results ever for school. I'll email the figures to you soon. Don't know whether the penny will have dropped at this school but I'm certain that the SSF experience cemented all the As and A*s."*

- Gail Borrow, Head of Drama, Wellington School, Somerset

"They [the students] have all learnt so much and their depth of understanding of the play is excellent. They have produced some thoroughly pleasing essays on the back of the work they have done on the play."

- Dominique Norris, English Teacher, Ormiston Bushfield Academy, Peterborough

By engaging with Shakespeare through performance, teachers like Andrew Cooley, (English Teacher, St Alban's Academy, Birmingham) hope to change the perception of English. *"I wanted them to see that it wasn't just about taking an exam but actually there's a lot more to it, because we are very focussed on functionality and we've got to get them to express and enjoy it as well. In two years' time we'll have a sixth form and these students will be the first ones to go into the sixth form. We're offering English Literature A-Level so I think there'll be an effect there."*

Educational

Through taking part in the Shakespeare Schools Festival 87% of students were clearer of the meaning of Shakespeare's language.

"My students gained sound knowledge and understanding of the plot and characters and felt confident in using Shakespeare's language - it broke down the barriers"

- Lucy Cordingley, Teacher, Reddish Vale Technology College, Stockport

The Festival also impacts on the core curriculum:

- 64% of teachers felt that the Festival fulfilled requirements for core curriculum.
- Participation in the Festival can contribute to GCSE coursework, English Key Stage 3/4 and studying the texts. AQA, OCR, Edexcel all support SSF as an introduction to teaching Shakespeare.

Teachers also mentioned the additional benefits of encouraging, supporting and developing speaking and listening skills and expanding drama.

Case Study - Lea Manor School, Luton performed *Othello* at Lea Manor Theatre

As an English teacher, Maura Ryan had never directed a Shakespeare play until she took part in SSF. The process of putting together a play – the games, the line learning, character development, movement and performance – led the cast to discover a new found joy and confidence in English.

Before SSF, the cast thought Shakespeare was all about **“big gowns... tights”** but through performance, as Cassius neatly puts it: **“we made it our own”**. Daniel, 14, played Othello. Speaking about his experience of SSF, he says, **“I didn’t like Shakespeare until Othello. It’s different on the stage. Now when I read it I can picture it as how I’d say it. I wrap myself around the language and then you begin to love Shakespeare.”** Performing –speaking the words and being the character–gives young people ownership of Shakespeare; it becomes theirs. Daniel went on to say, **“I think the language is why it’s hard. [To understand it] You need to say it how you say it, act it how you act it.”** Students connect and understand Shakespeare on a personal and academic level in performance; they bring the plays alive for themselves. Speaking about his character, Othello, Daniel says **‘I’ve been through those things, I’ve been in love, I’ve been sad and I’ve definitely been angry. So I understand him.’**

The cast from *Othello*, are now studying *Romeo and Juliet* in English. The girl playing Aemilia says, **‘I can understand Romeo and Juliet better now [having done SSF], I get the language.’** As a result, the cast now support their peers when studying other Shakespeare plays. Gemma, who played Desdemona, describes this: **‘while doing Romeo and Juliet in class, we got into groups, with at least two or three people from each group that did Othello to help the rest. ... It’s frustrating when the other students don’t get it. I want to tell them all about Shakespeare!’** The cast use the abridged Shakespeare plays as a way into the original full-length texts. The cast **‘put the abridged Romeo and Juliet next to the real one so I can get it more easily. The story is easier to see’**.

Maura Ryan, reflecting on how positively doing SSF has impacted on the cast’s achievement in English, comments: **‘I think we [English Teachers] need not just to sit in the classroom, we need to get children on their feet. We [Lea Manor High School] now do drama for English once a week with the Year Sevens’**.

For a young person the feeling of mastering Shakespeare is like no other. Shakespeare is, by many young people, felt to be the territory of other people: perhaps people that go to different schools, come from different families or people they think are smarter than them. Daniel says, **‘I’m even more of a lover of English now, because of Shakespeare, because it is Shakespeare.’** In mastering Shakespeare, young people are breaking down internal barriers and awakening to the realisation that, with time and work, they can ‘achieve greatness’. Speaking of this self-belief, Cassius says **‘doing Shakespeare made you feel so confident about English’**, whilst Aemelia went one step further: **‘I feel big headed in English now!’**

Ofsted Recognition

SSF continues to be recognised by Ofsted. SSF's process gives teachers the professional development and confidence to teach Shakespeare. Lambeth Academy's Festival performance of Othello was celebrated in the school's Ofsted report. In the personal development and well-being section, inspectors noted:

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The majority of students get on well with each other. They show good understanding of the wide range of cultural heritage groups that attend the academy and clearly enjoy expressing themselves through mediums such as dance, drama and music. The academy's highly acclaimed production of 'Othello' provides a good example of this. Students are also proud to celebrate each other's achievements and successes.

With direct reference to Tanbridge House School in Horsham's participation in SSF, Ofsted noted *"the good quality of leadership throughout the school is driving the development of teaching and learning..."*

This type of recognition by Ofsted proves the significant value the Festival adds to a school's wider development aims for their students. The Festival has also been mentioned in the Ofsted report for the Dorin Park Special School:

The school's specialist status has helped improve opportunities for all the pupils with performing arts, great theatrical productions are taking place throughout the year, such as the 'Story of Esther' and 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. Everybody makes good use of the school grounds and there are a number of lunchtime clubs, and a 'Shakespeare' after-school club, which are well attended. The specialist status of the school has helped performing arts develop well with regular play productions and workshops for the community and local schools.

Additionally, the OFTSTED report for Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Special School included the following:

QEII is an outstanding school....We especially enjoyed Twelfth Night.

Personal and Social impact

"SSF opened a door that you have to step through. Just going to school and coming home isn't enough. People always tell you they want to be these things like a lawyer or a footballer or an actor; saying it is nothing - you can sit at home playing your playstation and wait for things to come to you. Taking an opportunity like this, you never know where it's going to go. Going out and grabbing opportunities - this has been that."

- **Lucentio (The Taming of the Shrew), Mill Hill County High School**

The Festival experience differs for every school and young person involved. The table below shows the varying responses of five schools around the UK.

Table 1: What the students gain from the Festival

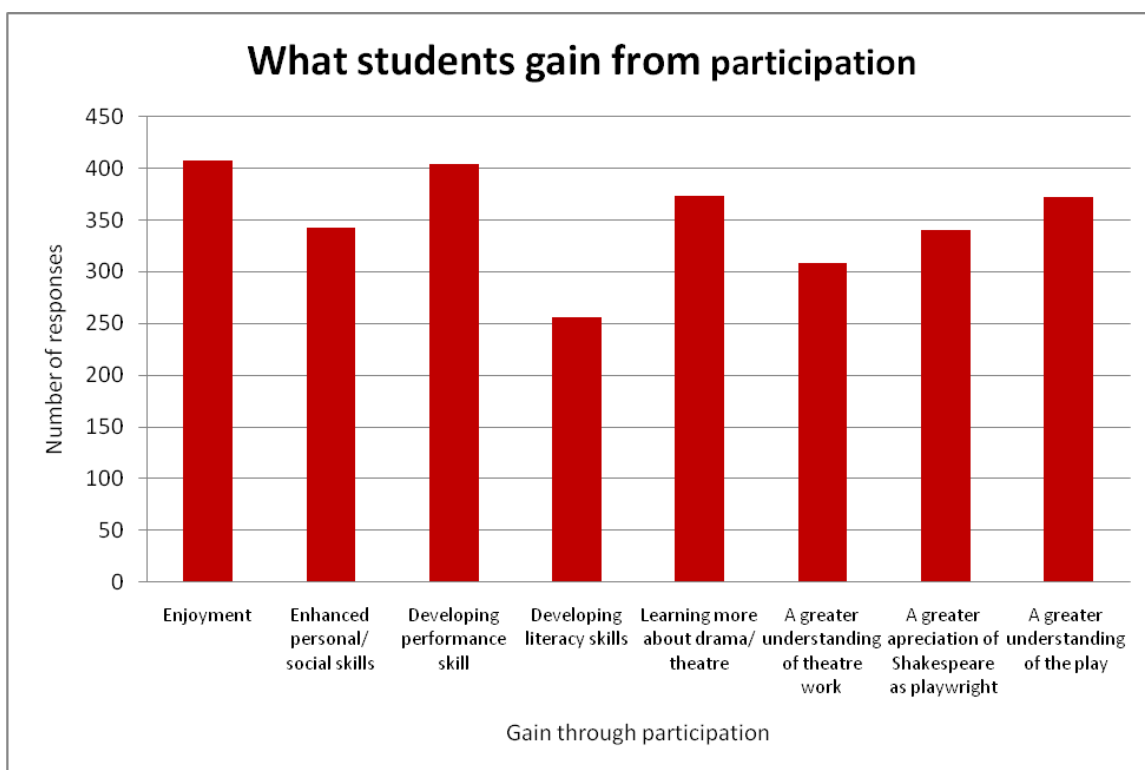
School	What did you most enjoy about SSF?	Main Personal and Life Skill acquired
Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Luton	Making friends with people they hadn't met before	Taking and giving useful criticism
St. Columba's Catholic Boys' School, Bexley	Supporting and learning from peers	Improving concentration and learning to be patient

Shotton Hall School, Durham	Being able to develop teamwork skills	Working harder for a purpose and taking responsibility
Shuttleworth College, Lancashire	Being able to develop teamwork skills	Greater confidence and working hard for a purpose
Oasis Academy Brightstowe, Bristol	Supporting peers and developing teamwork skills	Greater confidence

Every school attributes the Festival with boosting the confidence of their cast members and getting to know new people. Beyond that each young person also gets different personal and life skills from the project.

The Festival appeals to teachers for a number of reasons. Teachers place a lot of emphasis on cast enjoyment and the opportunity to work in a professional theatre. 82% of teachers felt that cast enjoyment was a crucial part of, and a key benefit of taking part in the Festival.

"I got a real boost in confidence feeling I was good enough to work in a professional theatre." - **Sean, Student, City Technology College, Birmingham**



Our ethos of celebrating non-competitiveness enables all young people to leave the theatre with a sense of their own achievement; all feedback is positive and the success of each school's journey is measured according to their own requirements.

Teachers responded that enjoyment and developing performance skills are important outcomes of the participation. 80% felt the process had enhanced students' personal and social skills.

"Even before the production has taken place, I know that the rehearsals and all that the festival has entailed has been helpful. My family has gone through a lot recently, but this production has helped keep things going and allows for a lot of wonderful creativity."

- **John, Parent of performer**

The Festival also offers the family and friends of the young performer the rare opportunity to watch four different Shakespeare plays in one evening. At the end of the programme, as they step confidently out onto a professional stage to the sound of applause from peers and family; the majority experience their most profound sense of accomplishment and respect yet. For a lot of the students taking part this is the first time their parents have seen them on a professional stage;

"My parents went on about it for a few years and I'm sure they'll go on about it till I'm really old like 30, but they really enjoyed it. My dad was telling my barber and everyone; when I was getting my haircut my barber started asking me about theatre."

Hortensio (*The Taming of the Shrew*) Mill Hill County High School, London

Overall an overwhelming 98% of students enjoyed taking part and would participate in the Festival again.

Students were asked what the opportunity to act on stage meant to them:

- 84% developed their acting skills
- 83% enjoyed performing in front of an audience
- 69% had the opportunity to demonstrate their talents
- 67% valued working alongside professionals
- 65% appreciated the feeling of being treated like a professional

SSF's approach and practice enables students to take ownership of the project, developing their personal skills such as self-discipline, time-keeping, commitment, team-working and peer mentoring. Students are trained in Health & Safety in each theatre, and are required to take responsibility for themselves and their fellow cast members throughout the rehearsal and performance process. The students are encouraged to support and motivate each other.

As a direct result of taking part in the Shakespeare Schools Festival:

- 91% of students became more confident
- 91% were able to take and give useful criticism
- 90% worked harder for a purpose
- 88% took responsibility for something
- 86% improved their ability to concentrate
- 81% overcame their fears about performance/public speaking
- 81% were able get along with people they didn't know
- 78% learned to be more patient

68% (283) of the participants rehearsed for the Festival in their own time: after school and during lunch. A further 20% of schools had rehearsals during both lessons and after school, 12% of schools integrate the Festival into their school timetable.

As part of the cast:

- 89% of students developed teamwork skills
- 81% supported their peers
- 72% learnt from their peers

"I just cannot describe their elation and the unforgettable experience they had. They were walking on air and want desperately to perform again, do another play and so on, they cannot be contained. When you think, they learnt about three Shakespeare plays in one go. It has done so much for their confidence and self-esteem and theatrical experience and to have the positive feedback from the three teachers and families who attended from Denbigh" - **Mary Casey, Teacher, Denbigh High, Luton**

Artistic Excellence



We asked teachers what they believed the effect of the Festival had been on the school; had the Festival enhanced drama in their school? An overwhelming 86% of teachers said that participation in the Festival had strengthened the teaching and learning of drama in their school.

We work with regional theatres across the UK to give participants a professional experience. 80 theatres from Inverness to the Isle of Wight, Cardigan to Norwich are involved to get the maximum regional spread. For theatres, the Festival is an opportunity to open its doors to the local community and develop its audience:

“Just wanted to say how much we enjoyed hosting the two nights of Shakespeare Schools Festival. The performances were amazing. It was great to see the theatre full of new people and although it was exhausting I am already looking forward to next year!”
- **Fliiss Pocock, Theatre Coordinator, The Old Laundry Theatre, Windermere**

Although the Festival is primarily a project aimed to increase access to the arts, the tools and resources provided often produce some inspired productions. Performances often reflect diverse culture and language and find inspiration in current affairs and issues which the teenagers find relevant to their lives – from the recession, to the frivolity of the rise of celebrity culture.

Memorable performances from 2010 include;

- Redmoor High School set *The Comedy of Errors* on the stage of a silent movie in the early 1900s.
- Kirkintilloch High School staged *Romeo and Juliet* against the backdrop of sectarianism in Glasgow, having the two protagonists from opposing sides of the Old Firm divide.
- Twynham School's *Much Ado About Nothing* was set in post Second World War England. Instead of the returning soldiers winning a war, the school portrayed them as a victorious village cricket team coming to stay with the local squire and magistrate.

Our success lies in the fact that we encourage teachers to give creative control to the young actors. Through understanding the story, character and language of the play the actors realise the relevance of Shakespeare's work. We provide character notes, production diaries and breakdowns of themes to encourage earlier starts to rehearsals.

“What you offer youngsters is priceless - the opportunity to perform the work of the greatest playwright in history - the chance to recognise how great his stories really are and how they only truly come to life in performance - as they were written for- then there is the opportunity to work with the National Theatre - one of our greatest institutions -

and meeting other schools going through the same experience - watching their development in ten minute and then later, full runs - congratulating /praising them - the social interaction and general camaraderie - then the final event itself in a packed theatre - the nerves, the excitement - the final performance and that appreciative audience applauding your play and recognising all your hard work - it is wholly magical and the buzz that live theatre performance brings cannot be beaten."

- **John Clayton, Teacher, St. Paul's Catholic College, Brighton**

We recruit and train established actors and directors to work with the schools on their performance in the theatre; reports from venue staff confirm the quality of the shows:

"A great ensemble cast who told the story playfully and truthfully with a great sense of timing. The honest portrayal of characterisation and dialogue was realised and sustained throughout. The cast worked brilliantly as a cohesive group supporting each other admirably and playing the space in an inventive and imaginative way capturing the real essence of the story. They revelled in the performance, demonstrating real enjoyment, confidence and maturity. There was such a clear understanding and delivery of the text."

Dale Rooks, Venue Director

"Excellent all male production...Intelligent and heartfelt with clarity and very good verse speaking". **Mark France, Venue Director**

7. Transferable Skills

For Teachers:

"Sharing experiences with other professionals is always the best way to learn new skills and be exposed to different teaching ideas."

- **Rebecca Farrow, Teacher, Drayton Manor High School, Middlesex**

Much of the Festival's unique appeal lies in the way it skills teachers. For teachers most of their training is acquired during the National Theatre teacher workshops and developed throughout the rehearsal and performance period:

- 94% of teachers felt that their SSF experience would benefit other teachers and/or the whole school.
- 90% of teachers found the workshop useful in engaging the students
- 88% said the workshop provided the maximum opportunity for encouraging student ownership

The workshop is an integral part of the Festival experience. Teachers who are feeling overwhelmed or worried by the project gain huge confidence from the day. They come face to face with the enormity and scale of the Festival but by meeting other teachers in similar positions they gain a sense of unity and reassurance.

Through the Festival process:

- 71% of teachers developed directing skills
- 63% gained a greater confidence with the text
- 61% improved in teaching drama as a process

For Students:

We ask each school to provide marketing students, who are responsible for promoting their production in the school and local community. This allows students who want to be part of the production, but don't want to be on stage, to get involved.

"Our Press and Marketing manager will be in Year 10 next year and is studying both GCSE Media Studies and GCSE Applied Performing Arts, so this position will be an invaluable part of her coursework portfolio in both subjects. The whole press aspect is a fabulous idea and fits in totally with our educational philosophy!"

- **Eddie Brierley, Teacher, St. Monica's RC High School, Manchester**

8. Working in Partnerships

Since SSF's inception, we have commissioned a number of high calibre organisations to deliver workshops. Partnerships are key to the delivery of a high quality experience.

National Theatre

This workshop is designed to inspire and support all teachers, regardless of their level of experience in directing Shakespeare with young people. The CPD day empowers teachers to work confidently with Shakespeare and embrace the challenge of having to hold the roles of both director and teacher at the same time.

The workshop provides a balanced day of work on text, voice and staging, a toolkit of useful techniques and exercises for rehearsal and the classroom, approaches to directing that emphasises student learning and clear performance and the opportunity to share feedback and advice with peers and tutors.

Purple Patch Arts

SSF offers a workshop in inclusive performance for teachers working with students with disabilities and difficulties, delivered by specialists Purple Patch Arts. The workshop offers a valuable opportunity for teachers to explore creative solutions to the challenges they face in conversation with professional practitioners and other teachers in similar situations.

National Youth Theatre (NYT)

Each cast receives a half day workshop, alongside another school, with the NYT. On this half day the Festival suddenly becomes real for the young people as they meet another school performing on the same night, share their work in progress, and benefit from acting tips and techniques from experienced NYT actors and directors. Every effort is made to ensure that the young people see the stage on which they will be performing. Many SSF participants have gone on to join the National Youth Theatre, using the skills of teamwork, discipline and communication encountered in their SSF experience.

"I have not chosen the most gregarious students; I've chosen the students who are less confident and less able...because of the SSF experience, I had 10 students put themselves forward for NYT auditions..."

- **Gail Borrow, Teacher, Wellington School, Somerset**

9. Working with other arts and education organisations

We have started a partnership with **Arts Award**, a national qualification which supports young people's development as artists and arts leaders. Young people submit portfolios detailing their artistic achievement which is set in collaboration with an Arts Awards specialist to achieve Bronze, Silver or Gold. Our schools are already running Arts Award and have commented on the match, especially to Bronze. An SSF student from Beckfoot School in Bingley has gained a Gold Arts Award. We are formalising the partnership with Arts Award, actively encouraging and promoting the relationship.

A further partnership link has been made with **Teach First**, an independent charity aiming to bring excellent teachers into challenged secondary schools across the UK, who address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields. The collaboration with Teach First is an effective way for us to access innovative teachers who would relish the challenge of directing a production.

10. SSF and the current education agenda

There are several policy developments and debates over the last year with which SSF feels that it has special resonance. To demonstrate this we have submitted responses to the DfE Curriculum Consultation, the Henley Review on Cultural Education and the National Campaign for the Arts call for Evidence.

Particular areas of interest and correlation include:

Teaching Standards

The Schools' White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* has mapped out the current Government's intentions to raise the standards of teaching and teachers in this country.

SSF is in a unique position as an arts-education charity because we put teachers at the heart of everything we do. The professional development of a teacher leaves a living legacy in each school that we work in - an individual skilled to use their new Shakespeare expertise in and out of the classroom.

SSF has already engaged with the agenda for the reform of teacher training and increased standards in this area by helping TeachFirst in their training for English Teachers and in meeting with Future Leaders to promote our work.

Reform of the National Curriculum

The Government's review of the National Curriculum has focused debate on the nature of 'essential' subjects and the freedom to innovate.

SSF has submitted its thoughts to the DfE National Curriculum Review including

- recommending statutory Shakespearean content coupled with increased training to ensure the delivery is enjoyable and empowering for educators and learners
- the inclusion of English literature in the English Baccalaureate
- serious provision for a greater emphasis on the communication skills needed by employers and for further and higher education.

Bridging the attainment gap

In his statement on the Teaching White Paper in February 2011 Michael Gove said: *“Social mobility has gone backwards - and it is the mission of this coalition Government to reverse that melancholy trend and make opportunity more equal - so we can become an aspiration nation once more...”*

SSF believes that it helps to bridge the attainment gap and provides social cohesion through Shakespeare. Our process is specifically designed to bring together young people from diverse backgrounds - on any one night an Independent School, a Grammar School, a Special School and an inner city Comprehensive could perform together in a culture, as Gove puts it *“of ambition, aspiration and achievement”*.

Literacy and a classical education

In Michael Gove's speech to conference in October 2010 he said that *“Our literature is the best in the world – it is every child's birthright and we should be proud to teach it in every school. And, more than that, it is every child's right to be taught how to communicate clearly.”*

SSF has long believed in the value of access to Shakespeare especially for those teachers who do not believe that their young people are capable of this engagement, and for young people who have found traditional classroom teaching of the plays boring and perceive theatre to be elitist.

Unusually for arts-education providers, because we provide teachers with classroom skills and help young people to become more articulate, we fulfil both of Gove's stipulations..

Innovative schools

The Government's drive to release schools to work independently of local authority control and to have greater autonomy over the use of their budgets has represented an opportunity for us.

After their second year of SSF in 2010, the ARK Federation has made SSF part of their core offer to their schools. For 2011 all the Harris Academies are taking part.

Skills for the workplace

The CBI's annual education and skills survey has found that almost half of top employers had to invest in remedial training for school and college leavers. In this environment SSF offers a unique way to increase articulacy and ambitious communication, as confirmed by the Government's own Communications Champion.

“As the Government's Communications Champion I am always delighted to find creative solutions to the communication difficulties that – too often – beset our children and young people. Participating in the Shakespeare Schools Festival is one very good way in which young people can access and use a new, sophisticated language. Through this they develop confidence and become more articulate.

I was especially inspired by a student who said that before playing Desdemona in Othello with SSF she didn't know how important language was. Now, instead of just relying on slang she knows ‘that every vowel, every word, every letter matters.’

It is harder than ever for young people to enter the workplace and it is impossible to underestimate how important appropriate language and communication is to this – this charity helps with these vital life skills that have never been needed more. It is

especially delightful to see the young people appropriate Shakespeare's complex and beautiful language and through its intricacies find expression for themselves and their everyday lives, elevating and expanding their day to day vocabulary and opening their eyes to the vital importance of appropriate and ambitious communication."

SEN and tackling low expectations

The Government's Green Paper on Disability and SEN provision *Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability* makes wide-ranging proposals to respond to the frustrations of children and young people, their families and the professionals who work with them.

As documented above, SSF has considerable experience in working with Special Schools and SEN students in and out of mainstream settings. The beauty of Shakespeare is both its inherent rigour and accessibility. Given the right tools a teacher can engage a whole class, stretching the gifted and talented and giving SEN students opportunities for effective learning. SSF has the in-house expertise in this area and continues to demonstrate how, through our process, young people can defy their own and others' expectations.

The biggest compliment to the Festival is that 96% of schools responded that they would take part again.

At its most basic the Festival boosts confidence and self-esteem. At its most profound it leaves a lasting impression...*"I met a student last week who took part in the first production of Tempest 5 years ago, who is really profoundly handicapped and in her 20's now and she left us some time ago but she looked at me and said 'Full fathom five thy father lies' she didn't even say hello, just those words. We feel like we've given them something very special."*



The Future

Over the past few years Primary Schools have expressed an interest in participating in the Shakespeare Schools Festival. Their involvement provides an innovative and exciting way to introduce Shakespeare's language and stories to an even younger audience. The experience of South Rise Primary School has proven the case for growth into the primary sector. **For the 2011 Festival SSF has extended its offer to primary schools.**

Case Study – South Rise Primary School, Greenwich – performed *Julius Caesar* at the House of Lords and the BT Tower

“SSF has exposed our children to another way of thinking and talking.”

– Soheila Mathison, Head Teacher

According to the Head Teacher of the largest primary school in the Greenwich LEA, serving 650 children from 45 different nationalities, many of whose parents are first generation immigrants and asylum seekers, *“participation will put [pupils] on a far better, stronger footing in secondary school than children who haven't gone through the experience.”*

When the children from Yr 6 were told that they were going to do Shakespeare their response was *“are we going to be a posh school now?”*

Mirielle, aged ten, who played Mark Antony is from Ghana. She says she volunteered to take part because *“I wanted it to teach me to be more responsible, like to learn my lines or to speak to an audience.”* After playing Brutus, 10 year old Melissa said *“I think other primary schools should also do Shakespeare because it will teach everyone to work as a group and get along, and all the words in Latin – it will help you when you go to your secondary school or when you get older.”* Adam, playing Cassius, agreed: *“I liked to be in this play because I thought it would teach me how to be less shy and not fuss over little stuff.”*

Participation became a family affair. As Teacher Director, Jenny Chapman, says, *“the parents were incredibly supportive. They wanted their children to do it. I think there's some gravitas about Shakespeare.”* When Jenny Chapman invited Mirielle's mother in to discuss the extra work load, it transpired that Mirielle's maternal grandfather in Ghana had named all his children after Shakespearean characters, and that her mother was named Olivia, though Olivia didn't know which play she was from and had never seen or read a Shakespeare play. To her family's pride, Mirielle has gone on to perform at the House of Lords and the BT Tower.

“If you go into it with the expectation that they will understand the themes and that they are relevant to them, they rise to the occasion.”

– Jenny Chapman, Deputy Head

Conclusion

SSF is for everyone. Although each journey, for teacher and student, is inevitably unique, SSF is a proven way of engaging young people - initially in the story of their play and the language of the world's most celebrated playwright and ultimately in their futures.

SSF is not about creating actors. It is about showing young people their own potential – and showcasing it to their teachers, family and peers. SSF is demanding and consequently demonstrates the valuable lesson that the more you put in the more you get out. We expect the best from each and every cast member, no matter how small their role, we treat them as professionals, and we raise the bar. And our evaluation proves that young people respond to this treatment overwhelmingly positively.

SSF is not an add-on, nor a luxury. It's a new way of teaching that impacts on core curricular subjects and on personal skills for life. It brings four local schools together, celebrates diversity and promotes community interaction and pride.

Most new teachers and students embark on the SSF experience with reservations. They fear the subject matter and they fear personal failure. For the 2011 Festival 58% of teachers returned again buoyed by the reactions of their students. The Shakespeare Schools Festival gives them something they cannot find elsewhere.

“After the play I thought maybe I could do this again. I’m not a Shakespeare fan. But when you act it out it’s sort of 10 times different. The story line just comes out to you. Because you’re actually acting it out... That was the first time I’d performed in front of an audience and after that there’s no stopping me now. I’ll do anything. There’s just something about it that just turns it into something else.... The whole experience, the whole experience just blows you away.”

- **Servant, Macbeth, Cooper School, Milton Keynes**