

The PG Award for Actors has been developed as part of the RSC's partnership with the University of Warwick, through the experimental and innovative CAPITAL (Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning) Centre. This is another example of the RSC reaching beyond its own theatre to connect with and make new communities of interest between artists and academics. The CAPITAL partnership between Warwick and the RSC provided the fertile ground to develop this programme, which has now successfully attracted future funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.



The course has reinforced my belief, knowledge and trust in drama and theatre as essential for life.

The Histories ensemble PG Award actor

By reclaiming the ensemble acting tradition from an earlier period of theatre history, the RSC has transformed the idea of an actor from one who is hired solely to perform on stage to one of a dedicated professional forging new relationships both with other actors and with their audiences and wider community. The commitment to both longer contracts and longer and more intensive rehearsal periods than is usually the case provide the opportunity for developing a new breed of professionalised stage actor. This unique development of an ensemble of actors who perform to the highest standards as well as developing the skills to teach and engage young people in theatre heralds a new age for actors, combining their artistry with an active commitment to the artistic and social communities they belong to.

The sense of ensemble is vital for creating a secure environment for the students where no value judgements are made.

The Winter's Tale PG Award actor

THE RSC ENSEMBLE OF TEACHING ARTISTS

Six actors from the ensemble performing *The Winter's Tale* are training to become skilled young people's workshop leaders. A five day training programme has run alongside their rehearsals for *The Winter's Tale* and *Julius Caesar* as part of a unique ensemble based project. Adam Burton, Hannah Young, James Gale, Joseph Arkley, Tunji Kasim and Samantha Young are preparing to act beyond the RSC stage and take their skills and knowledge of Shakespeare's plays into schools and colleges.

They are the third group of RSC actors to train for this work and by the time tonight's ensemble open the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 2011, a quarter of them will have completed this training and be actively involved in leading Shakespeare workshops with young people.

ACTING BEYOND THE STAGE



Jonothan Neelands

Professor of Drama and Theatre Education
Course Leader PG Award Teaching Shakespeare for Actors
Institute of Education, University of Warwick

**THE POST GRADUATE AWARD IN
TEACHING SHAKESPEARE FOR ACTORS**

In return the actors develop a new sense of the power and relevance of Shakespeare, and of their own work as actors, from the responses and energy of the young people they work with. They train with the RSC's own education practitioners and internationally recognised drama and theatre educators at the University of Warwick. They learn the practical skills and understanding needed to design and deliver workshops, which encourage young people to make the same kinds of creative and interpretive choices with the plays as actors and directors must in the rehearsal process. In this way young people come to understand that as well as being great play texts in a literary sense, the plays are also great texts to play with artistically and creatively; allowing them to find new and fresh ways to make Shakespeare speak for them and their worlds.

I think any form of creative teaching always expands your own knowledge, as well as the students' knowledge. It frees up your opinions and views on things which can only enhance you as a performer.

The Histories ensemble PG Award actor

The first day of training for this ensemble brought the actors together with a group of young people from a girls' school in London with a rich and diverse cultural mix. The day focused on a journey of discovery into the characters of Hamlet and Ophelia, stressing themes of love, betrayal, identity and parental pressure which were alive for the young people taking part. By the end of the day, the differences between pupils and actors blurred, as the group began to take on the qualities of an ensemble committed to exploring the play through action and reflection. For the actors and the young people the journey was beginning.

I learnt that the key to successful workshops is mutual respect, a great belief and passion in what you are doing and that this work can not only benefit in an academic way but also in respect of human growth. It is a self-esteem tool unlike any other.

The Histories ensemble PG Award actor

Much of the training takes place in the context of the RSC Learning and Performance Network, which is a community of schools across England working together with the RSC's Education Department to transform the teaching of Shakespeare and improve the quality of learning for pupils. The Post Graduate Award in Teaching Shakespeare for Actors sits alongside other qualifications being offered to teachers in the Learning and Performance Network. Taken together these initiatives represent a significant investment by the RSC in developing and supporting an active rehearsal room approach to teaching and learning Shakespeare, which is designed to nurture lifelong pleasure and engagement with his plays for all young people.

The course helped me to realise that rehearsal room techniques are not at all in conflict with the learning taking place in classrooms, but actually represent current thinking as to best practice in this area.

The Histories ensemble PG Award actor

A NEW THEATRE FOR A NEW VISION

These teaching artists, reaching out from the RSC to a wider audience and community, represent the aspirations of the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre to be part of the life of its communities – near and far.

I would like to encourage young people to find the richness within Shakespeare's plays, to get past the received idea that Shakespeare is boring or irrelevant to young people.

The Winter's Tale PG Award actor

The artist's impression of the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre, which appears in this season's programmes, promises a theatre that is much more than an auditorium. At the heart of the project is an exciting new thrust stage which will connect more directly with its audiences and, in so doing, encourage the social and shared enjoyment of theatre going. Beyond the auditorium itself there are new public spaces for meeting, eating and drinking, passing through, education and actor development, amongst many other possible social activities. These public spaces connect the theatre both to its local community in Stratford and also to the wider communities of theatre goers, young people, the artists and others who will be drawn to these spaces, which have been designed for sharing and being together.

I learnt that everybody has a 'way in' to Shakespeare, as unique as they are, and that with the right tools every student can engage, appropriate and enjoy Shakespeare's plays, stories, characters and psychology.

The Histories ensemble PG Award actor

Whilst the plays performed on the stage at the new theatre will still be the centrepiece of the RSC's work, the reach of the power of Shakespeare's drama extends beyond the building, to embrace national and international tours but also workshops with a wide range of local and other communities, including schools and colleges and a wide range of abilities involving the most talented young performers of the future as well as young people with special needs. The new theatre promises to be much more than an exciting building. The PG Award is one example of the transformed vision of theatre represented by the new building and the ensemble approach to theatre making.