



TCG

THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

CENTERPIECE

FOCUS ON: EDUCATION

• • • •

PARTNERING WITH TEACHERS

BY DANIEL RENNER

It seems as though every time I pick up a newspaper these days, there are always several articles or letters to the editor bemoaning the quality of teaching (or lack thereof) in today's public schools. The current debate in the media and many state legislatures is often centered on how best to make teachers more accountable. Should they be penalized, rewarded or completely retrained? It certainly has been the cause for a lot of speeches and proposals on the presidential campaign trail this election year.

Regardless of your stance on the situation, all of our theatres are involved in some way with this issue. Although our primary concern is the creation and presentation of plays, we know that the cultivation of future audiences is fundamental to our survival. Teachers have long been some of our strongest advocates and best partners by bringing young people to our theatres. In previous *Centerpieces*, education directors have talked about their programs that go out into the schools to interact directly with the students. With this edition, I wanted to look at how some organizations are using their resources to directly affect the teachers themselves.

There are so many different kinds of teacher training programs being offered by theatres across the country that I thought it might be useful to look at different programs that both used Shakespeare as the focus of their work. With that in mind, I invited two organizations to write about their programs for training teachers. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) has been developing their approach since 1949. Teachers come from not only the nearby western states, but as far away as Minnesota, Texas and Canada to participate in the program. I want to thank Joan Langley, Education Director at OSF, who was kind enough to take time out of a very busy schedule of teaching teachers to write about what they are doing in Ashland. Meanwhile, across the country, Robert Moyer, director of the School of Drama high school and summer programs at the North Carolina School of Arts, was equally generous in his willingness to track down Gerald Freedman, Dean of the School of Drama at the North Carolina School of Arts, and Patrick Spottiswoode, director of Education at the International Shakespeare Globe Centre in London, to talk about their international collaboration to train high school teachers in the North Carolina public school system. Both programs are aimed at guiding teachers to a richer and more visceral understanding of theatre and the work that we do. They also are both motivated by a desire to be ongoing partners with those teachers in the development of curriculum and, as Gerald Freedman says, "transferring the torch."

Education *Centerpiece* curator: Daniel Renner, Director of Education, Denver Center Theatre Company
Copyright © 2000 by Theatre Communications Group, Inc. All articles reproduced by permission of the authors. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form, or by any means, including photocopying, without written permission from the publisher or author. Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 355 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 697-5230, fax (212) 983-4847, website: www.tcg.org. Ben Cameron, Executive Director; Joan Channick, Deputy Director; Christopher Shuff, Director of Management Programs; Laurie Baskin, Director of Government &

DESTINATION: SHAKESPEARE

BY JOAN LANGLEY

Oregon Shakespeare Festival founder Angus L. Bowmer, a teacher himself, wrote that "Any good teacher must be an active learner." He knew that educating young theatregoers is essential to theatre's future, and that teachers play a key part. OSF first offered teacher training in 1949.

In the vital task of keeping theatre alive for future generations, teachers and the Festival work together in a partnership based on a fair exchange of services. We depend on teachers to offer students experiences that will inspire a lifelong love of theatre and literature. At the most practical level, we depend on some of the teachers we reach to do the work to bring their student to the plays. In return, we provide assistance, validation and support for the teachers in a variety of ways: study materials for individual plays, an extensive school visit (outreach) program, classes for teachers, and a multitude of activities for student groups when they come to the Festival.

Because OSF presents three or four plays by Shakespeare each season, we focus our teacher classes on the texts and productions of those plays, demonstrating potential "classroom-stage" connections through discussions with the director, dramaturg and actors, and through a great variety of exercises. Weekend classes during the school year concentrate on one play; week-long classes in the summer draw material from many plays. When the participating teachers spend the afternoon playing games with speeches from *Henry V*, for example, and see the play that evening, they have an experience they can recreate for their students: the thrill of working with a piece of literature, then "owning" it — that is, recognizing it, understanding it, remembering it with the whole body. The exercises can be applied to any piece of literature (and, we have discovered through our partnership with teachers, to history, science and math as well).

As an illustration, for *Henry V*, we developed an exercise which we call "The Glories and Horrors of War." Each

participant is assigned a phrase expressing either the glory of war ("Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars / And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day" 4, 3, 47-48, for example) or the horror ("Your naked infants spitted upon pikes, / Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused / Do break the clouds" 3, 3, 121-123). Step by step, we guide them through exercises to help them become more comfortable in presenting the phrase both vocally and physically — saying it in various ways (whispering, as though speaking to someone across a football field), for instance; performing a physical action while saying the words; conversing with the others using only the phrase. Then the two groups (the "glories" and the "horrors") put their phrases together in collages. They must decide the order in which the images will be presented, how loud or soft each will be, where the people will be placed (sitting, standing, crouching, lying on the floor), which phrases will be repeated, which spoken in chorus, how they will move during the performance, and so on. To complete the exercise, each group presents its collage with the objective of convincing the other group that its view of war is right.

We conclude each exercise with a time of reflection, asking, "How would you use this in your classroom?" The question always generates an enthusiastic exchange of practical applications. In the case of "The Glories and Horrors of War," suggestions included assigning the students to comb the text for the speeches rather than giving them ready-made lists, partnering with a history teacher on a literature-and-history assignment, finding historical passages (the speeches of Winston Churchill, for example) to support the points of view, using other works of literature on the same themes, and creating visual collages that express the material of the word collages.

Teachers are eager for new ways to excite their students. Our classes provide a forum where they can meet their peers,

exchange ideas and form support networks.

Because OSF is a destination theatre, we make contact with teachers from elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges in a multi-state region. Developing close partnerships with hundreds of them is impossible. Yet, over the years, I have formed relationships with many highly committed people, some of them hundreds of miles away. They include playgoing at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in their curricula, and they make full use of everything we have to offer. We are friends and partners even though we see each other only a couple of times a year.

Ironically, OSF has greater success nurturing teachers far away than those in our own backyard. We are currently working to find ways of partnering with them while maintaining the existing programs and relationships.

Still, we are proud of the things we are doing right. In an article about OSF's Teachers' Symposia in the January 2000 issue of *Teacher* magazine written by Rachel Hardigan, an alumna was interviewed after she had taken some new ideas back to her classroom: "Adina Lawson's ... students certainly have become Shakespeare fans since she returned from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. The Eureka, California, teacher reports that three of them came to school sick one day this past fall rather than miss *Romeo and Juliet*. Lawson ... credits the activities she learned at the Festival with exciting her students — and herself. She describes how her kids kicked pillows to emphasize the changing thoughts in a speech, danced in a reenactment of the Capulet ball, and stood on their desks brandishing swords. 'I'm getting chills just talking about it,' she says."

Joan Langley is Director of Education and the OSF Institute at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

TRANSFERRING THE TORCH

A conversation conducted by Robert Moyer with Gerald Freedman and Patrick Spottiswoode on a collaborative program designed to improve the teaching of Shakespeare at the high school level.

Gerald Freedman is the dean of the School of Drama at the North Carolina School of Arts, an Obie Award-winning director, and former artistic director of the New York Shakespeare Festival. He has staged multiple productions of 26 Shakespeare plays and this summer will be the first American director at Shakespeare's Globe.

Patrick Spottiswoode has been the director of Globe Education since 1989 at the International Shakespeare Globe Centre, which now serves more than 25,000 students annually. He has designed English and history curricula and is on the London faculties of Notre Dame, St. Lawrence, and Washington Universities, as well as University of Connecticut.

Robert Moyer, Shakespeare Lives! director, is also the director of the School of Drama high school and summer programs at the North Carolina School of Arts and has been involved in innovative arts education programs for more than 25 years. He founded and directs United Stage, a nationally recognized touring story theatre company.

In January 1998, with the encouragement of the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, the North Carolina School of Arts (NCSA) and the International Shakespeare Globe Centre in London embarked on a collaborative program (Shakespeare Lives!) to improve the teaching of Shakespeare in selected North Carolina high schools. In January 1999, nine teachers from two North Carolina counties were chosen for the program. Shakespeare Lives! is designed in three parts: five preparatory workshops led by NCSA faculty and special guests, utilizing the School's campus facilities in the winter and spring; two intensive weeks of workshops in July at the Globe in London that culminated in a performance of prepared scenes on the Globe's stage; and, back in the United States, a collaborative "festival" of Shakespeare scenes the teachers studied at the Globe staged with their students. Now in its second year, the program has added three new funding agencies as well as a new group of 10 teachers from four counties, with the original group of nine serving as mentors. The program returns to the Globe with the new teachers July 10-21, 2000.

MOYER: How did an arts conservatory like the North Carolina School of the Arts end up at Shakespeare's Globe in London with a bunch of high school teachers?

FREEDMAN: Because I love Shakespeare and wanted to find a way to make Shakespeare live off the page for high school students. Shakespeare education in the way it is usually thought of is so boring you fall to sleep when you hear it.

SPOTTISWOODE: I wasn't interested in doing another summer school; we do enough of those. Then Jerry [Freedman] came over and we just met and chatted and I threw out a few thoughts, seeing if we could marry up this project with the Globe. He warmed me up to the idea. I said, "Ah, there's something worth exploring, it's not going to be just another summer school." Then you [Moyer] came over and we hit it off, we started speaking the same language. We were thinking on the same lines, with long-term aims.

MOYER: This project was originally envisioned on a much larger scale by the Theatre for a New Audience in New York and we were to be a regional component. Then Jeanne Butler, director of the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, got involved and the Institute committed funds for our portion [in North Carolina].

FREEDMAN: Then you and Jeanne took a pragmatic approach to the project and decided to do it alone.

MOYER: Yes. We thought North Carolina was ready: NCSA was in, the school systems wanted to participate and the Kenan Institute was on board. Jeanne's contribution was invaluable, particularly her insistence that participating school districts contribute staff development funds for the workshops stateside.

SPOTTISWOODE: This partnership is very exciting because I don't think I've ever known a funding organization to take such an active interest once they've written the check. The Kenan Institute is active all the time, and interested in the intellectual nature of the program. They're invested in every sense, especially in seeking matching funding – such as securing funding for the second year from family foundations in the teachers' hometowns and airline tickets from US Airways. They have listened to us, listened to what we really want, and they provide it, because they understand why we want what we want. And that's a new model for me for funding organizations.

Then the Globe provided a focus, and added incentive: going to London, working at the Globe, working with Globe staff, working on the Globe stage. So the teachers would have insight into how productions are created, rather than what plays mean. We provide teachers and their students with a first-hand opportunity to work with actors and the Globe through distance learning (GLOBELINK and our Adopt an Actor program), and then when they are here, working with the productions and the actors. Then, our role is just to act as a catalyst, because of the passion that people have for the Globe, the building.

FREEDMAN: There are a lot of people like us who want to do this and have different ways to do it, but the Globe offered an extraordinary opportunity – out of the academic and into the real. I think the existence of the Globe is the magical component. The building gives such authenticity, and we were all affected, teachers and myself, with the sense of the historical.

MOYER: Patrick, you designed the program to help the teachers feel like part of the Globe as a "working" theatre.

SPOTTISWOODE: I think teachers need to know how theatres work in order to teach plays. If they don't have a sense of the collaborative, creative energies that are involved in creating a production, then they are just reading words on a page, and that's all they're teaching – words on a page. The process is so important. I think we're very lucky at the Globe because the actors are willing to share process, and that notion of collaboration is there from the performance out. From the beginning, the actor is collaborating with the audience because of the way the Globe is designed. I think that spills out into our work in education. The actor is immediately aware and interested in sharing offstage, in classrooms, in workshop situations. The whole ethos of this place is that; it's marvelous.

MOYER: How did the five workshops at NCSA contribute to the teachers' work in London?

FREEDMAN: The workshops prepare the teacher in every area – they had voice and movement each time, they studied text, observed both the rehearsals and performance of my *All's Well That Ends Well*. When they got to the Globe, they were ready and were more available to the actors at the Globe. We were off and running coming off the plane!

SPOTTISWOODE: In effect, with the workshops, you're creating a company. Just as in the theatre, a group of actors get together for the first time, they rehearse, get to know each other, and they develop rapport and working methods. And that's what the workshops do for the teachers who come from different schools. They come here already warmed up, rather than freezing cold, and it means we can be much more intensive more quickly than if they hadn't had the workshops. . . .

And Jerry's participation in the London workshops certainly made a difference. Here's this great director who said, "Treat me like one of the teachers, one of the company." It was completely non-hierarchical, which I also think is important about this program. So he got involved, he was going through what the teachers were going through. Our actors were directing him, he was so willing to "muck in." And that's a tremendous lesson.

MOYER: What was the major challenge for the teachers?

FREEDMAN: The bureaucracy and the standardized requirements they are forced to meet, and how they have to be creative to both satisfy that and yet get to the heart of Mr. Shakespeare.

MOYER: And when did that happen, what was the thing that pushed you to understand that?

FREEDMAN: I think it was that Sunday in London, when we were on the floor in teams, to figure out lesson plans. That was a thrilling and fruitful day for me, to see them creatively trying to "shoehorn" this new knowledge into what seemed restrictive demands on them. And the enthusiasm with which they entered into it. And the fact that they weren't alone, they were working in teams. There was something about that collaborative process. Very moving, very exciting.

SPOTTISWOODE: I think your presence [Moyer's] in the workshops make this course different. You made them think

every day: "Now how can we use this, how can we make use of what we discover with the actors, how can we turn this into classroom activity, what are our objectives for this work?" I think those sessions of reflection and planning are crucial. We like to think we are offering practical strategies, practical teaching approaches. But you helped us tailor workshops always keeping the curriculum as the goal. I learned a heck of a lot myself. We can give people a good time, and it can be full of meaning, but if they can't use it in the classroom, what's the point?

MOYER: I have to ask a question that's almost embarrassing – was the collaboration easy?

SPOTTISWOODE: That was what impressed me, when I started asking questions, making suggestions, there was never, "No, we can't do that." Each one of us would have ideas. We were singing from the same hymn sheet.

FREEDMAN: Yes, yes. You might have come up against administrative problems I don't know about, but there was so much enthusiasm and positive input that the challenges seemed to keep falling away. Of course there were problems. How often you had to say to the teacher, "You are the course, you are the solution." That wasn't an easy concept to grasp. How can I be learning and be the subject, too?

SPOTTISWOODE: The teachers just went to it. There wasn't a "no" in the group. I wonder how much having them bring students to every NCSA workshop helped them be so eager. I think it's the right play. It breaks down hierarchies.

MOYER: The third phase of the project was to return to North Carolina, and present scenes from *Julius Caesar* in a "festival" setting, with NCSA once again providing support, such as your [Freedman's] visits to the schools. Why was this such a vital part of the project in your eyes?

FREEDMAN: It enabled us to follow through. There is a collision of forces, teacher bouncing against the material and the ideas, encountering the students, and ricocheting back to the feelings of the participants. They have a task, and they have to think how to share their discoveries with students. They cannot avoid looking at Shakespeare as a text for performance, getting it off the page onto the stage. It asks them to put it immediately into practice. And it gave the program a lot more depth.

MOYER: What did you observe when you came here to see that final project? What was exciting to you?

SPOTTISWOODE: Again, I was excited by the collaboration on stage. Ownership of the language was very important, breaking down barriers of fear and suspicion – this language, these strange words, they became friends – for the strange to be exciting, not frightening. The text work with many of the students was quite remarkable.

FREEDMAN: Kids with Southern accents, ethnic accents, were attempting, if not wrapping their tongues around the language. Every once in a while there was a student who occupied the space with confidence and authority – not that he was an actor – and I thought, "This kid is going to do something, be a leader."

There were issues and ideas that he had to incorporate to do that. He is already living up to an idea. It was very moving, the kids working at this material with confidence and interaction.

MOYER: What do you think we've learned?

SPOTTISWOODE: People often think "Oh, it's the Globe, therefore it's the center of the Shakespeare world, we can sit on high and tell teachers how to do Shakespeare classes." But we're learning all the time. We learned more and more about what the teacher faces in the classroom, improving our awareness of teacher and curriculum issues; the course also enriched the teachers of the teachers. And we learned the impracticalities of the classroom situation. It can be frustrating, but enlightening too.

MOYER: Why do you consider this a model program?

SPOTTISWOODE: We do think this is a model program. It goes back to being long term for the teachers. It's prequel and sequel, and the Globe's the thing in the middle. What's the Shakespeare sonnet line, "Violent fires soon burn out themselves." I think a lot of the courses are "violent fires." But

this one is not because of the longevity. The program did capture the imagination of a lot of our staff. It brought my staff together, particularly the use of **GlobeLink**.

MOYER: One of the reasons you wanted to get involved with us was the opportunity to develop your Internet distance-learning program, **GlobeLink**.

SPOTTISWOODE: Yes. I was really heartened when you agreed that the teachers could be "Globelinked," and then the Institute and foundations funded it. It's one of our most pioneering activities here in Globe Education, and Shakespeare Lives! helped us develop it. Teachers and students can "visit" the Globe online and talk with each other, as well as with members of our companies, through our online Adopt an Actor program. When we've got a core of high school teachers who have been through the **GlobeLink** program, those people will be our advisors over the years to come.

MOYER: What challenges do you see for the future?

FREEDMAN: Our hope lies in transferring the energy, transferring the torch. It ain't ever gonna run itself.

website resources:

- North Carolina School of the Arts: www.NCARTS.EDU
- Oregon Shakespeare Festival: www.orshakes.org
- International Shakespeare Globe Centre: www.shakespeares-globe.org

GlobeLink