

RSC TO TOUR FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTION OF *THE TEMPEST* TO LONDON IN MARCH 2017

CONTINUING THE COMPANY'S FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH SHAKESPEARE SERIES OF PRODUCTIONS FOR 8 – 13 YEAR OLDS ACROSS THE UK

The Royal Shakespeare Company continues its commitment to creating live theatre for young audiences with its **First Encounters with Shakespeare** production of *The Tempest* – Shakespeare's magical last play of fun, fantasy and sorcery.

The production will visit **Eastbury Community School** on 14 March; **Uxbridge High School** on 15 and 16 March; and **Intermission Theatre** on 17 and 18 March. Performance schedule at the end of the release.

The two schools are either part of the RSC's **Associate Schools programme**, or its former incarnation, the **Learning and Performance Network (LPN)**, the aim of both being to bring about a significant change in the way young people experience, engage with, and take ownership of the work of Shakespeare. Eastbury Community School is in the third and final year of the LPN, with the RSC as its partner theatre. Uxbridge High School is a lead associate school, with Intermission Theatre as its partner theatre. **Darren Raymond**, who plays Prospero in the production, is also the Artistic Director of Intermission Theatre.

The Tempest tells the story of the exiled Duke, Prospero, who, on a crazy island swirling with sounds, uses magic to create a home within the wilderness. As his beloved daughter Miranda falls in love with a shipwrecked stranger from their homeland, she rebels against Prospero's power, and he must risk forgiving those who betrayed him, or lose her forever.

This gripping story of how love and reconciliation can conquer fear and control is an ideal first experience of Shakespeare for anyone aged 8 and above. Using Shakespeare's original language, this edited version lasts 90 minutes, and includes an interactive introduction to the world of the play.

Directed by **Aileen Gonsalves**, and aimed at 8-13 year olds, the cast includes: **Alison Arnopp** (Stephana/Sebastienne), **Laura Cairns** (Trincula/Alonsa), **Elly Condrón** (Miranda), **Caleb Frederick** (Antonio), **Sarah Kameela Impey** (Ariel), **Matthew McPherson** (Caliban), **Darren Raymond** (Prospero) and **Oliver Towse** (Ferdinand).

Aileen Gonsalves said:

“We are interested in exploring and immersing the audience in the magic of the island that the characters are stranded on. The strange creature Caliban confides, “The isle is full of noises.” We want our young audience to help us create this enchanted place, bringing their own homemade instruments and joining in the singing with the 8 strong cast, as they fight for power under the control of the all mighty Prospero. His daughter Miranda, and the exquisitely “delicate” spirit Ariel show that only love can set them all free. The actors will respond uniquely to each new audience, who will use whatever is at their disposal – their voices, bodies, imaginations and each other - to join with us to create this unique “rough magic” version of Shakespeare’s most funny, touching and fantastical tale!”

Aileen trained as an actor at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Previous credits for the RSC include Assistant Director to Tim Supple on *Midnight’s Children* and Gregory Doran on *All’s Well That Ends Well*. Most recently Aileen has written and directed a piece in association with the LSO for The Barbican, called *Play On Shakespeare*. She has been Head of the MA in Acting for the last four years at Arts Educational Schools London, which she left last September to work as Associate Director at the RSC working alongside Gregory Doran on his production of *The Tempest*. Aileen is Artistic Director of Butterfly Theatre, a company which specialises in site responsive productions of Shakespeare across the UK and Europe.

Jacqui O’Hanlon, RSC Director of Education, said:

“Many of us have our first encounter with Shakespeare at school, an experience which can define our attitude to live theatre and to Shakespeare for all of our lives. This tour of *The Tempest* will bring the excitement and wonder of Shakespeare’s work right into the heart of schools, regional theatres and local communities. Our First Encounters with Shakespeare tour is testament to the profound impact that partnerships between schools and theatres can have on the life chances of students - partnerships forged out of a shared vision for education in which access to the arts plays a central part.”

Other members of the creative team include: **Kate McStraw** (Designer), **Sianed Jones** (Music) and **Lucy Cullingford** (Movement).

For additional information / images / interview requests etc, please contact Dean Asker, RSC Press Office on 01789 412660, dean.asker@rsc.org.uk

Notes to editors

Performance schedule

Eastbury Community School

Tuesday 14 March, 9.30am and 2pm (schools performances)

Uxbridge High School

Wednesday 15 March, 11.25am (schools performance) and 6pm (public performance, tickets available from 01895 234060)

Thursday 16 March, 11.25am (schools performance) and 6pm (public performance, tickets available from 01895 234060)

Intermission Theatre, St Saviour's Church, Walton Place, London

Friday 17 March, 7.30pm (public performance, tickets available from 020 7581 4620)

Saturday 18 March, 7.30pm, (public performance, tickets available from 020 7581 4620)

Tickets available from 16 January 2017

The RSC Associate Schools programme and Learning and Performance Network (LPN)

The RSC Associate Schools programme is the RSC's new, national partnership programme which works with schools and theatres across England. It builds on the success of the Learning and Performance Network (LPN) which celebrated its ten-year anniversary in July 2016. Over the past 10 years the LPN has worked in long term partnership with 507 schools, 11 regional theatres, 1,320 teachers and reached an estimated 690,000 students.

Building on the inheritance of the LPN, the fundamental ambition of the Associate Schools programme remains the same: to bring about a significant change in the way young people experience, engage with, and take ownership of the work of Shakespeare.

Eleven *Lead Associate Schools* joined the programme when it was launched in July 2016. Each local partnership consists of a Lead Associate School, a Regional Theatre Partner and up to ten Associate Schools.

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