

# Kiki Lindell, *Staging Shakespeare's Comedies with EFL University Students*

Kiki Lindell is a prodigy. That's something her colleagues and students already know, and her friends and family too; but I'm stating it for the benefit of those who don't yet know her, and am trusting that this thesis will make more people aware of it once it's published – as I strongly recommend it should be.

Why is she a prodigy? Well, she's persuaded a university to let her devise and teach a course in which a small number of students (the number varies each semester) puts on a production of a Shakespeare comedy in a public space in the university; and she's taught that course for over a decade. Just to make it more interesting, the students are EFL students; for most of them, English is not their first language, although she finds it helpful to include a native speaker or two on the course each time – this ensures students will have to rehearse and discuss plays in English or risk excluding part of the group.

Each year, the course is centred on a different play – and remember that this involves giving not just *one* performance but *two* quite separate productions, whose interpretations of the play in question are of necessity radically different because different numbers are involved in the cast, and the cast itself made up of an entirely different gender mix, and of radically distinct personality types, with different skills, different levels of linguistic competence, different anxieties, different whims.

In putting on these productions Kiki is involved as teacher, director, musical director, fight director, choreographer, costume, set and poster designer, stage manager, publicity officer, and psychologist for her terrified charges. She's also, one might say, co-author; the whole process begins with her selection of a cast and the laborious task of adapting the play to fit the needs of the students she has in that particular semester. I rest my case: Kiki is a prodigy, and one of Shakespeare's closest friends and most passionate champions in the twentieth century. I feel privileged and somewhat awed to have the chance to talk to her; I feel as if I am getting a direct line to the bustling, seething, dirty, colourful, dangerous, joyful time of Shakespeare himself; and I don't want to make a hash of this opportunity.

This is in fact the second time I've had it. I acted as opponent for an earlier, shorter version of this thesis, and I returned to it with pleasure as to a favourite book – only much expanded, perfected I would say, by the addition of several new episodes that bring the extraordinary story it has to tell to a fitting close, and of an expanded introduction and conclusion, which articulate with startling clarity the significance of what Kiki has achieved in her course and in the book itself. I'd like to begin, then, by repeating that I would like other people to have the opportunity to make this one of their favourite books. The thesis should be published and circulated widely. It strikes me that this is one of the richest treasuries of material relating to Shakespeare in performance in a pedagogic

context that is ever likely to be assembled. Because, let's face it, a course like this has not existed before; and who knows if it will ever exist again? Will universities continue to have the vision to give space to such a course on their curriculum? Will another Kiki be found, with this level of commitment, imagination, skill and energy, and will she be able to set aside enough time from attending meetings, applying for grants and writing reports on her own teaching activities, to give free rein to these qualities? I don't know – though oddly enough, I'm optimistic; work like this requires a certain inspired lunacy, and inspired lunatics tend to crop up from time to time in unexpected places. But any future Kikis will discover in this thesis a handbook full of instructions to help them in their mad endeavours. Ordinary Shakespeare teachers, like me, will find in it a plethora of new ideas on how to bring the man alive in the Twenty-First Century. And non-teachers will get the chance to read what is effectively a thriller, full of scholarship worn lightly, with wit peeping out from every page, and as many insights, I would say, for the philosopher or the psychologist as for the lover of literature and the theatre.

In what way is this book a thriller? Well, when I spoke about its former manifestation I described Kiki as an 'Indiana Jones of Shakespeare studies, fighting her way with whip, revolver and machete through the thickets of unexpected problems to that elusive prize: a sparkling new production' – which gives you some idea of the challenges she's been up against. But that really only says half of it. The course consists of two components: the theoretical, which takes the form of written work supported by a series of lectures on historical, literary, theatrical and what are essentially *philosophical* subjects; and the practical, which involves rehearsing and finally putting on a performance of the play that has been studied. Scholarship could never be more urgent or intensive than it is in this course. Every question of the teacher's, every suggestion from the students, every piece of writing, every diary entry, has a direct bearing on the success or failure of the final performance; and rehearsals for the performance are constantly throwing up fresh theoretical questions to be addressed in the lectures and the written work. Slacken on either of the course's two components and you risk messing the whole thing up, not just for yourself but for the other student actors who are working with you. Everyone in the course is in everyone else's hands. And the lecturer has more to lose than anyone. If the course should prove a failure, not only will the students experience that failure as humiliation, but the entire university will witness failure in action, bathed in sweat and blushes on the public stage.

That's why this thesis is a thriller. Last time I called it an 'adventure in active criticism', and the phrase is appropriate in two ways: first, because the students who learned from Kiki on the course knew that they were going to have to put their critical insights into action on stage – the severest test imaginable for the accuracy of their conclusions. And secondly because the course itself has become the source of Kiki's insights in this thesis; a testing ground, that is, for her investigation into how the theatre men of Shakespeare's time managed the practicalities of performance; into how Shakespeare can be used in EFL pedagogy; into how to reduce a Shakespeare play to a manageable length – something Shakespeare's own acting company had to do when they trimmed a play for use on tours around the country – and how to furnish parts of more or less equal size for all the actors. This business of furnishing equal parts necessarily involves interference

with Shakespeare's text on a scale even Indiana Jones would be afraid of. Lines must be transferred from one character to another, two or more characters must be collapsed into one, whole new characters must be invented. This is not a case of meddling with the original so as to boost the director's ego; far from it. Kiki's aim with each play has been to follow the guidance of the script, as it were, as closely and with as little interference as possible. No, necessity drives these changes – just as they would have driven changes made by Elizabethan theatre companies in response to the particular conditions of each performance: the availability of extra musicians in a noble's house, perhaps, or the requirement for a smaller company you could take on tour. One of the many insights you get from this book is into the role of practical *necessity* in shaping the greatest works of imaginative art in the English language; and it's a salutary lesson for those who are still inclined to think of art as romantically disengaged from the material conditions under which it is created.

Necessity has given rise to one of the most intriguing aspects of Kiki's practical research: her investigation into what happens to the gender preconceptions of students and lecturer when you have too many girls and too few boys for your comedy's cast list. Under these circumstances you must ring the gender changes with unprecedented daring, so that male students become female, female students male, and some students have to switch sex more than once in the course of a single performance. Interestingly, in some plays Kiki found herself quite unable to imagine certain parts being played by the opposite sex, a discovery that leads her to some fascinating and convincing speculations as to the reasons for this prejudice. At other times, those Shakespearean characters who seem most securely lodged in their own gender identity – such as the flamboyant suitor Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* – turn out to be ideally suited for performance by a person of the opposite sex. Gender studies have been high on the agenda of literary scholars for perhaps forty years now; but I can't think of another case like this, where playing a range of variations on the sex of actors is *forced* on a series of productions, raising questions that should be allowed to resonate well beyond the pages of Kiki's thesis.

The structure of the thesis is simple but compelling. Kiki begins with a theoretical introduction, which details the theoretical and practical issues raised by the idea of studying Shakespeare through performance. This account has a significant historical dimension: the reader is quickly made aware that teaching by performance has a rich lineage, beginning with the helpfully detailed notes left by the Elizabethan theatre impresario Philip Henslowe, who recorded payments for scripts, props and costumes he used in his productions, thereby furnishing invaluable evidence for future scholars – evidence Kiki has drawn on in remarkable detail, from the table full of props (objects to be carried on stage) she secretes back stage, to the 'plat' or list of entrances and exits kept nearby for consultation by nervous or forgetful actors. In doing so she joins a distinguished line of fellow academics who thought it best to bring Shakespeare alive for their students by turning those students into actors: Ben Greet, Nevill Coghill, John Barton, Homer Swander, Ros King and all the rest. The story of these scholar-directors is told in the introduction. And the rest of the thesis constitutes a history of Kiki's own contribution to this tradition of teaching Shakespeare through performance.

Each chapter narrates the story of two courses, culminating in two productions of one play – an academic year’s worth of teaching. And the thesis closes with a return to the first play she directed: a repeat performance, ten years on, of the favourite play of amateur companies, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which contains the most celebrated fictional amateur company ever created, the cast of craftsmen who mount a production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* for Duke Theseus of Athens. There’s something deeply satisfying about this return to the start of the theatrical history we’ve watched unfolding through the chapters. So much has been learned; so much has changed, even, in the culture of the students who put on the play – among other things, they seem to have become vastly more tolerant of the idea of an arranged marriage with which the play begins. And this final production is also the most spectacular. It takes place in Lund’s Open-Air Museum of Cultural History, and draws the largest audience of any so far. In it, Kiki takes over Lund itself – the Lund outside the academy – and so symbolically demonstrates the impact a teacher like her will continue to exert on the world and its understanding of Shakespeare long after the course is over.

I’ve spoken about the thesis as a kind of history, but there’s a strong theoretical component to it too. Kiki expresses the principal theoretical problem of combining learning with performance as one of *interpretation*. Classroom work – reading, talking, writing about a play in thoughtful fashion – involves what she calls the ‘open text’, whereby all the possibilities of the play are brought out, considered, revolved, debated, celebrated. Performance involves a ‘closed text’, shutting off a huge range of available options in response to the urgent requirements of the one-and-a-half hour traffic of the stage. Her responses to the challenge of making students aware of the multiple readings available to them even as they work towards the narrower readings that must be made in order to fashion a coherent production are inspired. ‘The course on which this thesis is based attempts to achieve the best of both worlds,’ she tells us in the introduction. ‘While rehearsing, we experiment uninhibitedly, treating the text as an open thing, feeling our way towards the choices we want to make; in the actual performance, our reading is (hopefully) consistent, [...] complete and plausible’. She encourages, that is, ‘free experimenting with a text which is perceived as open, and as much ours as anybody’s’; and it’s through this experiment that many of the necessary selections for the performance come about. Some of the most delightful passages in the thesis are those which describe these uninhibited experiments, when the trust between actors and director has built up to the point where they find themselves spontaneously introducing improvised theatrical business into a scene, to their collective surprise and delight.

Another kind of openness encouraged by Kiki is in the students’ written work, whose central strand takes the form of a diary: a perfect choice of form, since it draws attention to the *process* involved in a performance. Thus the students are encouraged to write about what they think of the character they will perform as the rehearsals are just beginning; and at the end of the course, after the performance and the post-production party, they are encouraged to revisit those characters once more, and recognize how their perception of their roles has been transformed by the chronological process of staging the play. As well as acknowledging, by its very nature, the minutes, hours and days that elapse while preparing a production, the diary also has a flexibility which more formal

modes of writing can't achieve. So as we've mentioned already, Kiki can come up with imaginative new questions born from the problems thrown up by the current production. And she discovered a third crucial use of the diary, after she had undergone the trauma of a production that very nearly failed to materialize, because the students fell prey to stage-fright as the day of reckoning approached. They had written about their mounting fears in their diaries; so that an alert lecturer, Kiki found, can also use the diary as a failsafe mechanism, a psychoanalyst's tool, whereby she can make herself aware of any burgeoning problems among the cast and catch them before they get out of hand. (I told you she was a psychologist, didn't I?) The diary, in other words, can respond to the many dimensions of the course like no other written form; it's the closest you can get to a written performance, improvising from day to day on the page as the actor does in the theatre of his or her imagination.

Another element of the course diary that encourages an open reading of the text is Kiki's ingenious notion of having the students comment on the cuts and changes that have been made to the play in response to the demands of the course. This actually makes a merit of the necessity for the adaptations I mentioned earlier: changes that ensure each performance lasts no longer than an hour and a half, for instance, or that as far as possible each student has a role or roles of roughly equal length, or that the number and gender of the students is accommodated by one device or another. Clearly such alterations furnish ample material for discussion in the students' journals; indeed, these discussions quite often persuaded Kiki to make new changes in response to some excellent suggestions. In some senses, then, toying with the text encourages *closer* reading of the Shakespearean script than presenting students with an undoctored version. This is one of those perceptions that could well be usefully carried over into a conventional Shakespeare course, a taught course rather than a taught-and-performed one.

As I said, many of Kiki's changes strike me as exhilaratingly courageous in themselves, even without considering all the other forms of courage involved in her productions. The most startling change of all was the introduction of an entire new character into *Twelfth Night*: a confidant for the disguised Viola named Captain Curio, whose character is fleshed out – and made fascinatingly complex – by his recitation of certain Shakespeare sonnets, or parts of sonnets, at crucial points in the play. This Captain's presence must have made Viola's situation very different from what it is in conventional *Twelfth Night* productions: less lonely, less prone to paranoia, and more obviously comparable to the situation of her brother Sebastian, whose companion in the original is the doting sea-captain Antonio – here transformed into the former prostitute Antonia. An equally adventurous choice was to transform Duke Senior and the tyrannical Duke Frederick in *As You Like It* into an estranged married couple, of which the wife has succeeded in getting the husband banished and seizing his dukedom for herself at the beginning of the play, though they are restored to mutual respect and affection in the final act. These are radical transformations, and point to what must be one of the unique features of attending one of Kiki's productions: that each audience encounters a brand new play in place of the old one – indeed, that each year the audience must come to the production with a mounting sense of excitement as they learn to expect the wholly unexpected. Some might object that the changes I've described are a bit *too* radical, that they've moved just

a little too far from the dramatic structure as Shakespeare conceived it. But the same objection might be mounted against all the great Shakespeare productions over the centuries, from the seventeenth-century reworkings of *The Tempest* and *King Lear* to Laurence Olivier's film of *Henry V*, or Akira Kurosawa's version of *Macbeth*, or Julie Taymor's *Titus*. And the objection is finally put to rest by Kiki's practice of having her students familiarize themselves with the play as it was before she cut it. Her changes, then, grow organically out of a deep familiarity with Shakespeare's words, both on the part of the director-adaptor and on the part of the student actors. And I suspect that this familiarity will ensure that they are made to feel equally appropriate to those who are lucky enough to experience them on stage.

But the diaries don't just comment on the Shakespeare text which is the course's focus; they also extend it. Kiki's students have been invited to write speeches, letters and poems on behalf of their own or other characters, just as Kiki's own very accomplished verse has supplied explanatory prologues to her productions. This is another way to bring Shakespeare to life: combine traditional academic approaches to his work with what we now call 'creative writing' – although it's worth remembering that Shakespeare himself was taught to imitate other people's poetry and highly-wrought prose as an integral part of the Elizabethan school curriculum. What better way can we think of to make new Shakespeares than to expose our students to the pedagogic disciplines that shaped the man himself? This is another perception I'd like to transpose to the Shakespeare courses I teach myself...

The students' creative writing will have been helped by Kiki's own sensitivity to the nuances of Shakespeare's language, which she imparts to them by way of a series of lectures which I wish I could attend. In particular, I was struck by her awareness of the complex interplay between verse and prose – and between the many available *varieties* of verse and prose – in Shakespeare's comedies. Few scholars can have had occasion to be more aware of these linguistic variations than a teacher-director; so that when Kiki points out that *Twelfth Night* pits the verse of Count Orsino's court against the prose of Olivia's household, or that the proportion of prose to verse rises steeply in the comedies from the early to the middle stages of Shakespeare's career, we find ourselves being made aware of the consequences of these observations for an actor – the way verse or prose will dictate the way they learn and speak their lines, regardless of how little the audience may be conscious of the difference between the forms. But her perceptions go further than this. Almost casually, she makes observations about the verse and prose that could have been expanded into a chapter in themselves, or published as a separate essay in a scholarly journal. In a lecture on *As You Like It* she points out how Shakespeare's usual method of dividing verse and prose along lines of class – the aristocracy speaks verse, the commoners prose – doesn't quite work for this comedy. True, the Dukes speak verse, as you'd expect, and the shepherds prose; but 'the younger generation of rank – Rosalind, Celia, Orlando and Oliver – mostly speak prose, undignified, funny and endearingly silly. [And] the most consistent use of verse is reserved for some characters that are to be found a great many rungs below them on the social ladder – Silvius, Phebe, Corin, and Adam.' Kiki explains this by pointing out that in Shakespeare's mature comedies such as *As You Like It* the use of verse and prose respects the psychological condition of the speaker

rather than his or her rank; a view that supports the findings of several scholars she quotes on the subject. It's more brilliantly supported, however, by some wholly original reflections of her own, which she gave in an earlier lecture:

More than any of the other plays that I had previously worked with, the language of *Twelfth Night* seems largely to be governed by the moods and relationships of the speakers. Orsino's and Viola's growing intimacy is shown as well as told in the way they interact verbally, splitting blank verse lines between them; Sebastian and Antonio do the same. Malvolio speaks prose all the way up to the very last scene – but there, through his very humiliation and loss of dignity, he acquires the deeper dignity of the truly tragic hero; and suddenly, his pathetic plea – why has Olivia used him so – is delivered in blank verse. [...] Olivia's entire household, including Olivia herself, is prose-speaking at the beginning. In the case of Olivia, this makes perfect sense – it is all part and parcel of her assuming the part of the competent mistress of the house. Then something happens: 'Cesario' [Viola] comes to woo for Orsino, speaking her master's passion in blank verse. For a while, Olivia clings to prose, but then falls into poetry as she falls into love, and on their next encounter, she even declares her love in heroic couplets, the preferred medium of romantic lovers.

Now that's a set of observations to which any actor or scholar would do well to pay attention. And scholars as well as directors will benefit from Kiki's methods of teaching her students about the differences between metrical forms. When preparing a production of *Love's Labours Lost* – one of the most complex of all Shakespeare's plays in its use of wordplay, metaphor and learned allusions, as well as of verse – she set Shakespeare's poetry to the tunes of familiar songs in order to acquaint her students with the *feel* of each different metre, giving us in the process yet another demonstration of how she brings the past alive by weaving it into the present. You can see now why I want to see this thesis made widely available through publication; its remarkable insights and inspired suggestions must be made available to teachers everywhere, as well as to those few teacher-directors who dare to follow in her footsteps.

One of the themes that emerges from this thesis is the constant urge to try out new ideas and readings; to ensure that two productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, both mounted in a single year, should be radically different – not just out of necessity (one staged inside, one staged outside, both performed with a different cast) but from a spirit of restless inventiveness and a constant quest for freshness and vitality. It's easy to underestimate just how extraordinary this search for difference is in the context of a university curriculum. You need to be aware of the pressures on a teacher to repeat the little successes of past years in the interests of making things easier on herself; to read out the exact same lecture word for word so that you won't have to revise it at a time when you should be working on a chapter of your latest book, or a bid for funding, or that pile of essays waiting to be marked, administration waiting to be completed. Kiki has never jettisoned her commitment to making annual innovations; and given the heavy annual burden of her teaching, this is just one of the elements of her course that inspires a sense of awe in a reader who knows something about the academic environment she works in.

Her commitment to innovation is, of course, assisted by the freshness and vitality of each new cohort of students. Kiki gives many examples of how the minds and bodies of her actors produce radically different interpretations of the same part in successive productions. One example that struck me was the difference between two Pucks in one academic session. 'In the autumn, this part had been played by a small, slender, limber girl in a black leotard; the Puck she played could indeed, one felt, have put a girdle round the earth, and any error in the distribution of magic juice would be no mistake but mischievousness. The girl cast for Puck in the spring was an entirely different type. She was tall, and had a huge talent for acting the awkward pre-pubescent boy with two left feet and an attitude problem. Any mistake made by this Puck would be genuine and unpremeditated; when she told Oberon "I remember", this was plainly a lie, and when she found Lysander sleeping, it was by almost falling over him'. Note the adaptability of the director faced with this drastic change of type: in her capacity as costume designer she jettisons the leotard in favour of 'white schoolboy shorts with braces, a sailor's blouse, and tiny transparent wings (it was amusing to imagine the havoc this Puck would wreak trying to fly with these). An Irish tin-whistle completed this outfit (it went well with her Irish brogue), and two perpetually running, skipping and stumbling, gangly legs with scraped knees and bare feet were thrown in for free'. Delight in the task, affection for her students, and the creativity with which Kiki responds to the challenges her students set her – all these things emerge quite clearly from this account; and so too does her determination to sustain what she calls 'the spirit of doing things differently'. Its communication of that spirit alone would make this thesis an achievement of real substance.

Kiki's newest chapters give abundant examples of the 'spirit of doing things differently'. There's her staging of *Much Ado About Nothing* with characters dressed in black and white, as if their costumes were keyed in to their moral identities – something which must have become intensely ironic in performance, given the refusal of several key characters in the play to recognize the 'plain-dealing villainy' of the baddie Don John, or the self-evident innocence of the heroine, Hero. I loved the idea, too, of Beatrice being given a golden fan to cover her face with like a piece of protective armour, with a face painted on it to conceal her lively changes of expression – a perfect visual representation of her desire to shield her inward life from emotional assault. In this same production Kiki was forced to collapse three characters (Borachio, Balthasar and Conrade) into one, who thereby took on a complexity none of the three could have achieved by himself. Could this be a clue to how some of Shakespeare's understanding of complex characters first took root? This innovation was forced on her by having a cast of only nine students, the smallest she had ever been faced with. Another innovation this forced on her was that of doubling the characters of Hero and Dogberry, which led to some fascinating behavior by the female actor playing both parts. As if in response to Hero's passivity when she is framed, falsely accused and cast off by the man who claims to love her, Dogberry became extraordinarily violent to the man who framed her – the composite character I mentioned earlier, now called Borachio. She dragged him around like a dog on a leash, striking and kicking him at every opportunity. And Dogberry's violence seems to have rubbed off on Claudio, who treated Hero with equal savagery as he accused her of being unfaithful to him: 'enraged, [he] pulled Hero's face up by the hair' to say his line 'Is this



face Hero's?' You can see how each of these bits of stage business invites a new reading of the play, a reassessment of characters' motives, of the dramatic structure, of the profound questions of how a person's identity is perceived, revealed and concealed which this comedy asks. As one of the scholars Kiki quotes puts it, drama is able to 'stimulate thought, clarify, disturb and generally promote learning of a kind that could not just be "told"'; and the performance of *Much Ado* described in Kiki's fifth chapter affords abundant support for this important claim.

The performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* that followed offers us an even more interesting example of the 'spirit of doing things differently'. This is a play that has attracted as many alternative film versions as any in Shakespeare's canon – from Cole Porter's musical *Kiss Me Kate* to the Heath Ledger movie *Ten Things I Hate About You* and the BBC version in the *Shakespeare Retold* series. Yet to modern eyes it's a profoundly troubling comedy, focusing on a man who humiliates a fiercely independent woman or 'shrew' into conformity, and culminating in a long speech by the tamed wife listing the duties a good woman owes her husband, the depths to which she should consent to sink in order to please him. Like the musical and the films, the students on Kiki's course found an astonishing range of ways to deal with this problem, from seeing the play as a struggle between the male and female leads, from which both can be said to emerge victorious, to seeing it as taking place in a satirized world akin to that of the SF movie *The Stepford Wives*, where all women are expected to behave in identical fashion, like androids, drones or worker ants. One student reached a conclusion that seems particularly apt: she 'put the play's popularity down to its being so provocative', and 'compared the effect to that of Swift when he wrote *A Modest Proposal*', the mock-essay in which he suggested that the best cure for famine in Ireland was to serve up children at mealtimes to make up for the lack of more conventional meat. Another student argued that 'When we are bothered by something, the hardest thing imaginable would be letting it be and leaving it alone'. With typical acuity, Kiki summarizes this theory as that of 'the play being (as it were) a painful piece of grit that the oyster has to forge an entire pearl around before it can be comfortable with it'. She also tells us that she was deeply grateful for this analysis of the unconscious workings of her own mind; here the student had become the psychologist, explaining to Kiki the reasons for her own fascination with a problematic play. The traffic of the stage and of teaching has, in fact, become two-way – as it always will be at its best.

The solution Kiki found to the question of what to do with that final speech – the speech given by Katherine in which she expatiates on women's duties, urging them to humble themselves before their husbands – was as elegant as it was daring. She took the embarrassment factor by the throat, if you like, by having all the women in the play read out the speech from a scroll Petruchio has given his wife Katherine to read. As they read on, their expressions become increasingly incredulous, their laughter increasingly abrasive. When the speech ended, 'an uncomfortable silence ensued, punctured by an uneasy attempt on Petruchio's part to laugh the whole thing off. Constrained silence again; then the women began to laugh, and almost immediately, with enormous relief, the men started laughing too'. If Shakespeare's ending is difficult, it is not the teacher-director's business to make it easy. The silences Kiki introduced here are, I suspect, what

both the students and the audience will have carried away with them; the spaces that give us time to ask ourselves what exactly we are seeing, what we think of the man that penned Petruchio's scroll. There are few plays of Shakespeare's that more uncomfortably expose the vacuity of treating the Bard as a philosopher who can do no wrong, a cultural icon against whom criticism is blasphemy. Another play that does this is *The Merchant of Venice*, and I wonder if her success with *The Taming of the Shrew* will have given Kiki the idea of taking that on in future, too?

I'd like to finish by repeating what I said earlier, and what I said last time I spoke about Kiki's work: which is, how impressive I find it that the University of Lund, and the Centre for Languages and Literature in particular, has made space in its curriculum for Kiki's course on 'Drama in Practice'. There is only room for a few students on the course each year, and the amount of energy and commitment it takes cannot be quantified. But it seems to me quite clear, as I've said several times, that the impact of such a course must extend far beyond the obvious benefits it brings to the participants. To see the Centre of Languages and Literature, or SOL, transformed each year into a space where Shakespeare's words are uttered and his imagination bodied forth must make a massive impact on any audience, and leave a deep impression on the people who use that Centre every day. A staircase where Jaques has stood to declaim his versified polemic against blood-sports will never again be *just* a staircase. A garden where Thisbe's lion has roared will never again be just a scenic setting for outdoor seminars. Both will be transformed into component features of an Elizabethan memory mansion, a mnemonic system whereby things of importance are recollected by being mentally anchored, as it were, at specific locations in a well-known architectural setting. Kiki and her students have transformed the University of Lund into such a memory mansion; indeed, they've done the same for the City of Lund itself; and it's to the eternal credit of the University that it has colluded in this visionary process. And it's to the benefit of those who happen not to live in Lund that Kiki has given us a memory mansion of our own: this unforgettable thesis, which we can return to when we want to be reminded of that most versatile and elusive of academic phantoms, the *spirit of doing things differently*.

### **Peroration**

I began my love-affair with Shakespeare as a schoolboy of eight or nine; I was so excited to be given the part of a nameless 'boy' in a school production of *Much Ado About Nothing* that I got told off for over-acting, even though I only had two lines. One of the things I loved about your writing was your affectionate enjoyment of your students' over-acting; you recognized it for what it was, yet you celebrated it for what it stood for, a passionate engagement with the 'brave new world' you had made so immediate to them. On behalf of my childhood self, I'd like to thank you for giving retrospective justification for my melodramatic tendencies.

On a more serious note, your thesis exudes a sense of Shakespeare's importance; a sense that he can change people's lives, that his language will make people see and feel the world in a new and better way. I can think of no better method of summarizing your

conviction of Shakespeare's value to EFL students – and the rest of us – than by quoting the final words of your thesis:

For the teacher, it is an ever-fascinating process to witness and bear witness to: new generations of students cautiously stepping into this brave new world, and quickly becoming absorbed; trying it out for size, thinking and writing from within it, negotiating their way through their lines until they really understand them and can make them *their* words – for a while inhabiting a completely different life, and emerging with new knowledge and insights, about Shakespeare, about literature and language, and even, perhaps, about life itself.

It's this notion that Shakespeare enables students to inhabit a *completely different life* that has always appealed to me; and I think no pedagogic programme I have heard about enables a student to more fully inhabit this different life than yours does, on the evidence of this thesis. May many future readers get the chance to inhabit it by reading your words, and by imagining, as I have, the joy of participating in your remarkable course: 'Drama in Practice – Shakespeare on Stage'.

/ Professor Robert Maslen  
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