



cymdeithas ddrama cymru
drama association of wales

Summer School 2015

Summer School Newsletter



Organising DAW Summer School was both daunting and exciting; daunting because I'd never even been to one and the last time it happened we had three full time staff in the office, and exciting because once I'd realised we could have it at Willow Globe and Broneirion it had the potential to be a fantastic experience. "Sharing Shakespeare" was our title, and that's what we did, with our tutors, with each other and with our final night audience at Willow Globe.

Where to start? It was a wonderful week because of our tutors, the group and the location.

Sue and Phil, a professional director and actor, run Shakespeare Link, which promotes the understanding of everything Shakespearian, and they have the ability to make it live even for those who are frightened by the idea of Shakespeare. We spent our workshop time between acting skills and making text live. Shazia, a recent young LAMDA graduate, provided a lot of energy and fun to the week with warm-up and breathing exercises, and we had two exciting but exhausting sessions on voice and interpreting text from Victoria Williams of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Every workshop brought new skills and experience.

"Performing at the Willow Globe was a once in a lifetime, magical experience that I will never forget. And I now have a newfound love for Shakespeare. I never thought I would."

"Lots of positive feedback, which improves confidence considerably. Willow Globe and the owners are magical and it was a pleasure and a joy to spend time with them. This year will be hard to follow."

Our group of fifteen was drawn mostly from Wales, but also from as far afield as Scotland and Suffolk. Thanks to an anonymous donor who funded the Bob McTurk award at this year's Festival, and to grant funding from the Gwendoline and Margaret Davies Trust, we were able to provide bursaries for four young people aged 18 – 25, and the week would not have been the same without the contribution made by Jon, Annie, Catrin and Grant. Our group ranged in age over seven decades. Living and working together we very quickly developed an amazing trust which enabled us to explore a range of new ways of working.

Broneirion Country House provided a beautiful base for our sole use, with a variety of good working areas, excellent food and staff who couldn't do too much for us, even opening the bar when we returned late from the pub and Willow Globe. I think we will be returning next year. Willow Globe Theatre was a wonderful experience, from working in the converted stable and indoor theatre to acting in the magical outdoor version of the Globe replicated in living willow, where the audience feels so much a part of it.

I don't think I have ever used the word magical to describe a place or an event before this week, but it truly felt magical. Thank you to everyone who contributed to that feeling.

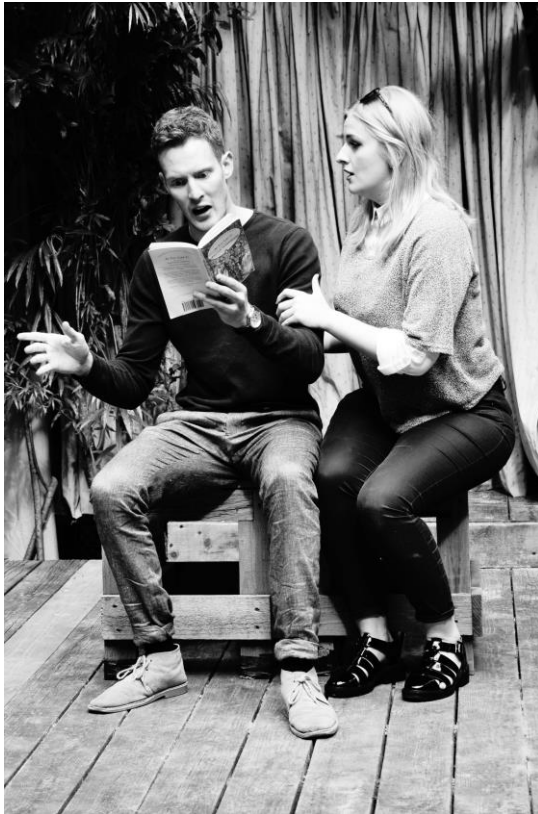
Sue Jones



Many thanks to DAW for arranging this year's Summer School. I learnt a great deal from the tutor sessions, and found the opportunities for one to one guidance especially valuable. I am planning to use several ideas for warm-ups and approaches to the text during the next year; these will be helpful for members of the local drama I belong to, and should enhance our performances. For me the highlight was being on stage at the Willow Globe, and sharing this with such an enthusiastic group of people.

Elisabeth Jones

"Before coming, especially with Shakespeare, I was apprehensive but with Sue, Phil and Shaz they made the experience one I will treasure."



Where do I begin? I'll start off by saying a huge thank you to the cast of 'The Cut' from the Unknown Outcasts both onstage and backstage, the director Lon David and of course the Drama Association of Wales without whom I would not be writing this. I was lucky enough to be one of the four young actors to receive a bursary for the DAW summer school 'Sharing Shakespeare'.

Personally I was excited to dive straight in and use this opportunity to prepare some speeches for drama school auditions and get a better understanding of Shakespeare in a whole.

Well this week has risen high and beyond my expectations which were already fairly high. First the tutors Phil Bowen, Sue Best and Shazia Khawaja helped us all in unlocking the text through a number of exercises, how to speak the language using the rhythm which can sometimes seem totally obscure, but the enthusiasm in which all three of the tutors taught and the passion is something I can only hope to achieve.

We were also lucky enough to have Victoria Williams from the Royal Shakespeare Company come down for a day and provide us with even more tools for the text and preparing our bodies for the stage, breathing deep, staying grounded and ensuring your voice is using its full potential. The days flew by (of course with a fair few tea and cake breaks) preparing us for a show at the Willow Globe where we would perform a number of different scenes and monologues we had been working on throughout the week. Actually performing in the Willow Globe is an experience I will never forget, with people who I will always remember. What made this extra special for me, was the people I was surrounded by 24/7. I couldn't ask for a happier, funnier, kinder, (crazier) group of people and for that I thank them dearly. I will end by saying thank you to everyone who had a part to play and that I'm suddenly craving tea and cake.

P.S. I am aware I didn't mention the accommodation. This is because I could write another 2 pages on how amazing the place was. The scenery around, the food provided and the rooms. I had 4 beds in my room and when told I didn't have any roommates I almost fainted. The staff were fantastic and I'm sure I fell in love a few times (which helped as I played Romeo). So to Broneirion Girlguiding Cymru, I thank you also.

Grant Cawley

"Relentless but essential. A brilliant week that coupled the kind, supportive but also fiercely enlightening approach of Phil and Sue with the verve and passion of youthful Shaz. A winning combination."

"A very good mix of age groups, so it was not all OAPs or young people. We learned from each other."

I was really looking forward to the summer school after a gap of two years and eager to learn more about performing Shakespeare's plays. Our accommodation at Broneirion set the scene and gave us a splendid backdrop to our activities. It was a relaxing, comfortable and beautiful old house, which afforded us plenty of room inside and out as we were the only residents for the whole week: delicious meals, irresistible home-made cake and biscuits, and a good bar. We worked in the billiard room, the marquee and outside on the terrace. So, we couldn't have asked for better, and set amidst the lovely Mid-Wales hills.

Our tutors, Sue Best and Phil Bowen, who run the Willow Globe Theatre on their farm, were joined by Shazia Nicholls, a graduate of LAMDA. We were so very, very fortunate to have such enthusiastic, knowledgeable, hard-working and generous-hearted teachers. They made us feel that Shakespeare belonged to us for the week: we worked on text-based exercises which enabled us to become familiar with the language, punctuation and rhythms as a key to understanding the text. We worked on scenes and single speeches which would be put together around the theme of Jaques's speech describing the Seven Ages of Man.

Our sessions were shared between Broneirion and the Willow Globe. Our first visit to the Willow Globe was on the Tuesday when luck was with us. That is, it was rainy in the morning, so we were able to sample the stage in the theatre in the barn, itself a friendly space to be in. Then for the rest of our time there, the sun came out and we were able to enjoy the Globe stage for our workshops, rehearsals and our Friday night performance. We strolled around the vegetable garden, saw the flower meadows, one full of Shakespeare's flowers, and after our performance, we were treated to a barbecue by Sue and Phil. And not to be missed out is the time spent in the wonderful library/coffee house/magical house of visual treats where the various kettles seemed always to be bubbling away on the hob and the hospitality was positively, well, Shakespearean!

On the Thursday, Victoria Williams visited us from RSC. She taught us a different approach by leading us through more physical ways to discover the emotions behind the words, so that, even if the meaning isn't clear at the start, you can investigate and discover it through various, sometimes visceral, means.

I felt it was a real treat and privilege to be performing on that wonderful stage. I have a crowd of memories of the whole week, but a special place is reserved for the performances on Friday evening of everyone we had got to know so well during the previous few days. I relished watching and enjoying all the scenes and speeches and realised how far we had journeyed in just a few days, thanks to Sue, Phil and Shazia (and Victoria), who made of us a "company" of friends as well as players.

Many, many thanks are due to them and to Sue and Teri for organising such an unforgettable week.

Carol Shone

"How can you improve on excellence?"





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I was a latecomer to this whole Summer School business, making a rash decision to join three days before it all kicked off. Therefore, I had no preconceptions as to what I would experience, and was initially daunted on learning that the week would concentrate on Shakespeare. I have no issues with the Bard at all, but I was steeling myself for a torrid and intense week of plumbing through the seemingly impenetrable text. However, my school day memories of dull, stentorian and unreachable Shakespeare, were swiftly replaced with touches of whimsy, guidance and love. We dissected passages of text through song, tableaux and beautifully barmy sessions of physical challenges and exercises. I cannot speak higher of the efforts of Phil, Sue, Shaz & Victoria; they spread their considerable talents equally with all members of the group. We came, we saw, we conquered our Shakespearean fears and graced quite possibly one of the nicest stages in existence. In five days we became a company who loved and nurtured each other to grow. It was a week of wonder and deep immersion into the acting world, set far away from most of our modern day troubles in resplendent Mid Wales. I can only describe the week as a perfect storm of brilliant organisation from the DAW: the locations sublime, the tutors exemplary and the making of lifelong new friends – priceless.

John Parkinson



"This week has done more for my confidence than any number of counselling sessions could!"



I had a wonderful time at the Summer School. I am already planning on returning! The DAW Summer School is an amazing opportunity to learn new skills to help with enhancing your local drama group, or in my case to boost my skills for future work. It was such a unique way to learn about Shakespeare, something which you do not get in a school setting! All three tutors were amazing and each brought a different skill set and approach to the classes, each making sure they spent quality time with the participants so everyone could flourish, which they did! It was also a great opportunity to meet different people from around the country. Each person brought something different to the group and I was able to learn from them as well as the tutors! I cannot wait to come back!

I would like to thank DAW for the opportunity of going to Summer School through the Bob McTurk Bursary

Jon Johnston



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The DAW Summer School at Broneirion & Willow Globe Theatre, only one word for it - Excellent! The tutors Sue & Phil from Willow Globe Theatre just wonderful, so encouraging, warm, informed, and experts in their field, just a joy to be with. Victoria Williams from the Royal Shakespeare Company thought provoking and a delight, as was Shaz, ex LAMDA who warmed us up every morning with ingenious exercises and a lovely personality. In short, if you get the chance to go next year, don't hesitate and you'll meet the most amazing fellow students!

Gareth Gibbs



Having just completed the DAW Summer School for 2015 I feel I must write and let you know how much I enjoyed everything about the course. I have attended Summer School on two separate occasions and enjoyed each of them in different ways but this year it was especially good. Before I arrived I didn't really know very much about Shakespeare and how to deliver the lines, but the expertise of the three tutors helping us to unlock the words and to understand the text opened up a whole new world for me. I have gone from wanting to know more about the plays to understanding the language and the techniques needed to deliver the speeches correctly. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to understand Shakespeare. I would also like to let you know how much the experience was improved by having young people present. I understand that they received a bursary to enable them to attend the Summer School. I felt that the improvement was very marked in all four youngsters and I know from talking to them that they didn't really know anything about "the Bard" or how to approach his plays when they arrived. By the end of the week they were excited about performing them on the Willow Globe Theatre stage and talking about not wanting to wait until next year. That I think tells you how successful the week turned out to be. I wonder if another year it would be possible to offer a bursary for those of us who are of a pensionable age. I realise that this is asking a lot, but it would be marvellous if other 'oldies' like myself could have the opportunity to experience working with enthusiastic young people with the same passion for the theatre. Thank you again to the Drama Association of Wales for making this magical experience possible. Please keep me on your mailing list for next years' Summer School and for any workshops you hold during the year.

Carol Strutt

