

Unlock the magic of Shakespeare

Inspire creativity, ignite imagination, and deepen understanding of one of the greatest playwrights in history. Wild Will Theatre Company, based in the South Hams, invites schools to participate in our dynamic outreach programme designed to make Shakespeare's works accessible, engaging, and relevant for year 6 and above.

Rob Heyland

Wild Will is the brainchild of Rob Heyland. Rob studied drama at The Central School of Speech and Drama. He acted for over 20 years, starring in TV drama series and playing many lead roles in the West End and at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

As a distinguished, BAFTA award-winning screenwriter, he has also worked on many prominent TV series. Rob has also run arts centres and theatre, and has worked with Judi Dench, Mark Rylance and Steven Berkoff.

Experience in Schools

Rob did not enjoy studying Shakespeare at school but joining the RSC turned this around. While at Stratford he ran classes at Alcester Grammar, St Benedict's and Evesham High School, inspiring GCSE and A Level students to achieve improved exam results. Before moving to Holbeton he lived in Ireland and worked with Rathdown School for Girls, one of Ireland's foremost colleges.



Rob Heyland (left) directing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2023





Opportunities for Schools

Wild Will can now bring an inspiring and interactive understanding of Shakespeare's words and intentions into schools. Rob has a very easy and accessible manner. The young like him; his boundless enthusiasm and joy are infectious and by generating real engagement, exam results will benefit.

With charitable status Wild Will is able to secure outreach funding. Working closely with teachers the company is keen to learn how best it can contribute and is confident it can bring something truly worthwhile to the learning process. Around 10 school children are already involved with the company, playing leading parts and minor roles.

The cost to schools

Wild Will Theatre can now deliver subsidised workshops. Costs are usually only the expenses of those involved.

Sessions are planned to last around 45-60 minutes.

Tailored Workshops

All ideas will be tailored to a school's specific needs, focusing on students' studies while supporting the work of the teachers as fully as possible. A list of possible workshops follows below.

The objectives are to inspire students to see the essence of the plays and their context, to bring the text and the world of theatre alive, to improve confidence, have fun and to reach out to those who are disaffected or confused.

Talks: From Prep to Performance

Shakespeare the man in 16th century London, contrasting with present times. The writing, casting, rehearsing, set-making and performance. The career of an actor/writer and what a director does.

Sonnets

An RSC exercise - actors perform sonnets face-to-face. Repetition brings one small piece of text to life, demonstrating the essence of what acting means.



Scenes

Wild Will actors will perform specific scenes, and then draw students in one-by-one until they have taken over. Teachers may choose scene(s).

Six Minute Shakespeare

Working as a group, cutting everything extraneous and non essential. Even the most unmotivated students rise up in defence of favourite passages. When the play is reduced to an absolute shell, it is performed breathlessly and hilariously, to peers and even parents.

Performances in School

The company performs either Macbeth or Midsummer Night's Dream (more plays to follow). Students engage with the actors seeing the practical challenges as the company acclimatises to a new space. The play is performed followed by Q&A.

Alternatively, students are drawn into the production and might take part in the final public performance. (Suitable for Activities Week).

Teaching Methods

Taking the fear out of the text and savouring the breadth of language that still speaks to us after 400 years, often in startlingly modern and accessible ways.

Examining the characters and how they each, in such varied and individual ways, express their feelings.

Examining how the themes and narrative of the plays lay bare the challenges of past and current times.

Rob believes the word "play" is at the very heart of Shakespeare, a chance to step out of the humdrum and into another world, to be other than we are.

Recent Productions

In 2023 and 2024 Wild Will Theatre Company staged sell out performances in Mothecombe Gardens, Holbeton. Audiences were fully immersed and Rob's ability to coach members of the local community was truly impressive. Twelfth Night will be staged next.



Feedback from students

“Rob has been one of the most influential people I've met in terms of encouraging my passion for acting. With his crazy but wonderful ideas and his devotion to creating performances which entice an audience, he has completely changed the way I view theatre.”

Through working with Rob and the Wild Will Theatre company, I have fallen deeply in love with the beauty of Shakespeare's language.

I have seen how Shakespeare can be accessed by a contemporary audience and have come to appreciate the poetic nature of Shakespeare's plays. In rehearsals, Rob advises us not to rush or force ourselves into making solid decisions and often talks about the journey of discovering a character.

He has made me feel comfortable trying lots of different things out and playing around when rehearsing scenes.

I feel so lucky to have met Rob and am grateful for the opportunity to be directed by him. It really has changed my life.”

“We were extremely excited to be offered the position of ‘police’ fairies in Wild Will's production of ‘A Midsummer Night's Dream’. No matter how many times we had seen it being rehearsed, each scene had us captivated.”

“It's been an invaluable experience which frankly would have been extremely beneficial to us during our GCSE years. But beyond the choke-hold of exams, it has given us a genuine passion for English.”

“Rob is clearly a total expert and alongside the tightly-knit team of Wild Will, could offer amazing opportunities for students.”

“Fred is so much happier now he's found Wild Will Theatre Company. He enjoys being part of its cast, loves being outdoors in such a beautiful space, loves learning more about acting. He had never even read any Shakespeare before.”

“When Rob is directing he gets you to do things in a friendly and funny way. It's indescribable how he does it... you really have to be there.”



Contact us

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 THEATRE COMPANY

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