

Welcome and Registration: Santa Marta
Keynote: SM10
Lectures: SM10
Seminars: SM10
Masterclass: SM10
Meetings with the actors: VSF Q&A: SM10
Open rehearsal Group B + Q&A: Conservatorio di Verona, "Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco" Via Abramo Massalongo, 2 37121 Verona
Closing Remarks: SM10
City tour/Walking lecture: from Santa Marta
VSF: Performances at the SS Trinità Theatre
Welcome Aperitivo: teatro SS.Trinità

GROUP A

Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust)

“From Comedy to Tragic-comedy: Dreams of Love and Desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*”

This illustrated, opening session seeks to introduce both works as plays to be imagined in performance, and will consider the dynamics and expressions of friendship, love, sex, and desire, theatre history, characterisation, and poetic and dramatic styles. As we appreciate how both works contain elements of the surreal - *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in its depiction of dreams, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (co-authored with John Fletcher) in its imagery and verbal style - we also consider Shakespeare's development as a writer across these two works.

Silvia Bigliazzi (University of Verona)

“*Amor hereos* and Lovesickness: Vicissitudes of the Eroticised Self in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*”

The Two Noble Kinsmen strongly intertwines medical discourse about erotic love with self-conscious forms of theatrical representation of desire, highlighting theatre's insights into areas of amorous suffering left unsolved by contemporary medical lore. This session moves from a reflection on Renaissance medical views

regarding love-related ailments, pinpointing the intersections among four predominant frameworks: humoral, psychological, sexual, and Neoplatonic. Building upon this foundation, the analysis shifts to the evolving nature of seventeenth-century medical education, which increasingly adopted a gender-neutral approach to diagnosing erotic disturbances, emphasising the predominantly nervous features of conditions such as hysteria. Special attention is given to lovesickness and greensickness, two ailments often addressed by contemporary drama with varying implications of gender and class. By engaging with contemporary ideas about sanity, erotic malady and the shattering of identity through disruptive desire, this play also engages with the repercussions of love's destabilising force, either overtly or subtly highlighting concern over social subversion stemming from overwhelming passion, as a manifestation of the emerging eroticised self. This discussion encompasses both hetero- and homoerotic themes.

Victoria Bladen (The University of Queensland)

“Fairy-Thinking and the Labyrinth: Constructing the Forest in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595)”

In Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595), the forest outside Athens functions as an alternative space to the courtly world of supposed order and the rule of law. Constructed as a palimpsest of various layers, the forest is multi-faceted with shifting guises and roles. As a mirror to the court, it reflects government in a different form; and, in its hints at eco-disorder, it resonates with the flawed leadership and failed nurturing of patriarchal Athenian society. Maze-like and a place of wonder, *Dream*’s forest is both enchanting and threatening, and the motif of the labyrinth, and the Theseus and Minotaur intertext, haunt the forest. The forest is also a creative blank space, where desires and fears can be projected and encountered, offering a place to perform and rehearse the potential for tragedy and transformation. In the play, the fairies and the forest are closely aligned, both leading mortals astray and literalising the journey of the psyche through the labyrinth. This paper argues that the interlinked fairies and forest are key to the play’s imaginary, and that their overlapping mythic intertexts enable thinking through human flaws and nurturing responsibilities. Through the fairies and the forest, humans confront the *other* within themselves in negotiating the arboreal labyrinth and moving towards renewal.

Victoria Bladen (UQ)

Masterclass: “Writing a Research Paper on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: Scaffolding Steps”

This workshop is designed to help students with writing their summer school paper and, in the process, develop a **methodology** for approaching research essays in literary studies. It is comprised of 2 parts:

1. *Overview of the Scaffolding Steps*: Starting with the ideas of J. Hillis Miller on fast and slow readings of texts, this section outlines a methodology that breaks research projects into small steps, emphasising active close reading and exploring a student’s ideas before they analyse the secondary literature. The steps (Steps 1-20) take a student from preliminary research and brainstorming an idea to editing techniques for a full draft.
2. *Brainstorming Mind Maps and Drafting an Abstract*: In small groups, students will brainstorm their ideas for a paper, creating a **mind map** and **draft abstract**. They will then share the draft abstracts in their groups for constructive feedback.

Piero Boitani (Sapienza University of Rome)

“Invention and Tradition of the *Two Noble Kinsmen*: From Epic Poetry to Drama and Fable”

Boccaccio invented it with the *Teseida*, Chaucer adapted it in the *Knight’s Tale*, Fletcher and Shakespeare turned it into a play, Dryden transformed it into a “Fable”. The story of ’two — perhaps not very noble — kinsmen fighting for the same lady goes through genres and genders.

Fernando Cioni (University of Florence)

“Fairies, Elves and Dreams: the Enchanted Wood of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*”

A Midsummer Night's Dream brings us to the enchanted world of the forest, where fairies and elves meet humans and clash with them. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an intricate drama that stages different and contrasting worlds, mirrors a reality presented as a dream, and that questions the art of dramatic representation and illusion. During the class we will explore some of the main themes of the play, such as the dream, the fairyland and their metamorphic nature. We will also explore how these themes have been performed and perceived during the stage history of the play.

Tania Demetriou (Cambridge University)

“Comedy, Tragedy, and Sources in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*”

This lecture will consider the mixing of genre in these two very different plays about Theseus, and reflect on how Shakespeare's reading influenced his ideas about representation and happy endings at each of these two moments in his career, set chronologically poles apart.

Sidia Fiorato (University of Verona)

“*A Midsummer Night's Dream* between Law and Dance”

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents us with a multifaceted reflection on love, female sexuality, and power, displacing the setting between Athens and the forest. The play presents various instances of rebellion against established social and political authority, especially about the female figures, addressing issues of filial and love relationships which at the same time mirror and contravene the social and political conventions of the time. The class will propose an analysis of these issues through the critical lens of law and literature and selected case studies of theatrical and balletic adaptations.

Paul Goodwin (The Shakespeare Edit)

Masterclass (Voice & Text)

This session will explore how the sound and movement of language; through the body, through the blood and through the imagination - can reveal and illuminate the "world" of the play. Short pieces of text (given on the day) from both “*A Midsummer Night's Dream*” and “*The Two Noble Kinsmen*” will be explored through a series of practical exercises, and through the sensation of these experiences, a subconscious response to the text and the play(s) will emerge. This fresh point of departure - one that is sensory - will bring a level of emotional and visceral understanding to both plays.

Jason Lawrence (University of Hull)

“‘All the counsel that we two have shared, / The sisters' vows': Female Friendship and Male Rivalry in Shakespeare's Athenian plays”

Despite being composed almost twenty years apart, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (written in collaboration with John Fletcher, c. 1614) demonstrate a shared interest in the dramatic representation of female friendship, which will be the primary focus of this interactive lecture session. Whilst close male friendship is a prominent feature of Shakespeare's plays from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *The Winter's Tale*, where it is often imperilled by the (perceived) advent of sexual desire for the same woman, discourses around female friendship are less prominent in the plays. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the rivalry between Lysander and Demetrius for the affections of first Hermia and then Helena is not borne of an established friendship, so Shakespeare unusually chooses to focus instead on the dramatic impact of this rivalry on the friendship between the two female characters, conveyed most

powerfully by Helena in the central act of the play. In the later collaborative Athenian play, where the destructive male friendship between Palamon and Arcite is modelled on its primary source in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, the two playwrights choose to add, in a scene commonly attributed to Shakespeare, Emilia's moving recollection of her childhood friend Flavina, one of many intertextual allusions to earlier Shakespeare plays in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which will be explored in this session through the lens of female friendship specifically.

Cristiano Ragni (University of Verona)

“Using Digital Tools to Explore *A Midsummer Night's Dream*”

The aim of this seminar is to introduce students to some easy techniques which can help not only with illustrating broader arguments with concrete textual detail, but also reveal interesting and potentially unexpected features of a text. We will apply these techniques to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, exploring how Shakespeare used language to create his play, and thinking about the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Students will be provided with some critical reading to complete before the seminar, allowing them to connect the possibilities opened up by digital tools to key literary-critical issues.

Beatrice Righetti (University of Verona)

“Reimagining *The Two Noble Kinsmen*: Adaptation, Authorship, and Contemporary Performance”

This seminar will explore two exciting productions of Fletcher and Shakespeare's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. In 2016, Blanche McIntyre staged the play at the Swan Theatre, highlighting its underlying erotic strangeness and adopting distinct approaches to the Shakespearean and Fletcherean portions of the text. In contrast, Barrie McIntyre's 2018 production at Shakespeare's Globe reimagined the play as a vibrant and engaging performance, featuring colourful costumes and energetic dances, in stark contrast to the warlike atmosphere of McIntyre's adaptation.

Following a brief introduction to the play, students will watch both adaptations, with pauses for discussion on remediation processes and linguistic adaptation, particularly in relation to the challenges posed by its co-authorship. This seminar will examine how these productions interpret key characters and motifs, with a particular focus on the representation of female characters and their adaptation to contemporary sensibilities. Constant references to the Shakespearean text during the screenings will enhance students' appreciation of the complexities and challenges of adapting Shakespeare to new performative genres and artistic media. Active participation in the discussion is encouraged throughout the session.

Emanuel Stelzer (University of Verona)

“Male Anxiety and Homosociality in Shakespeare's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*”

In this seminar we will talk about forms of homosociality and male anxiety as expressed in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. We will discuss the play's Italian and English sources (from Boccaccio's *Teseida* to Chaucer's “Knight's Tale”) and set those themes in context with other Shakespearean plays (especially *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Winter's Tale*) in order to analyse how a) masculinity is constructed in the world of Shakespeare and Fletcher's tragicomedy; b) that portrayal spoke to early modern cultural concerns, and c) such gender dynamics have been adapted in modern and contemporary times.

Lisa Wolpe

Masterclass: “The Two Noble Kinsmen”

Analysis of an adaptation of TWO NOBLE KINSMEN, which was conceived and directed by Lisa Wolpe and presented at The Estates Theater in Prague for the Prague Shakespeare Company Summer Training Intensive in July, 2024. “A stunningly Queer tragicomedy, featuring base noblemen, misguided monarchs, and hateful lovers. A captured Amazon virgin who longs to be left alone is set up as a prize for prideful warriors – who will stop at nothing to win the day. A young

girl goes mad – tricked, raped and ruined in her pursuit of an impossible dream.” Video excerpts from this one-hour adaptation (from a play written by Shakespeare and Fletcher, taken from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*) will be shown, and a conversation about the play and Q&A will be led by Lisa Wolpe.

Roberta Zaroni (University of Verona) - Interview with Philip Parr

Contemporary adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Timon of Athens* – Conversation with Philip Parr

Philip Parr is an acclaimed director of theatre, opera, and festivals, and a visionary creative producer. Philip Parr has crafted a bold new theatrical experience that fuses *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Timon of Athens*. Conceived as both an artistic and educational adventure, the production was created to offer 18 talented student performers a rich challenge – stretching their skills with complex roles and exploring the nuances of classical text. Staged in the open air, this unique performance transforms a park into a living theatre, with the second act in promenade, drawing the audience into the heart of the action as they move with the story. In Philip Parr’s play teaching meets storytelling, and adaptation.