

Shakespeare Globe Theatre bridges performance and reality in 'King Lear'

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The Shakespeare Globe Theatre's performance of "King Lear" at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts makes something out of nothing.

"We're in for an ordeal," declared English professor Rebecca Bushnell at Wednesday night's pre-show. Bushnell, president of the Shakespeare Association of America, talked about the play's emphasis on the word "nothing."

In the play, King Lear asks his three daughters which one loves him most. While the two eldest sing his praises, the daughter who truly loves him most says nothing because she does not feel that words or actions can adequately express her love. The king goes on to disown her, while his eldest daughters proceed to betray him.

The opening night performance drew in the crowd by breaking the boundary between actor and audience.

At the beginning of the show, audience members waited for the lights to dim. However, an enthusiastic actor explained that the theater company leaves the lights on to simulate daylight.

It wasn't just scenery that brought the audience close to the performance. Before the show, the actors walked along the aisles of the theatre, talking to audience members. Later — during the play — King Lear, played by Joseph Marcell, looked into the crowd and asked, "Do you know who I am?"

The audience laughed. Those who recognized him knew that the actor also played Geoffrey, the butler in "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."

Marcell had both a reversal in character and social status in his role as King Lear from that of Geoffrey. The show featured seven other actors, all of whom played multiple roles in the show, including sound effects and crew.

"I think it's really cool how they break the fourth wall," Wharton freshman Felipe Haddad said. "This is the first play that I've seen that does it in that way."

The lucid boundaries between performance and reality echoed the sentiments Bushnell shared during the pre-show. "Theatre is both real and unreal at the same time," she said.

DISCUSSION
