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## Next Stop, U.S.A.: A Taste of Elizabethan Theater

By [PATRICK HEALY](#)

LONDON — After a four-year absence from the United States, [Shakespeare's](#) Globe is returning in the fall to stage “Love’s Labour’s Lost” at seven universities and a college-town theater over three months, with the hope of providing an authentically Elizabethan theatrical experience to American audiences.

The Globe brought “Twelfth Night” in 2003 and “Measure for Measure” in 2005, which enjoyed a sold-out run at St. Ann’s Warehouse. (“Twelfth Night” did not come to New York.) “Love’s Labour’s Lost,” an early Shakespeare comedy about strong-willed young nobles matching wits and falling in love despite themselves, will conclude its run in December at [Pace University](#), in Lower Manhattan.

Dominic Dromgoole, artistic director of the Globe, said he had waited to do another tour of the United States until he had found his feet at the theater, which he took over from the actor Mark Rylance in 2005.

“I wanted to establish a sense of confidence and authority and a sense of style,” Mr. Dromgoole said in his office at the Globe here. “I wanted to lay a good foundation before we went to America again, and now we’re hoping to make it a regular thing.”

Touring America is a relatively rare undertaking for a British theater company. The [Royal Shakespeare Company](#) has performed at some theaters and schools, like the [University of Michigan](#), but usually the expense is prohibitive.

Mr. Dromgoole said the Globe would not make money from the tour, but also hoped not to lose any. The budget is about \$1 million, with the Globe and the universities splitting the cost and the campuses arranging housing for the actors and crew.

The Globe also has an income-generating Education Academy that provides Shakespeare courses for some American universities, including some on the tour, like the [University of California, Davis](#), where the Globe will hold master classes as well as stage “Love’s Labour’s Lost” in November. (In California the tour also stops at Santa Monica College and the [University of California, Santa Barbara](#).)

Jeremy Ganter, associate executive director of the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts on the Davis campus, said that while his campus’s 1,800-seat theater was host to about 70 touring productions a year, he expected none would look and feel like the Globe production.

“A number of us have been to the Globe, with its open-air space and people standing on the ground throughout the performance, and we’re curious about whether they can recreate that experience here,” Mr. Ganter said. “Of course, our audience will be sitting, but we’re looking for other ways to conjure the feel of the Globe.”

Since the Globe cannot reconfigure American university theaters to resemble its space here, Mr. Dromgoole said he planned to make small adjustments. The lights will remain on in the theater, to try to mimic the outdoor feel of the Globe, and characters will talk directly to audience members (or look at them as they talk to other characters) in the spirit of “the democratic shared space and the talk-back quality that was a part of Shakespeare’s original Globe productions,” he said.

“We want to make sure that just because we’ll be in more traditional theater spaces, we don’t fall back into conventional theater practices,” he added. “It’s very easy to turn down the lights and have a recording of crickets chirping to create atmosphere. We don’t want that.”

Michelle Terry, who played the Princess of France in “Love’s Labour’s Lost” in the original Globe production in 2007 and will again on tour, said, “At the Globe, if a character asks a question onstage, there’s a chance that someone in the audience will answer back.”

She added: “There’s also a moment in the play when the Princess of France is sitting out among the audience, away from the stage. At one performance I could feel someone pulling the strings on my corset. I turned and the person said, ‘I’m terribly sorry, but your corset has become undone and I was doing it up.’ And I just said, ‘O.K., cheers, carry on.’ ”

Mr. Dromgoole said he believed “Love’s Labour’s Lost” would be an especially good fit for university audiences because it explores the sexual politics between a group of young men — Ferdinand, the king of Navarre, and his nobles — and the women with whom they spar and fall in love, a group led by the Princess of France.

“It’s the only Shakespeare play with a real girl gang who take control of the proceedings,” he said. “It has a youthful, zesty, sexy energy to it. But it can also be the single most irritating play in the canon, with these kids being witty with each other. You sometimes want to roll up your program and go onto the stage and beat them with it. So we’re excited to see how American audiences react.”

Ms. Terry added that for her, one pleasure of touring abroad was seeing the different responses that a production provokes.

“When we took the show to South Korea after our run at the Globe in 2007, it was fascinating to see how the Koreans reacted to the play’s sexual politics,” she said. “They were so shocked by a moment in the play when I lift up my skirt, for instance. I heard gasps!”

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