

Audience Focus group led by Sarah McCourt on Filter's *Twelfth Night*
Exeter University, 27th October 2011



DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
Thornlea
New North Road
Exeter
EX4 4LA

26 October 2010

I am currently undertaking a PhD in Drama at Exeter University exploring the processes used to adapt Shakespeare's plays for casts of nine or less.

I started my research in February 2009 and am expecting to complete it in February 2012. During that time I will be conducting research into the work of theatre practitioners engaged in creating small, touring interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Britain

As part of this research, I am conducting a focus group interview with audience members about their response to Filter Theatre's *Twelfth Night* which will help to inform my research into the reception of this production.

A digital audio copy of the interviews will be recorded. Material from the audio recording may be used in publications directly associated with the PhD. This may include quotations within the thesis itself, a transcription of the interview included in the appendix of the thesis, and use of quotations in conference papers, articles submitted to academic journals and any future publication of the thesis in book form which would be available to the general public.

I will make every effort to inform those who have contributed interviews of any publication details. I am bound by the code of ethics for researchers established by the University, and overseen by its Ethics Committee.

By signing this form, you will confirm your understanding of the research as explained above, and your willingness to participate in the interview process and to assign copyright over interview materials to myself only for the purposes laid out above.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for your contribution.

Sarah McCourt
Tel: 07915 666276
slm201@exeter.ac.uk
Supervisor: Professor Mick Mangan

- I confirm that I wish to participate in the interview process for the research as explained above.
- I assign copyright over the audio recording and transcription of the interview to Sarah McCourt for the purposes laid out above.

Signed: V. B. BOWN

Date: 27/10/2010

Name: VIRGINIA BOWN (please print)

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Signed: *N Pollard*.....

Date: *27.10.10*.....

Name: *NICOLA POLLARD*..... (please print)

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Signed: *Areti Poulatsidou*

Date: 27.10.2010

Name: Areti Poulatsidou (please print)

SM Focus group questions, Wednesday 27th of October. Okay, so if we could start off just by introducing yourself, saying what course you are on and the performance that you went to.

GB Okay so my name's Ginnie Bown, and I study drama and I went on the Saturday night.

NP Hello my name's Nic Pollard. I'm doing Staging Shakespeare MFA, I went on a Saturday afternoon.

AP My name is Areti Poulatsidou. I'm doing the MA in Applied Drama and I saw the play on Saturday 9th October at 2.30.

SM I'm going to start this from the point of view of spectators going in to see the performance. So I wanted to ask what expectations did you have of the performance before you actually went to see it, and what sparked those expectations?

GB From the poster I thought it would be a little bit quirky just because it sort of just like a lot of colour on the poster and like sort of really weird images and so I sort of knew already it was going to be a bit different and then the fact that RSC had merged with Filter. I didn't know before what Filter was ((laughing)) but RSC obviously made you think it would be quite prestigious and maybe...I don't know, maybe that gave off some...like a different expectation to some people because if it's RSC then maybe it would be more straight cut, but yeah I think I knew it would be quite quirky.

NP Yeah the same from the publicity and like the bizarre man with the flying goggles or whatever it is, I thought, "Yeah it's not going to be sort of Globe style, traditional, conventional Shakespeare" but I looked at the leaflet and

thought, "Well I don't know who Filter is" and then it said it's in association with the RSC and guiltily I did think, "Ah it should be good then" not because I think everything in the RSC is good, but it should at least have a quality to it. I thought, "I might not enjoy it, but it should have a quality". So I wasn't expecting it to be...I wasn't expecting the full text, I wasn't expecting it to be, as I said, like conventional...I was expecting it to be a bit quirky and it was ((laughing)).

AP I had watched the play before, I mean back in Greece and in Greek, but I think that I didn't have any clue what the play would be like, the performance. I just knew from Jerri that we should wear a funny hat and another one...a Shakespeare guy, Steven, told me that we will have fun. So I didn't know what to expect. It didn't sound like Shakespeare.

SM So how did the actual production meet up to those expectations?

NP It was definitely quirky and a bit zany and different as I was expecting, but I was hoping it would...it wasn't that it was a bad production, nothing was like...nothing was particularly like badly done, nothing was badly spoken or poorly choreographed, it was clearly rehearsed and rehearsed and obviously they'd performed it previously as well, but as I said to someone a while ago, *Twelfth Night's* got so much more in it than just the comedy and they did just pull out the comedy, which was suitable for what they wanted, but it gets me sometimes that things like *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* and perhaps the more...and *Much Ado*, like the more sort of basic Shakespeare to some people perceive them that you might do in like year 9 or 10 or something and are

played just as that when actually there's so much to *Twelfth Night* that's tragic or disturbing and black and *Twelfth Night* was kind of made into a massive rave or party or something and I had a feeling that was what it was going to happen and it did and I was really hoping there'd be a little bit of it that just made me go, "That's also *Twelfth Night*, it's not the comedy" but that wasn't there ((laughing)).

GB Yeah I think I'd agree. I think, as I said before, I thought it would be quirky, but not as much as it was. Like it did go like full out, pulled all the stops out on just being crazy and yeah it was like a party, like a big party and I think it did maybe miss out some of the...as you were saying, like miss out some of the good stuff from *Twelfth Night* by maybe making it so funny and yeah like *Twelfth Night's* already sort of a really good, funny play and maybe by trying to make it even more funny it lost some of like it's original quality a little bit.

AP I think that there were many factors which combined together made me feel bored because some people think even the original play is boring. I think I happen to be one of them. I'm not proud of it, but yes and yeah, for example it was 2.30 on a Saturday, morning for students. So yeah it was a bit weird and of course I'm not very familiar to that language or the text in English so I just...I think that I was kind of disappointed and I wanted it to end, but there were some elements that I really enjoyed and when it...if it has to do with my expectations I really enjoy when people get to kind of ruin that image of a play that is so...people respect that and so yeah I think that this made me...I think it was a positive element for me.

NP I was hoping they might challenge the stereotypes of the characters a little bit and I think with Sir Andrew they did because so often he is portrayed as sort of a tall, lanky, long haired, sallow faced man with hair down below his shoulders and he wasn't, which I thought was good, but then I thought Olivia, when the actors were on the stage, you could just go, "That's blatantly going to be Olivia". Then Maria was a bit different because Maria's quite a like a bustly little sort of big-chested, little woman and she wasn't but in terms of Olivia I thought they could've done more with that and explored the character just a bit more rather than gone for the kind of regal...I mean she had a lovely vocal tone, but kind of what you'd expect from Olivia, there wasn't anything...I think like other aspects in the production that was one that could've been played out with a bit more and they kind of just, "Well now that's Olivia sorted. We're going to do the pizzas" or whatever, you know.

GB Yeah, what was I going to say? I can't remember what I was going to say, sorry ((laughing)).

SM Because the two characters that you picked up are both female, was there an aspect do you think that the male characters were better developed than the female characters?

NP I think perhaps this production played a bit more with the males anyway just because of maybe the script they were given because Malvolio was played with a lot. Orsino was...well he started the play and immediately became a focal point and you could almost see him as perhaps the leader of the troop in a way because of the way he seemed to like orchestrate them all sitting down and, "Oh we've got to start now" and that sort of getting the

audience in the palm of his hand and we discussed in my session about the Maria/Feste sort of almost problem in that there wasn't much of a distinguishing between the two of them because she wore the same outfit and had a red nose for Feste, but if someone said when she put the red nose on to Malvolio was she then doing that...did she come away from that actually without the red nose as Maria or was she still Feste? And I don't think the way Toby reacted to her differed greatly when she was Maria, the woman he's in love with, or Feste who's a fool that's a few social levels below him. So I think perhaps...and then there was the Viola character which I think maybe character...and I don't know if I truly believe this, but some of the characters could've been...I think characterisation as a whole could've been played with a bit more. Perhaps they were going for more of a showing it than an actually being it effect and co-ordination with sort of all the other Brechtian ideas, but it just...you know what I mean, is like the problems with Viola and Sebastian at the end of the play, but that might come up later before I rant about that ((laughing)).

GB Yeah I think I'd probably agree with like the whole Feste/Maria thing that was...it was quite difficult to distinguish and the fact...I don't know, sort of like you felt like you're walking into the rehearsal sort of thing anyway because they're like in their own clothes and it felt like...so I don't know, maybe that added to it because if they're a bit underdeveloped then the whole thing might've been intended to have like a sort of underdeveloped aspect because it was quite like intentionally messy in places with like the wires everywhere and the whole just general bit of like chaos,

but yeah I think I'd agree that the female characters did seem less developed than the males. I don't know why.

SM **Some of you went to the Matinee and some of you went to evening so you would've had slightly different mixes of audience. What were the moods of the audience?**

AP As I said, I think it was too early for Saturday morning. So yes people were still sleeping, but yeah I meant it was a big party at the end so some of them got really cheered up and some of them had tequila so ((laughing))...and I noticed that all of the children were so excited that they could interact.

GB Yeah I think...sorry, like the association with like tequila and pizzas feels like a really evening thing. So maybe like you get...you'll have...if you're seeing that and being involved in that in the middle of the day, it's a really different feel so it's like, "Why do you want to be doing tequila shots at 2.30 in the afternoon sort of thing?" Maybe you wouldn't get so involved with the whole party feel because, you know, it's still like light outside and your day has followed like a different pattern whereas like if you saw the evening performance you've...I don't know, you're more set on the sort of...I don't know.

NP Maybe perhaps the evening's more like a scheduled time for relaxing, you've worked during the day and then you can...I actually found that there is...I have ranted about this many times, there were two children in front of me, boys, maybe...I'm rubbish at guessing children's ages, but both under ten, I'd say ten, eight, nine and seven, something like that and they did not sit still for the entire production. The only bits they paid attention to were

when the pizza was passed around and the bit with the hats and the Velcro balls, but he annoyed me for the entire way through the production and their Dad didn't tell them to sit still, like they made paper aeroplanes out of their programmes and they rolled it up and were looking at each other through it and were playing...they ended up with the pizza box and they started rustling with that until Dad took it off them, they weren't...I did feel slightly sorry for them at first because I thought...I think they were still...I don't think that Shakespeare should have an age limit, but I think they were too...I don't think they...they just weren't...I mean they might've been to the theatre before, but they really perked up when it was kind of like, you know, the pizza time and, "Can we come on stage and have fun?" And they just didn't care about engaging with the plot and the characters and I kind of understood that and I think that perhaps the performance...there were bits when I found myself thinking about other things or kind of just watching someone else in the audience and I just think it was...for me it wasn't the sort of action that really pulled me in, I don't think it was really meaningful. I think that was a problem I found with it. Like some people can sort of sit back and relax and just watch it, but I was just getting distracted by anything, largely the little boys in front of me and yeah I think...I mean some of the audience absolutely loved it, like there was a lot of people from my course on the left hand side and some of them were like...with the tequila bit two of them were up straight away, but I don't know, I kind of got the...like I found the bit with the Velcro balls and the hat actually when there were some little people on stage there seemed to be a lack of really helping them in, "This is what you do" and they were sort of standing there and people were being given the balls in the audience and

they were like...and they were looking a bit confused and, "Just please throw it at the small child wearing the hat" and they were like, "Oh okay" and I got the impression that our audience was quite reticent at first to join in because when she said, "Has anyone got a coat?" There was a massive pause and the girl was like, "Seriously I do need a coat. Does anyone have a man's jacket?" And eventually this man in the stalls area put his hand up and offered it and then I think the same with the hat as well, but there was a great...and I think that's quite a hard barrier to break because it's a very conventional theatre space and I think space has a lot to do with it. Like you kind of go into a space like that, you might have seen other performances in that where, you know, classical productions where you're expected just to sit and listen and applaud, maybe laugh a bit, maybe not compared with other spaces like studios when you're just a bit closer to them, perhaps you've had a class in there earlier, it's just a more relaxed space whereas this, you know, you had the ushers and the theatre bar and it was all quite sort of almost proper on the outside and then they expect you just to step in and go, "Oh I can relax now". It's very hard to do that and I think that was a bit of a...I think with the audience that was...we had a lot of older people in our audience I think. Sort of middle aged and I think they have been brought up, this is sort of a relatively new style of theatre this joining in, break the fourth wall, get up on stage unless it's a pantomime and I think they were all a bit sort of, "This isn't what you do".

GB There's a couple of people that walked out of ours...a couple of older people, like it's got to be in the first 10 minutes were just like out of there ((laughing)) and it was maybe a little bit shocking because they hadn't really

given it a chance, but I think from the first 10 minutes it sort of carried on in the same sort of light anyway so maybe they probably wouldn't have enjoyed it, but I didn't agree with the whole...with the children being a little bit out of it because the plot was quite hard to follow, like I found the plot quite hard to follow so then it's like...especially with children, they have nothing to follow so when the ball bits comes on it's like that's what they have to pick up on as they get really into all that and then they try and like...so with the pizza box that was the most exciting thing for them so they cling onto that and like play around a bit because the rest of it they're not really focussing on because it's sort of lost a bit, the whole plot was...it felt a little bit shoved aside sometimes for the more like whole like aesthetics of the performance was more like vocal than like deep and meaning or something.

NP I mean I found things to watch because I was sitting there thinking about the staging that they'd used and the stage manager woman at the back...

GB Oh yeah ((laughing)).

NP ...during my performance and the musicians at the side rather than thinking, "Oh this is just boring me" because *Twelfth Night* as a play doesn't bore me, it's my favourite...I think it's my favourite Shakespeare for various reasons and I was just...it wasn't necessarily their performance that kept me engaged it was kind of waiting for another bit of *Twelfth Night* to come out and it just never really came.

SM What sort of mix did you have in the audience? Did you notice the people around you specifically?

AP Their ages and stuff?

SM **Yeah, yeah.**

AP I don't know. There were many kids, but many students and older people and I think I noticed some old people leaving the theatre, yes quite soon.

SM **So do you think they handled the different age groups of the audience well?**

GB I think it's hard for the sort of performance they put on to work out who they're almost aiming it at because maybe older people wouldn't have liked Shakespeare being played with that much, but then for younger children to follow...sort of maybe it was aimed at people in the middle gap, I don't really know because like a lot of the people that are our age or like a little bit older enjoyed it then like younger children didn't really understand and older people didn't like how it had been changed around. So I don't know. It's hard to know who they were aiming it at so I don't know how to work out how they handled that.

NP I'd loved to have taken my Dad ((laughing)) to see what he'd have thought. I think in terms of like the sort of rock music that Malvolio had was kind of aimed at maybe people our age a little bit above and I don't think...I don't know, you shouldn't have to dumb Shakespeare down to get young people interested, but like children there's got to be something and I think they kind of thought, "Oh well if we can have...and it could be seen that if we have one...as you said, or you said, one scene when they can throw balls at each other and there will be Velcro hats and that's funny and then there'll be pizza, that'll keep them amused" well not for the first 25 minutes before the party, it's not going to or whatever...as you say, that's like

one chunk in the middle and then at the end so kind of like, "Oh well now it's just the play and I don't know what's going on" and I think, again, for like your older end of the audience we had a couple of like 70's people walking out. There wasn't really...there was a little bit of convention I suppose in the Olivia/Viola scene, you know, what is your parentage etcetera? But I don't think perhaps...I mean I can't say what a 50 or 60 year old person would've thought, but perhaps there wasn't enough of that to keep them kind of enjoying it. I mean I found some of it a bit awkward and I'm only 21 so...but...

AP It is hard to answer that question, but just by watching a play you can see the whole process behind that play and sometimes you can find out how this play was built in a way and yeah because it's devised and I think that I'm confused because they have been confused while devising that piece and I just think that they were trying to please everybody and you can see that because they have different type...styles of acting or getting people engaged. So...

NP It did strike me a little bit as, "We'd like to give our audience a good time" rather than, "We're going to present *Twelfth Night*" maybe. I just think there was, in my opinion, there was too little of *Twelfth Night* and too much of the other bits, which I'm not saying shouldn't be used in theatre or shouldn't be used in a production or shouldn't be used in Shakespeare, I just think the balance was unequal. Like I mean we said like it felt like that party scene with the tennis ball, the Velcro balls and the pizza went on for a long time and they cut various characters, various good parts of the scenes, various scenes that make the play, as you said earlier, better

than the version they put on, you know, as a girl in my group said, "Don't sacrifice a lot of your text for a 20 minute scene that you could've done in 10 minutes". They could've created the same effect in a shorter amount of time in my opinion.

AP It's not bad trying to entertain people just to entertain them, it's okay but I think it's bad when this is a blur and it's not clear.

SM One of the things you mentioned coming into the expectations of going to see the RSC there's maybe certain production values that you expect if something like the RSC is involved. So when you went in and had a look at the stage and the set or lack of the set what was your reaction to that? How well do you think that worked?

GB When I walked in I genuinely thought I was in the wrong place first off. Like, I seriously walked up to my friend, "Are we in the right place? Like is this *Twelfth Night*?" She was like, "I think so" ((laughing)) because the set...I don't know just the set looked like the performance had come to an end and everyone had like left their stuff on stage and was about to like clear away or something. I was so confused and the whole like rock band thing as well like when they first started I was like, "What is this?" ((Laughing)) Like some music festival Shakespeare or something. It was...because they didn't have any like set as in concrete if that makes sense...

NP Flats and things...

GB ...like flats and stuff so it was hard to know like where they were even like placing it like...where it was supposed to be set in. So I guess that was just like for

you to like work out yourself, but yeah before the performance, like a couple of minutes before they started there was genuinely like tonnes of questions in your head like what are you going to expect? It did like straight away cut down any expectations you might've had I think, well for me it did. I just had no idea what they were going to do with anything.

SM **You said it didn't show any of where the play was set?**

GB Yeah.

SM **Did you notice any patterns in the way that they use the stage or did they use it in any way that made the story clearer or not? Did you find that helped or hindered your understanding of the play?**

GB I don't know, I mean they did like continue going back to the whole rock band thing and used music throughout, but then I think it might've hindered because...I don't know, I didn't always understand what the musicians were doing round the side, whether we were supposed to understand them as characters as well, sort of how they fitted in. Yeah and this whole usage of the songs and stuff, I didn't always like follow exactly what they were trying to do with that. Like when Malvolio did his MAOI thing ((laughing)) I was just sitting there, "What?" It turned so erotic and just...it was funny though, but yeah I think generally probably hindered...just I don't know, it was like a...it did follow through so it wasn't like they kept on shifting and stuff, I guess, yeah.

NP When I walked in and saw the set my mind just went, "Oh Brecht" because I saw a performance of the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* by a different company in my sixth form

when we were looking at Brecht and the musicians round the side, actors all being visible, the stage manager was visible, wires all over the place, any special effect visible, you can see how everything's going to be done and then when they came into the audience. . . I'm not saying their performance was everything Brecht's ever wanted, but I did think a strong Brecht element, however my boyfriend came and sat down beside me and went, "God they haven't even finished their get in" ((laughing)) I think he was joking, but I'm not quite sure, but yeah that's what I thought and my boyfriend has a real problem with - I know it's supposed to be what we think but I think it's interesting comparing what I think and what he thinks - and he needs a location, he needs a set and he needs to know where it is and what time it is otherwise he doesn't...his mind's trying to like work with that. Like I did a performance of *Twelfth Night* in February and we had the same set, which was a disused mental asylum and he was like, "I just didn't understand where it was. Where was it?" And of course everyone goes, "Oh it's Illyria" and everyone goes, "Oh, a desert island or something" and Illyria can be so many different things, but for him there wasn't even a slight hint as to where it was, which...I mean he's not a theatre student and I think that sometimes theatre students can sort of go...or some people can just go, "Well it doesn't need a...that sort of production doesn't really need a location because if they're not going...we are people in *Twelfth Night*, we're showing you *Twelfth Night*". So I don't think that needed it, but for him it was a real problem and I can imagine there might've been other people in the audience going, "But I don't get where it is" and that sort of thing, which I can kind of understand. It's a bit like maybe reading a book and not having a clue where they are and never

really finding out where they were, you might feel that you kind of missed something I suppose, but...so I thought, "Brecht" and he thought, "They haven't finished their get in".

AP It's not only your boyfriend's problem, we all need, at least in Western societies, as an audience we need to know which is the place, what's going on, where this has happened, but yeah this wasn't clear and well I'm taking a look at my notes and I've written down a full set because it was...it seemed like chaos, but then I wrote, "A smart use of props" because I just thought that there you had piled up things, random things and then it came out during the play that they used all of it so that made sense to me at least.

NP Someone I spoke to had a real problem with the role of bubble wrap at the back of the stage because they had a massive role of bubble wrap and it wasn't used.

GB Really? I didn't see it.

AP I don't know what's the point of it...

NP I think it was to do with them looking like, sort of like a travelling group, like maybe wrapping up certain bits in it, but they didn't seem to have anything that was breakable anyway. So like I mean I was thinking maybe the instruments, but...he went to go and smack Sir Andrew in the face with it or someone and you kind of think, "Well actually if you're going to do that with your instrument you'll probably just chuck them in a box and put them in the back of the van and off you go. You probably won't wrap them up in bubble wrap" and I suppose there wasn't really anything that demanded...like there was a lot of care...then there was that stage manager who was kind

of lining up everything on her desk and making sure everything was where it was meant to be so the production could run smoothly. So there was kind of a little bit of calm, a little bit of calm in our production...in our performance within that...the chaos. There's kind of like a line where there was the musicians in the semi-circle that they were in and then there was the stage manager at the back and behind her there was a lot more space and everything looked a little bit more controlled.

SM **So how the space was used with the semi-circle gave the idea of...?**

GB Ensemble and...

NP And like it's an okay environment to make mistakes because there are people there that will back you up and...not that they probably would forget their lines at this stage, but if somebody missed their line or if you'd suddenly be like...because you did get the appeal that even though there wasn't many that improvised on the spot, but some of it they kind of gave it the impression that it might've been. You can imagine if Sir Andrew was like, "So I've got this microphone but I don't really know what..." you can imagine one of the actors or musicians running up going, "Do this" and trying to be like, "Oh neat idea, I will do that!" So like a safe environment for them to play around with rather than one actor alone on stage and everyone's kind of like, "Come on then start it. We're ready, are you ready? Get on with it" You know?

GB I think they...like from the semi-circle, like in front of that they tried to use that as the big space as well as in like how they got into the audience quite a bit and then when Olivia like ran up through the audience and the

whole...like they did use quite a lot of it as their like space to work in so it wasn't just the stage, but it was sort of like, as you said, behind the semi-circle like not really sure what happened, there was a lot of space that wasn't used that made it quite...I don't know, maybe they tried to make it more intimate because they had quite a big space if there wasn't like...it's not a tiny theatre so...

NP Isn't it like the deepest stage in student theatres or something...one of the deepest theatres in England or something?

GB Yeah, because I don't know how they would've done it differently wherever else they performed if they performed in a smaller space before so they had to like shift stuff forward to try and make it feel more intimate or something, I'm not sure.

SM How did you read the bit where they went off the stage?

NP Not behind the semi-circle but like through sort of where the loading bay would be as if into the dressing rooms.

GB Yeah, I don't know because I wasn't really sure what they were doing because before everyone had stayed on stage even if they weren't necessarily like performing apart from Sir Andrew and like I thought that was just a part of them trying to distinguish...was it Sir Andrew? Yeah like because I always find it really strange how he would like leave and then come back on as if they were trying to like really distinguish him even more than just from his costume and so when they all...I can't remember, when did they actually go off? That was near the end wasn't it or...?

- SM** **When Olivia says, "Give us the place alone".**
- GB** Oh okay. I didn't really understand that part. I wasn't sure.
- NP** I think it could almost...I had a slight problem with that staging for *Twelfth Night* in that there's a lot of secrecy in *Twelfth Night*, there's the whole letter scene when they're meant to be hiding and I understand that they wanted to do that differently from having three people like I saw the one that the RSC did in January. They literally had the three of them hovering in a box tree sticking their heads through and it's kind of like, "It's almost slap stick RSC, come on. You could've been more inventive than that" or people like just hiding behind like a big fountain or something and looking round, but there was no element of the comedy in that scene at all, which I thought was a shame because there were ways you can play with that and it is...it's just I find it just quite funny to have someone like popping up and shouting like, "Fire and brimstone" and then popping back down again, it can be amusing and then like the bit with like...yeah just like Olivia sort of disguising herself and there's a lot of secrecy in the play and if everyone's watching it then they blatantly know and then they have to kind of be like, "Well my character doesn't know, but I do know and I know that you know that I know, but you have to remember that my character doesn't know" and then when they went off completely it's just kind of like, "So what are you trying to say with this? Are you trying to pretend that you don't know what's going on in this bit? Because you blatantly do because you know when to come back on" and I just think I just found that a bit of a...if you think of it in the opposite way, if you had a scene...like well a normal,

conventional production where the actors exit and entrance through various wings and doors or whatever and then in one scene they suddenly all came and stood on and watched the scene that they weren't meant to be in it would be a very strange thing to...you think, "Oh they've all forgotten to go off" but instead they did it backwards and I just kind of thought like, "Has something gone wrong? Have they all forgotten that there's a massive prop that they haven't remembered or something? Do they all need the toilet at the same time?" I found it a bit of a kind of like, "Oh no. Okay maybe they just need a break, they're too exhausted, they're all going to go and have some Lucozade and half a snickers and then come back on, I don't know."

AP Well it's a whole different story that's it's presenting because I just thought that the way the audience space and actor's space merged I found it a bit aggressive. Oh I forgot my point. Yeah and the lack of consistence also confused me because...

NP What in terms of...?

AP The just...they haven't been consistent to anything like space or characters or conventions or...

NP I'm never a fan of audience members being dragged up. Like I don't mind volunteering, but like there was I think in our production there was a man at the very front in the stalls and the guy was like, "Come on, come and do..." I think it was the bit with the Velcro hat or something like the first person and they were like, "Come one, come and do it" and he was just like, "Oh I don't want to" and they were like, "Come on!" And almost dragging him out of his seat and you could see the person's like, "I genuinely

don't want to do this" like I've had that at pantomimes and stuff where you're the person sitting on the edge and they're like, "We need someone on stage" and they come on near you and you're just thinking, "No don't. Don't pick on me" and because I personally would hate that and I think that like generally it like would worry me if someone came towards me and said, "We're going to drag you on stage" "No you're not" ((laughing)) and I just don't think that's something that...yeah you go to theatre to be challenged, but you don't go to the theatre to have someone drag you on stage. Like if someone came up to you in the street and was like, "Let's get the bus together!" You'd be like, "What? No!" You know, I don't see that that's a part of theatre being an enjoyable experience, but maybe that's just me being...

AP It's kind of aggressive or...

NP Yeah, aggressive, yeah.

AP ...because you just start resisting afterwards.

NP Yeah, and then you sort of...it builds up a little bit of like almost distrust, you're like, "I don't want you to come and pounce on me and try and drag me onstage because I don't..." and that's when I was quite glad we were at the back part of the theatre because I was like, "I'm nowhere near the front, they're not going to pick on me".

GB Yeah, I think I'd agree just like the same with ours in...like when they did the conga line, they had a made up conga line and they were literally just grabbing children from along...that sounds really weird ((laughing)) grabbing children, but they were just sort of really pulling people into it and I don't know if they maybe just anticipated people wouldn't naturally volunteer, but it did seem quite

forced and then it created like a weird tension afterwards especially because they...once the conga line had sort of died down the people just stayed on stage and really didn't know what to do because it was like they dragged them up and like left them to do what?

NP Turn to themselves.

GB Yeah it was very unclear.

NP And I can see why they set that up because then Malvolio came on and kind of shouted at them, but with ours there were some very small children on stage and I thought, "Oh there's going to be tears or something. You've scarred a child for life". Yeah I don't agree with, like you said, them being pulled into the line and then just being left onstage and some of the...even the older ones were like, "Where have you gone?" And I think if you're going to...I much prefer it when you audience participation and someone literally stays with them the entire time and it's kind of like, "It's alright just do this" and, "Do you want to wear these? You don't want to wear that? Okay that's fine" that sort of thing much rather than, "Come on!" And even when they were in the conga line, it was like, "Oh I know you don't want to be doing this" and you think it's okay if they're just going up and down the audience then you could see them going down the steps and onto the stage because obviously some of them are thinking, "Oh I don't really want to" and I wouldn't have wanted to.

SM Moving into looking at the character expectations and the role doubling. How were your expectations met or altered?

NP It was nice to see a Malvolio that wasn't dead pompous, I mean I saw Richard Wilson do it in January and he could

easily play Malvolio, you kind of think, "Are you really stretching yourself in playing this role? Because that's kind of the part you've played before and it isn't..." I've never met the man, but it doesn't look like such a far stretch from who he actually is and Malvolio is so often like a...I can't remember who it was that played it in the Trevor Nunn film, but in that manner, you know, looking down the nose and he has to in a way on account of the part and the plot involving him doesn't make sense, but...and there was one bit that they did which I thought was really good because there were elements in it that I thought were clever when he put his hand up to Maria's face and said, "My mistress will know of it by this hand" I thought actually that kind of helps what they're about to do to you make a little bit more sense because you've just been violent towards her whereas just coming in and shutting down the party doesn't really, to me, seem to warrant enough for what they did to him. I suppose they were trying to show that underneath the guy that was trying to stop the party, there was the guy that wanted to join in the party, but I don't know if that's what enough people would've got. To me it was just kind of like, "And now you're stripping and now you're raving and this is a bit, you know...?" I was kind of like...I liked the fact it was different and again with the yellow stocking scene because that's quite hard to play because it's not seeing someone walk in in yellow stockings is perhaps not that funny because, as I said, a while ago like fashions have changed and stuff and it's not as funny as it would've been in the 16/1500's. So it was good that it was played differently, but the way it was played I still didn't really like...like you said about that MOAI bit, I just...I found myself sort of...I wasn't really engaged with it, I was just kind of...like when you...an hour on and you play a

record and it just plays and there's a song you don't really like, you just don't really pay attention to that one. It kind of felt a bit like that for me. It was just a bit...I personally found it a bit awkward, but I think that says more about me than what they were doing.

GB I think just with the characterisation I was quite confused on who...I know the play like massively well anyway, but I was like quite confused for like most of the start, I guess on what character was which and especially when I didn't actually pick up that...I did eventually, but that Maria was playing Feste as well. Like just with...because it was just the nose, I was like, "Is she just being stupid? Is it...?" I don't know, I was just a bit confused with the whole distinction between characters. I think maybe because they didn't like play them out as you'd expect, it was like definitely not what I expected character wise and then especially with Viola and Sebastian like didn't expect her to be playing the same person ((laughing)) and especially when she's doing the...when she spoke out to the audience as if he was there and then just did the...like she pulled down the cap to show she was Sebastian. I was just like, "What is she doing?" Like I don't know...not because she was doing it badly, but it was just really strange and I don't know, I think it might've confused some people if they didn't know it that well, just that...because it didn't seem like she'd massively changed character maybe because she didn't have like time to create a different character like as in she didn't...there was no like way she could've really show any distinction and so I was just like...

NP A lot of people in our set have said that they were very disappointed with that moment. I thought the bit with the

Valentine message on the mobile phone in the very opening was good like, but I mean it's a bit of a cliché having someone's mobile phone ring when you're an actor and going, "Oh it's for you" but I thought having that message relayed through like a conversation on a mobile phone was good and if you're going to make it modern why not? Because most people use mobile phones and the bit with the sea captain on the radio, I didn't quite understand why it was coming through the radio. I understood there was shipping forecast and I think perhaps they should've kept it as the shipping forecast and maybe, I don't know, Viola could've had perhaps a walkie-talkie or something, I don't know, just like a...or maybe be talking to like maybe if the ship's captain had the radio, I don't know, but that was kind of like, "It's good, but what?" And then in the final scene when they could've done something quite impressive they just had her pretty much talking to herself and again my guy was just like, "She's come back as Sebastian. Oh. Oh, okay". If you don't get that, which is quite easy not to get, then the whole last scenes are lost on you pretty much which would ruin the whole production.

AP Well if the native speakers had trouble, there's not much left for me to say, but I...yeah I will have to repeat the same, lack of consistency. I mean because she made that convention with the sleeves and the voice and the hat, but then she just...I don't know, it was like she forgot to do that again. Anyway, but I think that I was fascinated by Malvolio and yeah because I think that it's not very simple part because you can easily be funny, but still I think he was great, yeah and that's my personal opinion, I don't know if that helps, but I really liked the way he was so focussed and he...I had the...he gave me the feeling

of...that he was a complete character. I mean even before all those crazy things he did, even when he was just a musician I think he was very focussed and that helped me and I think it's really hard, it's even harder in this performance because he didn't have any make-up or costume or...he was just himself, he played himself. So I think it's the most difficult thing to do, be a complete character without having anything to help you.

Something really external and stupid like a costume or some make-up or even some gestures or a different voice.

GB I think it's quite weird how the stage manager was made into a character almost, I mean like in... who was it that interacted with her? Or like some of the characters sort of like... because they were aware of her presence and stuff and just added like a strange dimension. Like I know it was supposed to be really obvious that she was onstage and it was... don't know, add to the Brechtian sort of thing, but yeah it was quite strange how she did have this... she was given a part in the play and like mixed the whole thing up character wise I guess because they like wrote another character in and then they'd taken out people like... Antonio they'd taken out.

NP Sebastian and Antonio and the Sea Captain.

GB Yeah they'd taken that out and like they'd given her something else. It sort of mixed it around quite a bit.

SM What made her character for you?

GB The fact...she didn't...I didn't really see her as a character until the characters...other characters interacted with her. It was almost like she was just like really placid and just there. It was almost like a part of

the set or the props or whatever, but when they were...you could tell they were aware of her and interacting then it was like, "Oh she's sort of like come alive as a character" yeah, so...

SM **So it was to do with the characters interacting?**

GB Yeah.

SM **Because music's really central to the piece, and I was wondering how much did you pick up on any motifs to do with different characters?**

GB Malvolio had the sort of the rock thing, that was like his motif which maybe added to his character sort of like a bit crazy and out there and like...I don't know the word, I don't really follow anyone else or something. No, there was like...I'm sure there was something that went through, there was like some sort of sound or something, I don't know what it was. Do you guys remember there was like something that was throughout that was like a little pattern of music or something? I don't know. Although they used the microphone to be like the mini-amplifier quite a bit, I wasn't sure what that was about all the time ((laughing)) for the one...was it? I'm not sure which character it was when they were stepping across the...

NP Toby.

GB Was that Toby? When they were stepping across the planks and like the strange sounds and stuff.

NP I thought that was excellently done. Like it was just the timing when you could see the guy who was doing the sound effect, you could see him sitting and I was

watching his feet, I was watching Sir Toby so carefully and just doing everything at exactly the same...and even when Sir Toby went a bit quicker and I thought that was very well done. In terms of the music I don't really remember there being anything...obviously I remember the Malvolio bit and I remember it being...I remember thinking more sound than music. I don't remember a lot of actual music as I suppose you would traditionally view music. I mean obviously there's all sorts of different music styles out there and what some people think is music other people think, "There's another horrible noise" but vice versa as well, but I think Sir Toby had a lot of sound perhaps more than music. Like he had the thing with the microphone to the head, which I thought was a funny moment, but for some reason I missed the bit before that, I just tuned out completely and I don't know, that one bit that just didn't engage me and I just found myself being completely distracted probably by the boy in front of me ((laughter)) but the bit with the microphone to the head and then I think when he like sort of went up to the amp and sort of went, "Oh look what happens if I do this" and you could see the sound guys being like, "Yes that does happen and it's annoying" and...but yeah I don't remember any...I remember that in your questionnaire, but I don't think the music contributed. I think it did in the Malvolio scene and the MOAI horror, but...and obviously in the party scene it was...that was...there was a repeated bit in the party scene wasn't there?

GB Yeah.

NB With the ((sneezing)) sorry, what would be Feste's song and they used what? One or two lines of it? And then it

didn't even matter what they were singing in the line because you knew the line, you'd heard it fifty million times. I can't remember it now, but at the time you could. Just I think for me more sound and noise rather than actual music, but that might be because my memory doesn't hold music as well as it does other things.

GB Because there...with like the musicians they were all probably playing, but when the actors were singing it wasn't like their focus was on like singing well or anything, it was just like they just sang the words and it wasn't supposed to sound pretty or anything like quite a lot of the music was really discordant and just like clashy and like it wasn't supposed to fit. Like the rest...like it kept in line with the rest of the performance like it wasn't supposed to fit together, it was supposed to be weird and confuse you.

NP Olivia had was it a guitar at one point that she played or a cello?

GB Yeah.

NP I remember that. I don't...was it when she was angry about Viola refusing her?

AP No, I think she was just trying to seduce...yeah.

NP Oh was it that bit? Yeah.

AP Yeah. I think that's why I like music because it made things so clear. I mean that scene you could tell that she's trying to attract someone, but...yeah and I said in Jerri's class that I found the music more fluent than the text. Well that makes sense because my language, but still I think it's a very important part of the show and first

of all it helps actors because it has a rhythm and pace
so...((pause))

SM It's interesting because going through the interview that I did with the company they talk about the Viola and Sebastian change over at the end and one of the things that happens there is there were two motifs going which the actress sings both of, one in a high voice which is supposed to be Viola, and one in a lower voice which is supposed to be Sebastian, and they swap over as she swaps.

NP What when she comes on or...?

SM When she's doing the bit at the end where it's Sebastian and Viola meeting each other. So that was how they were signifying in the music in the musical accompaniment the change between the two characters.

NP And that was being played in the background while they did their, "My father had a mole upon his brow"?

SM Yes, yeah it's a sort of, "Ah ah aha, ah ah aha"((singing))...

NP I remember that bit now.

SB And it's just interesting it hasn't been picked up...

NP I didn't pick that up.

SM ...in any of the discussions I've had yet and I just wondered how much people actually noticed it or whether it helped with understanding that moment at all?

- GB I think it would've if you picked up on it, but I didn't pick up on it so it didn't make any sense. It just sounded like general background music.
- AP Well we're bombed with so many things in the end nothing was clear.
- SB That's maybe because there's been so much music it almost becomes a soundtrack and you...**
- AP It's not only the music because we had all that set and props and different characters changing and I don't know...and then the interaction and the two spaces merging and we were supposed to keep up with the story and at the same time react and give...yep throw the balls away and ah.
- SM England and Shakespeare have a very strong kind of identity together, so what's your experience of coming to see Shakespeare in England?**
- AP That makes things...yes. Because yeah I never thought of that as, you know, "I'm in England, I'm going to watch this Shakespeare play" and maybe that helped me because I think that I would expect or somebody would expect something more classic than people...yeah more text based performances. I think that I've never thought of that so I prefer being open to whatever's going to be, yeah. It's not always easy ((laughing)).
- SM No, no it's just interesting what your expectations were. I was going to finish up with my main research is around adaptation. So I wanted to ask you what is adaptation to you?**

GB When you take an original text and make it your own to maybe like find like something new in it that someone hasn't seen before or maybe just like just completely destroy anyone else's...anything else that anyone's...not destroy, to like be set apart from anything anyone's also done before and just be a bit outrageous and defy what everyone thinks it should be I guess is what it did ((laughing)) yeah which is take something and make it into what you want it to be.

SM So you would say that that was an adaptation?

NP Taking something that already exists and making people see it differently. I'm trying to think...it's really hard to say what makes a play what it is. Like one of my teachers at school did an assembly about what makes our school what it is; is it the buildings or is it the people? If we moved all the people to a different school would we still be the same school even though the buildings weren't the same? And I think in a way with the play it's the same, like what makes *Twelfth Night* what it is? If you did *Twelfth Night* with exactly the same themes, but gave all the characters different names would it still be *Twelfth Night*? Or, if you did completely different themes, but put Orsino, Olivia, Viola, and everyone in it. Saying that now, that sounds less like it would be *Twelfth Night* to me. So we said in my group or some of us said that the Filter should've been based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, I'm not saying that's necessarily what it should've been, but I think from my point of view I think perhaps that would've been...I'm not convinced that...I think anyone reading the text would find a very different production or play and I think they'd recognise bits of it, they'd recognise the characters, but there's a lot more in *Twelfth*

Night than was in that. So I think it was definitely an adaptation not a...I suppose what's the difference between a version and an adaptation? But I think that was an adaptation rather than a production of the text, if you think of *Twelfth Night* as a text rather than a production, because there wasn't a lot of the text in it.

AP I think there's a very thin line dividing adaptations and original plays. I don't know, maybe all of the...maybe just the first performance is the original one. I mean when the play writer's still alive and maybe he's a director or anyway he belongs in that group and all the others are adaptations. It's kind of philosophical question. So the criterion I would use would be just how faithful or how much do you stick to the text? So I think it's acceptable to put any other elements like music and different interpretations. I just assumed that they stick to the text, I didn't even know because I was...I could hear the occasional Shakespeare students laughing or recognising the specific parts of the play so I assumed that they were using the original text. So this is why I answered to the questionnaire that it's not an adaptation and I can't have a clear answer ((laughing)).

SB Your answer brings up many of the problems with defining what an adaptation is. There isn't a clear cut answer.

NP It is difficult because there's no way to...no right way to do a Shakespeare. I mean many people might say the Globesque way of doing it is the best way because that's how a lot of his plays were performed, but other people could argue well how about a traverse Blackfriar's type theatre? Because they've also done that way as well some of them and some of them have done that way and

not in the Globe because it was shut by that point and I mean like Trevor Nunn's film version he puts in modern prose at the beginning, is that...does that then make it an adaptation? And yeah that's...yeah that's really something to grapple with and get your head around isn't it? Fun for you ((laughing)).

SB **It is ((laughing)) thank you. Well moving into now what I'm looking at is what roles do production values and performance skills play in adaptation? Because there's a lot of focus on adapting text, you know, but that sense of when you start to play very often text gets changed because of the production values that you're playing with or like, "I'm going to go in and I'm going to use a devising technique or I'm going to use music in this way. So maybe I'll use music there instead of using the text there" and how the...**

NP I'd be really interested to see Filter's...haven't they done *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

AP Yeah.

NP And I'd be quite interested to see that and see if they've got like stock techniques that they like to use and just to see sort of what they do to that because I wonder if partly they've got things they like to do that they know an audience...are crowd pleasers and they kind of think, "Well where can we put it in here? We'll put it in there because that's where it's best suited" rather than taking the script that someone else gives them and going, "I think we could do this here because that would work really well." I don't know, I'm tempted...I'd like to think it's not the first one, but part of me's thinking it might be in

places, but working with a script that someone else has adapted for you would be a very hard task because you can't make your own edits like a lot of directors edit the plays they're doing because then they know what they want to work with and they can pull out more of what they want. If they really want to play with Antonio and Sebastian they might look for longer versions of their scenes rather than something else. If they want it to be very wordy they might take out maybe one of Feste's songs or something or just have it playing in the background rather than actually taking a minute and a half out of the performance to just have a song. So I think...

SB Is that because we're used to director's theatre? Because a lot of adaptation today is normally driven by the director and a directorial concept, and interpretations for that matter, particularly with Shakespeare, as the script is cut by the director and that then is the director's concept. Have we just become used to that style of performance to look at and if so, did this do something different?

NP I suppose they had a slight disadvantage in that because someone else gave them the script they then had to play around with what they'd been given in the script, there might have been times when they thought, "Oh I wished we'd had this bit instead and we could've done this with it" but they can't so, as you were saying earlier, like what makes it the adaptation? Is it like the changes in the script or kind of the production elements that they put in it?

SB They did add a few lines back in, but there was no overall guiding directorial figure who was sat there

saying, "This is how I see the script and this is how we're going to do it" as I understand what they explained of the process.

- NP I suppose it could be that there's kind of two elements composing the adaptation; there's the guy or girl that edited it and then there's Filter putting their own sort of stamp on it. So I suppose it's two steps away from the Shakespeare script really or at least two groups of people away rather than, as you said, just like Trevor Nunn going, "We'll adapt it then we'll edit it this way and we're going to perform it like this".
- GB So did their director not...it's directed by...but was their director...what role did their director play then? Was he just...?
- SB They work as a...as they explained it in the interview, they work as an ensemble. So he didn't cut the script, they got somebody completely different to cut the script.**
- GB Why does he do that? Did he explain why they...he didn't do that himself?
- SB Time and then they brought the director in as a...they actually worked with him on *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and then they brought him in again, but they don't use him in the traditional director role of coming in with a director's concept. He's in the rehearsal room where everybody including the stage manager and musicians and everybody has an input into the creative process. So the director, I guess at times, asks questions and maybe says, "Okay let's pull this together" but...**

- NP Because obviously if they're all in it on stage at the same time then they've got someone that can watch it that isn't involved and hasn't got any allegiance to any part or role and can just see it overall.
- SM Yeah.**
- NP I was going to say he's like acting more like a side coach than like a director like giving instructions and stuff then. So I guess they...each person in the company puts more of themselves into it and therefore like some of the like concepts might've been like really original like what each actor wanted. So maybe like costume they might've decided themselves, but it seemed like...it did seem like their own items of clothing and maybe they chose what they felt comfortable in or how they'd interpreted their character. So like Feste/Maria wanted like some hold up top because that's what she felt like she wanted to wear ((laughing)).
- NP Were they wearing the same things each time you saw them?
- SM Roughly. She always has a T-shirt but the pattern varies.**
- GB Oh really?
- SM What did...did you have polka dot T-shirts?**
- GB We had polka dots I think.
- SM When I saw it in Bath she had sort of squares that got smaller and smaller and smaller. Orsino wore a white shirt and trousers, but it was a different actor as well. The cardigan is always Malvolio. How did you read Sir Toby's costume?**

- GB I don't really know. Sir Toby was the one in the...he was the one wearing Jacobean costume. I thought that was...first of all when he came onstage like drunk or whatever I was really...I thought maybe they were trying to pick up the sort of stereotypical actor like he's drunk, he's come on stage, he looks really out of place and like he looks a bit disorientated or maybe they were trying to...I thought maybe it was some sort of link like this is still Shakespeare, like however far we've come away from Shakespeare like he was the central figure, it was like, "I'm in a Shakespeare costume so this signifies it's still Shakespeare" or something. Like they were still trying to remind you that it was Shakespeare or something. Yeah it seemed because he did look really different, I don't know maybe he was a bit behind times like trying to show he's...I don't know stuck back in that era.
- NP I know what you mean, I thought there might've been a little bit of sort of dragging him into it, him being like, "I'm an actor this is my costume, I have my skull, I'm going to do *Hamlet*" and they're like, "We're going to do *Twelfth Night*" "No we're not doing that" "Yeah we are, it's going to be great, come on join in!" And gradually he would've got more and more into it or I thought because he was doing like the random *Hamlet* line and there was a *Macbeth*, "This is a dagger I see before me". I thought perhaps he was meant to be representing, a bit like you said, sort of like the actor, I'm not quite sure how I developed that thought, but I thought it had a real like significance and meaning to it because again my boyfriend asked me, "What do you think...? Why was he wearing that?" I was like, "I don't know, but I think because he was just being, 'I'm the actor and this is how I

think it should be done' and the others were going to be a bit like, 'Come on, let's have fun'".

GB Yeah maybe like what you're saying about how the actors sort of dragged him along maybe that was...he was supposed to like represent us and what we thought of Shakespeare and the play sort of...as they drag him along they're trying to make us like come along with him maybe and what we think of Shakespeare they're trying to change that as you go through and like by the end we leave with a different perception.

NB Like the Jacobean actor that's stuck in time like you said, with the declamatory pattern and because the way he said it was very kind of like Olivier and kind of proclaiming from the stage to like noisy groundlings.

SM **Thank you very much. Thank you.**