

THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB OF STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

The 860th meeting of the Shakespeare Club, held on 8 February 2011 at Mason Croft, was a conversation between Mr Perry Mills and the Club's President for the 2010/11 season, the actor David Bradley. They covered a wide range of subjects with King Lear as a frequent reference point. Mr Bradley spoke about his approach to playing the role of the Fool at the National. He likened the Fool's jokes to the modern comedian's surreal riffs and described the value of costume in opening up a character. Two characters he would most like to play were Malvolio and Lear, which he had played one night in Nottingham as understudy to Brian Cox.

Other subjects discussed were the challenges of touring, the RSC's ensemble system; his playing of Justice Shallow, Trinculo, Polonius; how to introduce children to Shakespeare; the people who inspired him as an actor (Olivier as Richard III, Ian Holm in *The Homecoming*); his experience in repertory; his opinion of the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the limitations of the thrust stage; his admiration for Pinter and Chekhov; and Shakespeare's generosity of language. Mr Bradley talked of 'breathing' a play and how, for him, the language is the play.

After questions the meeting closed at 9pm and was followed by refreshments.