

## The Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon

The 927<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon took place on Tuesday 8 October, when Bill Barclay, former Head of Music at Shakespeare's Globe, gave a talk entitled "Historically Informed Experience". The meeting was chaired by Roger Taylor.

He began by asking the question "What did Shakespeare want music to do?" Music was an integral part of his plays, with an average of one musical allusion every twenty lines.

Even though it was smaller than the modern reconstruction, the outdoors 1599 Globe theatre had difficult acoustics, very different from the intimate Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Shakespeare is known to have wanted to use the indoors Blackfriars Theatre, but was not able to do so until the end of his career. Mr Barclay suggested that one reason why Shakespeare's use of music developed from the song "Who is Silvia" in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, requiring a single musician, to the complex masque in *The Tempest*, was because of the move indoors.

He noted that in England we continue to have an uncomfortable relationship with musical theatre. In Shakespeare's time music was always performed by a person within the space but modern actors, used to disembodied music, have to adapt to musicians sharing the stage with them.

The Globe was founded with the aim of investigating how Shakespeare's plays relate to the building. This resulted in the policy of Original Practice in all areas: in music, authentic sounds were created by original-style instruments. Because of this experience he was able to state confidently that in the original Globe the musicians could not have used sheet music, so songs were fitted to their repertoire of popular tunes. The title of his talk "Historically Informed Experience" signals a development from OP.

Now the goal is to make the Globe a truly living, modern theatre. The aim is to do to us what Shakespeare wanted to do to us. Not to make us time travellers back to 1599 and show us what Shakespeare's audience saw, but to enable us to have the electrifying experience of seeing the play for the first time, to expose its DNA. In the case of the music, to work out what will move us. As Emma Rice found when she put this into effect during her time at the Globe, this may not be what some members of the audience are expecting. But isn't that what Shakespeare wanted?

After questions the meeting closed at 9.05 pm.