

## **Weekend Courses 2024-25**

### **Staging Shakespeare: key scenes**

**Start date:** 28 March 2025                      **End date:** 30 March 2025

**Venue:** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge  
CB23 8AQ

**Tutor:** Dr John Lennard                      **Course Code:** 2425NRX035

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#### **Tutor biography**

Born in Bristol and educated at Oxford and St Louis, Dr Lennard has taught English, American and Commonwealth Literature in Cambridge, London, and Jamaica (where he held a Chair in British and American Literature) over more than 30 years.

He has written two widely used textbooks (on poetry and drama) and monographs on Shakespeare, Paul Scott, Nabokov, Faulkner, Tolkien, E L James, and David Weber, as well as two collections of essays on contemporary genre writers in crime, science fiction and fantasy, and romance.

Enthusiastic, discursive, widely knowledgeable, and a demon for punctuation (he is a General Editor of CUP's forthcoming *History of Punctuation in English Literature*), Dr Lennard has been a Summer Programme Course Director and Panel Tutor for the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education since 1992, and also teaches on day and weekend courses at Madingley Hall.

**Summary of content:**

Saving Shakespeare's Globe in London and other recreations, modern theatres are largely unlike anything Shakespeare knew. For most of his career he wrote for all-male, open-air performance on platform stages by daylight, with quite different machinery for much more limited special effects, and audiences with very different profiles and behaviours.

We begin by looking at the theatre-building for which he mostly wrote, the Theatre, later the Globe—bare boards without electricity but nevertheless a sophisticated and subtle structure with great versatility. In each session a scene that raises practical questions of staging will offer a central focus—the amateur actors in *Midsummer Night's Dream* with their heroically misconceived realism ; fat Falstaff's mock-death in *1 Henry IV* ; Hamlet leaping into a grave, if he did ; Edgar as Poor Tom arranging his blinded father's mock-suicide ; and the 'real' but radically contrasting suicides of Anthony & Cleopatra—but discussion will circle out to similar and comparable moments in other plays, and you are all welcome to ask about moments in any play that intrigue and puzzle you.

Late in his career Shakespeare also began to write for indoor performances by torch and candlelight on a somewhat smaller stage, a development implicated in the distinct style of his Late Plays. In the final two sessions we will look at some of their extraordinary staging demands—a bear and a statue that comes to life in *The Winter's Tale*, and a truly bizarre sequence in *Cymbeline* that requires a severed head, a headless effigy, and the mock-death drug, involving more errors and ironies than anyone can count.

As he has been performed for more than four centuries we tend to think of Shakespeare's stage-history as continuous, but it has not been so, and considering original staging can greatly illuminate why his plays are as they are.

**Aims:**

This course aims to:

- consider what is known about the theatres and styles in which Shakespeare's plays were first acted
- address seven key scenes with rich implications for staging-practice/s
- understand how imagining original performance can enhance both interpretation and enjoyment of the plays

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## Course sessions

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### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
<b>20:30 – 22:00</b>	<b>1. Shakespeare's Theatre &amp; the Business of Acting (<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>)</b>
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
<b>09:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>2. Mock-Deaths, Costume, &amp; Coups de Théâtre (<i>1 Henry IV</i>)</b>
10:30	Coffee
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>3. One Grave Shall Hold Them Both ... or not (<i>Hamlet</i>)</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
<b>16:30 – 18:00</b>	<b>4. Jumping Down a Cliff That Isn't There (<i>King Lear</i>)</b>
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
<b>20:00 – 21:30</b>	<b>5. Shakespeare &amp; Suicide After the High Roman Fashion (<i>Anthony and Cleopatra</i>)</b>
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
<b>09:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>6. The Blackfriars and the Late Plays 1: Bears &amp; Statues (<i>The Winter's Tale</i>)</b>
10:30	Coffee
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>7. The Blackfriars and the Late Plays 2: Cubing (Mock-)Death</b>
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

**Presentation of the course:**

In each 90-minute session Dr Lennard aims to talk for about 45 minutes, with PowerPoint images and demonstrations, before open discussion and questions.

**Learning outcomes:**

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject and you should be able to:

- read Shakespeare with better understanding of what he had in mind
- see contemporary productions with a better-informed and sharper eye
- imagine more confidently how his scenes worked for his original audiences
- be aware of the particular issues surrounding the Blackfriars and the Late Plays

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## Reading and resources list

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There are no compulsory readings for this course.

However, you may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland (Oxford: World's Classics 1995 [Oxford Shakespeare]), ISBN 978-0192814562

*King Henry IV, Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury 2002 [Arden 3]), ISBN 978-1904271352

*Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson & Neil Taylor, rev. (London: Bloomsbury 2016 [Arden 3]), ISBN 978-1472518385

*The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. Jay Halio, 3/e (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020 [New Cambridge Shakespeare]), ISBN 978-1316646977

*Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. John Wilders (London: Bloomsbury 1995 [Arden 3]), ISBN 978-1904271017

*The Winter's Tale*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: World's Classics 2008 [Oxford Shakespeare]), ISBN 978-0199535910

*Cymbeline*, ed. Valerie Wayne (London: Bloomsbury 2017 [Arden 3]), ISBN 978-1904271307

All these editions have useful things to say, but if you already have a complete Shakespeare that's fine too.

**You may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.**

While only the key-scenes are required reading, the more of each play you have read, and the more plays you know, the better you will be able to take advantage of and appreciate the course. All of the following will also be of value:

Dessen, Alan C, *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), ISBN 978-0521470803

Gurr, Andrew, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642* (4/e, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), ISBN 978-0521509817

Gurr, Andrew, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (3/e, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ISBN 978-0521835602

**Note:** Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment. (*Information correct as of April 2024*)