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SPEAKERS

IMOGEN (Cymbeline character), PISANIO (Cymbeline character), IMOGEN, IACHIMO (Cymbeline character), PISANIO, Scarlett Kim, IACHIMO, Amanda Bullock, Andrew Proctor, Nataki Garrett

A Andrew Proctor 00:00

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A Amanda Bullock 00:26

Welcome to The Archive Project. I'm Amanda Bullock, Director of Public Programs at Literary Arts, in for Andrew Proctor. The Archive Project is a retrospective of some of the most engaging talks from the world's best writers for more than 35 years of literary arts in Portland. This week, we are featuring a special episode in collaboration with Oregon Shakespeare Festival. We're planning to feature a series of conversations about OSF work throughout the season of The Archive Project, exploring storytelling and the intersections of playwriting, theatre production and performance and literature. This episode features a conversation between Nataki Garrett, OSF Artistic Director, and Scarlett Kim, the Associate Artistic Director of Innovation and Strategy. They discuss "The Cymbeline Project," an upcoming OSF hybrid production, part theater, part film, part visual art. During these long months of the pandemic, I have actually been thinking about Shakespeare quite a lot. I am part of a group of friends who have been getting together on Zoom roughly once a month to read a Shakespeare play out loud. None of us are actors, but we're reading it out loud to try to better understand the text through listening to and speaking it. Because of this admittedly, very dorky, but honestly extremely fulfilling personal project, I've been thinking a lot also about something that I read that every Shakespeare play, and I guess actually every play and every single book and every piece of art exists in and engages with at least three times or moments in history simultaneously, the time the play is set, the time the play was written and the time the play is being performed. This was true from their original productions at the Globe Theatre hundreds of years ago, and remains true today. And one of the reasons that Shakespeare's work endures is because it is flexible enough to inhabit all of those times at once. It can move with us as the way we experience media and theater specifically has shifted with new technology, the forced restrictions of the pandemic, and with new ways of seeing the world. Shakespeare is built to be open to interpretation. As the Nataki and Scarlett point out, it is not new to reinterpret Shakespeare. To do Shakespeare is to experiment. To be true to the text is to break it apart. Let's join Nataki and Scarlett and later in the episode we'll hear an excerpt from "The Cymbeline Project".

N Nataki Garrett 02:50

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival is located in Ashland, Oregon, the ancestral homelands of the Shasta, Takelma, and Latgawa peoples. In the 1850s, at the end of the Rogue River Wars, these Tribes along with many others in Western Oregon, were violently moved to reservations. Today, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians are living descendants of the original peoples of this area. I'm the Nataki Garrett, the Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Now I'd like to introduce Scarlett Kim, one of OSF's Associate Artistic Directors and our newly appointed Director of Innovation and Strategy. Welcome.

S

Scarlett Kim 03:37

Hi, Nataki, I'm excited to be here.

N

Nataki Garrett 03:40

So how shall we talk about "The Cymbeline Project" ? Why don't we start it: What is "The Cymbeline Project," Scarlet?

S

Scarlett Kim 03:46

So... "The Cymbeline Project" is a 10 episode digital production of "Cymbeline" by Shakespeare, that interweaves theatrical performance with digitally rendered visual layers creating a hybrid form that is part theater, part film and part visual art collage.

N

Nataki Garrett 04:03

We should talk a little bit about how "The Cymbeline Project" was first conceived. So I'll give a little bit of background. We were in the middle of a process that we used to have here at OSF called the Boar's Head Process, and people would sit around - people from across the organization representing all different departments across OSF - would talk about... read and talk about these amazing plays. And I think it was like a, I don't know a nine week process or a 12 week process. And at the end we'd have a kind of consensus around what are the things that really represent who we are and what we want to do in this next couple of years. And so we read "Cymbeline" and while it didn't make the cut for the plays that we decided that year, every time we talked about it, I kept thinking, "Wow, this would make a great episodic!" because of the way that Shakespeare constructed it. It was like, you know, a cliffhanger followed by an immediate response to that cliffhanger and you'd end a kind of mini-scene with with the advance towards what's happening across the land and some other place. And so, I was like, "Ohhh, this is like an original episodic." And so... I don't know a little bit more than a year ago, I contacted Scarlett and said, "I have this really crazy idea to do "Cymbeline" as an episodic, and what would you do if somebody asked you to do that? Like, what is... what are the ideas?" And Scarlett came up with this amazing idea that was to use collage and live performance and recorded... And then, you know, we were in the middle of a pandemic. And so how do we do that? And the ideas were, of course, much bigger than anything I could have ever imagined. But it was really based in what Shakespeare wrote, this idea that "Cymbeline" was happening over a series of many episodes, as opposed to the sort of giant arc of a play.

S

Scarlett Kim 06:04

Yeah, Nataki, when you invited me to explore "Cymbeline" as an episodic series, it instantly clicked because people talk about "Cymbeline" as a quote /unquote "problem" play, because it's neither a tragedy or a comedy...but actually, both of those things. Which I always felt very drawn to and felt it was almost the most truthful, authentic, rational way to think about life - as something that is both tragic and comic, something that is totally confusing. Where we go through, you know, life as a constant series of performance, constant role-play, a constant kind of code switching - being different selves. So when you invited me to explore kind of that aspect of "Cymbeline" that's usually, I feel, kind of swept away in service of uniformity, or something that's a coherent, quote /unquote "coherent narrative"... that was very exciting to me. Especially, I think, during the pandemic, as we go through - as a collective, as a culture, as a global community - this surreal experience of, you know, figuring out what it means to be an individual in a community, what it means to kind of like, come face to face with ourselves, that kind of framing really resonated with the absurdity of our current moment. So yeah, and then we kind of started looking at really what it means to break up "Cymbeline" into the episodic format, and then thinking about cliffhangers, thinking about... That led me to really thinking about what our attention span is, what our relationship to media is, and everyday life. Nowadays, we have a really intimate and dynamic and kind of constantly shifting relationship to media in our everyday lives. That's not something that's additive. That's something that we actually all experience with our phones and our devices and our computers.

N

Nataki Garrett 07:55

Yeah, we've evolved into this place of - I was actually thinking about this the other day, I was reading a book, and I was thinking, "Oh, boy, I'm so not used to reading a book anymore. I'm used to listening to a book as an audio book,

and then referring back to the physical physical pages for something." And that has completely shifted the way that I've read. You know, I actually feel like I take more in when I'm listening, when I'm doing something, when I'm doing it through media, even when I read it on my Kindle. So yeah, our relationship to technology, and literature has completely shifted.

S Scarlett Kim 08:32

Totally! I've been thinking about it as. "Where do we place our imagination? And I feel like it's always a very kind of simultaneous experience of like, you know, as I move through life, I'm kind of looking at my phone while watching something on the TV while having this experience. I think a lot about how, like, how do we write? And how do we create art that resonates with our contemporary relationship to media and our relationship to attention span? So as we were breaking down the play into an episodic format, we were really thinking about that.

N Nataki Garrett 09:06

That's interesting. So what was the development process before you even got to the filming of it?

S Scarlett Kim 09:12

Um, I think we started with unpacking the "the givens" that we assume, when we work on Shakespeare and really using this as an opportunity to break that apart.

N Nataki Garrett 09:24

What do you mean, Scarlett, by "the givens"?

S Scarlett Kim 09:28

This idea of, I think, tonal consistency is one thing that there is a kind of uniform, overarching emotional goal that we're trying to accomplish. That the play adds up to a kind of like single essential, emotional or moral message. And also just how Shakespeare should be performed, how Shakespeare should be addressed as something that makes sense in a in a very kind of dominant culture driven way.

N Nataki Garrett 09:55

Do you mean like the rules around Shakespeare, around iambic pentameter, around keeping the breath all the way to the end of the line... All of those ways in which we, we codify one's experience both performing and also experiencing Shakespeare.

S Scarlett Kim 10:09

Yes, I think for sure, both in our rehearsal of it, and how we perform it, and also how we experience it as audiences, you know, and this, again, is an opportunity to kind of use media, use technology, use episodic format to think about, oh, it doesn't actually have to add up to a cohesive whole or what we think of as a cohesive whole, but something that actually allows different people to enter into it in different ways. Like different actors to come into, it bring their full selves into it, and different audiences to interact with it through their own lens, own personal lens,

I IMOGEN (Cymbeline character) 10:43

A father cruel, and a step-dame false; a foolish suitor to a wedded lady, that hath her husband banished;-- O, that husband! My supreme crown of grief and those repeated vexations of it? Had I been their-stol'n, as my two brothers, happy! but most miserable is the desire that's glorious: blest be those, how mean soe'er, that have their honest wills,

which seasons comfort. Who may this be? Fie!

P PISANIO (Cymbeline character) 11:22
Madam, a noble gentleman of Rome, comes from my lord with letters.

I IACHIMO (Cymbeline character) 11:30
Change you, madam? The worthy Leonatus is in safety and greets your highness dearly. (He gives her a letter.)

I IMOGEN 11:38
Thanks, good sir; You're kindly welcome.

I IACHIMO 11:42
All of her that is out of door most rich! If she be furnish'd with a mind so rare, she is alone the Arabian bird, and I have lost the wager. Boldness be my friend!

I IMOGEN 11:53
"He is one of the noblest note, to whose kindness I am most infinitely tied. Reflect upon him accordingly, as you value your trust--Leonatus." So far I read aloud: But even the very middle of my heart is warm'd by the rest, and takes it thankfully, you are as welcome, worthy sir, as I have words to bid you, and she'll find it so in all that I can do.

I IACHIMO 12:24
Thanks, fairest lady. What, are men mad? Hath nature given them eyes to see this volted arch, and rich crop of sea and land, which can distinguished 'twixt the fiery orbs above and the twinn'd stones upon the number'd beach? and can we not partition make with spectacles so precious 'twixt fair and foul?

I IMOGEN 12:54
What makes your admiration?

I IACHIMO 12:57
it cannot be i' the eye, for apes and monkeys 'twixt two such shes would chatter this way and contemn with mows the other; nor i' the judgment, for idiots in this case of favour would be wisely definite; nor i' the appetite; sluttary to such neat excellence opposed should make desire vomit emptiness, not so allured to feed.

I IMOGEN 13:24
What is the matter trow?

I IACHIMO 13:27
The cloyed will, that satiate yet unsatisfied desire, that tub both filled and running, ravening first the lamb longs after the garbage.

I IMOGEN 13:42
What, dear sir, thus raps you? Are you well?

I IACHIMO 13:47
Thanks, madam; well. Beseech you, sir desire my man's abode where I did leave him; he is strange and peevish.

P PISANIO 14:00
I was going sir, to give him welcome.

I IMOGEN 14:08
Continues well my lord? His health, beseech you?

I IACHIMO 14:11
Well, madam.

I IMOGEN 14:14
Is he disposed to mirth? I hope he is.

I IACHIMO 14:17
Exceedingly pleasant; none stranger there so merry and so gamesome: he is call'd The Briton reveller.

I IMOGEN 14:29
When he was here, he did incline to sadness, and oft-times not knowing why

I IACHIMO 14:34
I never saw him sad. There is a Frenchman his companion, one an eminent monsieur, that, it seems, much loves a Gallian girl at home; he furnaces the thick sighs from him, whiles the jolly Briton--your Lord, I mean--laughs from's free lungs, cries "O, can my sides hold, to think that man, who knows by history, report, or his own proof, what woman is, yea, what she cannot choose but must be, will his free hours languish for assured bondage?"

I IMOGEN 15:12
Will my lord say so?

I IACHIMO 15:17
Ay, madam, with his eyes in flood with laughter: it is a recreation to be by and hear him mock the Frenchman. But, heavens know, some men are much to blame.

—

I IMOGEN 15:35
Not he, I hope.

I IACHIMO 15:37
Not he: but yet heaven's bounty towards him might be used more thankfully. In himself, 'tis much; in you, which I account his beyond all talents, whilst I am bound to wonder, I am bound to pity too.

I IMOGEN 15:58
What do you pity, sir?

I IACHIMO 16:01
Two creatures heartily.

I IMOGEN 16:04
Am I one, sir? You look on me: what wreck discern you in me deserves your pity?

I IACHIMO 16:11
Lamentable! What, to hide me from the radiant sun and solace i' the dungeon by a snuff?

I IMOGEN 16:21
I pray you, sir, deliver with more openness, your answers to my demands? Why do you pity me?

I IACHIMO 16:27
That others do-- I was about to say-- enjoy your-- But it is an office of the gods to venge it, not mine to speak on 't.

I IMOGEN 16:36
You do seem to know something of me, or what concerns me: pray you,-- Since doubling things go ill often hurts more than to be sure they do-- discover to me what both you spur and stop.

I IACHIMO 16:51
Had I this cheek to bathe my lips upon; this hand, whose touch, whose every touch, would force the feeler's soul to the oath of loyalty; should I, damn'd then, slaver with lips as common as the stairs that mount the Capitol: join gripes with hands made hard with hourly falsehood--it were fit that all the plagues of hell should at one time encounter such revolt.

I IMOGEN 17:20
My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain. Let me hear no more.



I IACHIMO 17:26

Oh, dearest sou! your cause doth strike my heart with pity that doth make me sick. A lady so fair, and fasten'd to an empery, would make the great'st king double,-- to be partner'd with tomboys hired with that self-exhibition which your own coffers yield! Be revenged; or she that bore you was no queen, and you recoil from your great stock.

I IMOGEN 17:54

Revenged! How should I be revenged? If this be true,-- as I have such a heart that both mine ears must not in haste abuse-- if it be true, how should I be revenged?

N Nataki Garrett 18:08

There is a long relationship between Shakespeare and and film, you know, Kurosawa, you know, like there, there are all kinds of films that are dedicated to - or honoring - the words and the stories that Shakespeare told. And it's not a new thing, it's not new. What is interesting about this work is that it's kind of hybrid, right? So it's one part live performance, one part, using the script to sort of support this visual medium. Can you talk a little bit about the intersection between those two?

S Scarlett Kim 18:41

Yeah, you know, it's funny because I think of what does it mean to do capital S Shakespeare, I think to do Shakespeare is to experiment you know, Shakespeare was a populist artists. So to me being truthful to the text itself is to experiment and to break it apart. So in this project, in particular, we're doing that through hybridizing between mediums, film, theater, you know, visual art collage, and also hybridizing, between kind of how the text functions as text, but how also the visual layers function as text. One example that we've been really excited about and have been exploring is kind of the literal visualization of the text. We created a kind of language... We explored a couple of different ASL visual gestural communication and then we kind of arrived at a language that the Queen gestures in our world so... What is ASL, just so that our listeners know American Sign Language. So in our rehearsal process, we kind of developed a language that is its own language specific to this world that we're creating that the Queen gestures in and it's kind of the premise is that all the characters within the world kind of gesture back to the Queen and they have this shared vocabulary. And then we also see that gestural language be visualized in textual form. Kind of like subtitles, but in a more artful and intentional way. So it's actually part of the visual landscape. So that's just like one manifestation of how we're using the kind of convergence of different languages.

N Nataki Garrett 20:15

And that came through the process with the woman who's playing the Queen, who's also a deaf actor.

S Scarlett Kim 20:20

Yes. And that speaks to a kind of a process oriented approach that we're taking to creating this world, we came into the rehearsal process - speaking of the developmental process - right, with a couple of anchors, but really, the process was designed so that every single person in the room would be generative artists, right? They're each bringing in kind of how they would like to play with this sandbox. And then, through this kind of encounter and intimate rehearsal experience, we actually were excavating our own language together in the room in real time.

N Nataki Garrett 20:54

So this is a really exciting notion, this idea of the room, because I directed one of the episodes, and I'm in my Zoom land in my home office. And all of the actors are in these green screen setups in their spaces, right? And so nobody's in the same room together. And yet, this idea of room happens because we're all brought together in this digital space.



S Scarlett Kim 21:23

Yeah, and I think that points to what was really central to this project, which is liveness. Liveness, as a kind of central to what we mean by theatricality, but liveness doesn't have to look like what we think of when we think of liveness - of us physical, fleshy beings being in the same room together, necessarily. So we had artists joining from across the country and across the world, at the same time, in our virtual shared real time rehearsal studio, which has meant for the actors, you know, they're having deeply emotional experiences exploring their characters and the narratives, but they're actually alone in their living room, or their studio or their bedroom in front of a green screen. But then, at the same time, and neither of these are, you know, they're not competing, they're actually working in tandem, right? They're both alone in their fiscal spaces, and we are all together in the virtual space. So that was a kind of a, you know, it's a kind of ongoing process of revelation of, oh, wow, this technology actually allows us to be together authentically, like genuinely, even when we're apart. That is part of the dramaturgy. The technology and the decentralized collaboration model becomes part of the story.

N Nataki Garrett 22:43

Well, and what I found really interesting about it, Scarlett, is you know, Shakespeare speaks the visual, right? So there isn't a scene that doesn't start with telling you where you are, what it looks like, who's in that room, and that, you know, like, if the king is in the room, it's a certain kind of place. If we're at court, if we're in somebody's - you know, a princess, his bedroom - that's a special, very specific kind of room. So, in a time, where you could only use very few symbols to create those spaces, because they didn't build gigantic, ginormous, elaborate sets, like we do now. You know, you relied on the language to tell you where you were and what you're doing. I mean, it's interesting to marry that with the visual landscape of, you know, that that film requires. What I love about this process is that you also remove the reliance on that. So the text says where we are, then that's where we are. And, and you can actually create a space that's reflective of your imagination in that world, or listen to the other artists as they try to create those, those worlds themselves. And it's interesting, you talked about the actors and the designers, everybody was in the in the space together in this room together, creating. Can you talk a little bit about like, how perhaps the actors did their creating in this space? And, you know, what did they have to remove in their notions of performance to in order to take something else on to create this?

S Scarlett Kim 24:12

Yeah, I think, you know, because we kind of frame the process as "this is theater." It is decidedly theater in the sense that we're kind of modeling our process off of a theatrical rehearsal process to begin with. But the medium we're working in is a visual medium. And it is a medium that, you know, is akin to film and video, but it's also NOT that. So it's kind of like drawing from all of these different vocabularies and creating our own bespoke medium. And in doing that, a lot of our rehearsal process was like, "Oh, this is how I'm trained to speak Shakespeare in a traditional sense." And that actually, is not even one thing. That means very different things to every single person in the room - of like what the ideal form of Shakespearean speech, articulation of expression, is. So thinking about like the assumptions that are laden in those kinds of approaches and that actually, like, let's strip away all of those ideas of what it should be, and actually just look at the text. So in a way, we had a very kind of a raw intimate encounter with a text. Looking at the text, it's kind of bare bones and then exploring how that interacts with the visuals. And, like you said Nataki, the space is really interesting. I was just going to say that we realize that we're actually freed from the pressure to represent, which has been such a treat in allowing us to really fully respond to our imagination, of, you know, the text is naming a space as such. So actually, visually, we can go to a psychological space, or an emotional space, or a relational space, or something totally surreal. And that relates to the physical presence as well, like you can be two people at the same time. Or you can be both yourself and a kind of visual echo of yourself. You know, we can place the audience under the bed (looking at the bed chamber scene) looking at Iachimo's foot, as Iachimo is doing the scene. We could put the audience kind of outside of the building, kind of a very Hitchcock rear window-esque, voyeuristic view into the scene. So our rehearsal process has been a kind of series of productive collisions between assumptions that we all make in different ways about what it means to perform Shakespeare and then using this new tool to kind of liberate.

N Nataki Garrett 26:36

So for our literary minded audiences do you mind giving us a little synopsis or summary of what happens in the play?

S Scarlett Kim 26:42

S Scarlett Kim 20:43

Sure. So... where to start? A play... a problem play full of twists and turns. So it starts out - "Cymbeline" by Shakespeare - starts out as a kind of what I always feel I'm from Korea, originally a very kind of K drama esque, melodramatic kickoff, where we learn about how all of these kind of scandalous things happened. And then now we're kind of face to face with Imogen and Posthumous who have just gotten secretly married. And Posthumous is being banished because this marriage is not sanctioned by the court. So by the king Cymbeline, who is Imogen's father - the two lovers are torn apart. And we see a series of kind of rapid fire like - again, K drama-esque - starcrossed lovers being torn apart. And then we see Posthumus go to Italy, and then engage with fellow men in Italy about kind of like placing a bet or wager on his wife's chastity, and virtue. So there's this whole sequence where Posthumus is kind of roped into doing this bet with Iachimo, who challenges Posthumus as: "Oh, I bet I can, you know, seduce your wife." And then we see Iachimo go back to Imogen and then try to seduce her. But then it doesn't work. Imogen maintains her virtue, right? So and then Iachimo comes back to Italy, but then kind of pulls the rug out from underneath Posthumous, telling him that he actually succeeded when he didn't. So that's kind of the first part - um, first half of the play where we see Posthumus kind of come to this boiling point. Now thinking that Imogen has betrayed him when she hasn't. So this is the first four episodes, which is what we have been really working on so far. It's so crazy to think that now, from episode five to ten, we go into a completely different world. And this is what's so dynamic and charming about this play, is that we have this entire narrative. And then now we will be going into the forest to meet the wilderness triad, as we've been calling it, who is Belarius, who has been politically banished by Cymbeline, and has kidnapped Cymbeline's two children as a kind of vendetta, and now they are living in the forest. And Imogen comes in disguise to kind of encounter them and, of course, they don't know that they're actually related. And then chaos ensues. That part of the play is so fast, it's very plot-y, like we've been saying. It's like, another impossible plot twist upon another, and then there's a huge war and you know, and then the play ends with....

N Nataki Garrett 29:32

Wait! Wait...Cymbeline at war with somebody at the same?

S Scarlett Kim 29:35

(laughter) Yeah. And then there's this whole narrative with war, where Caius Lucius, General from Rome, comes and there's this whole narrative... which is interesting because the play - the framing is the war, but it's not so present in the narrative itself. So I think that's always a big - that's been a big question for us of like, what is the war? Like... metaphysically?

N Nataki Garrett 29:58

Who does Cymbeline want Imogen to marry?

S Scarlett Kim 30:01

So... there's this... again, another million plots and subplots... So Cymbeline is married - newly married - to a kind of evil stepmother, who is just referred to as "the Queen," who has brought with her Cloten, her son. So Cymbeline is very invested in Imogen and Cloten being married. And for that to kind of sustain the throne.

N Nataki Garrett 30:27

Mmmm hmmm. To sustain the line. Yeah, it's like a corporate merger or something. Yeah.

S Scarlett Kim 30:31

And that's another moment where it feels like a very enduring storyline. Rings very relevant in our contemporary life.

N Nataki Garrett 30:40

So it's interesting that because there are so many plotlines in this play and what, you know, Shakespeare as a writer - what I always feel like when I read it is: Shakespeare is trying to try out some ideas. What are the what are the star-crossed lovers doing? What is this... What is this war that's being waged? What is this idea that you're being sanctioned by the court to marry somebody in order to continue the line? What are these sort of internal treacheries of the family... Like, what is? and what is? and what is? and what is? and what is? and we do know that Shakespeare was often hired by people to write plays so that they can perform them in their chambers, or, you know, in their was called theater, their home theater, but used some of those as ways of getting to other plays. So I think that the other thing is, it's interesting when people say things like, this is a "problem play" or that this is a "popular Shakespeare play". Because I think what they're talking about is the artist's process, right? So a writer will take some time breaking into some ideas in one play. And those ideas are fully realized in another play. And I feel like that's true of this piece of literature. Like as a piece of literature, you can take elements of "Cymbeline" and sort of - you can see them in all the plays, you know? It's one of those plays that's a kind of pivot play, which is why I think it's so interesting as an episodic

S Scarlett Kim 32:02

Totally

N Nataki Garrett 32:02

...Because it was like, "Oh, this is happening." And then "Wait! Over here, THIS is happening! And over HERE, this is happening." And you're still trying to pull all the plot lines together. So I'm curious in this idea of collage and how the world is set up, and how many different plot lines that he has to eventually pull together... Are you going to also follow that sort of linear... Because he does! I mean, you know, he does do it -because he's a good writer, right? But I'm not really sure if it's successful, which is why I think people consider to be a problem play. Are you following all those plot lines? Are you allowing that all to culminate into into kind of final scene?

S Scarlett Kim 32:42

Yeah, Nataki, you're speaking to kind of the central question of this project, kind of, you know, expression of "Cymbeline" by Shakespeare through this hybrid medium - through this episodic collage structure. We're constantly kind of ping-ponging between, how do we... for each episode, we have invited a guest artists to explore it from their own aesthetic styles and own perspective... So how can we really let each episode be singular, idiosyncratic, specific to the artist, but also, what are the through lines that kind of cut through each of the episodes? We are actually invested in the emotional and relational narrative threads that kind of run throughout the play. So it's a constant kind of dual focus of like singularity and kind of not cohesion per se, but a kind of like continuity, or kind of like commitment to these motifs and narratives that continue through. So I think when we get to the end of the play, which is this epic scene, where I think... I was just reading an article where it was saying it's like a 50 part denouement or something, because it's really just like an onion that keeps peeling. And it's like, every time you think that it's resolved, and then settled, like, there's yet another hat thrown in the ring. And it is both deeply, I mean, whenever we read that part of the play, it's like, our whole like acting ensemble is in tears sobbing because it's so moving. But we're also hysterically laughing, because the structure of it is so like, it's like a clown routine, but the kind of emotional content of it is so moving in that it's like, oh, all of these insane kind of plot twists and turns of star-crossed lovers and you know, long lost siblings, blah, blah, blah, it all kind of like, resolves and kind of like comes to this lovely kind of thing, but then it's not, you know, like, but on the other hand, there's still kind of this dark, savage undertone to it. Like the Queen has died, and it's mentioned very in a cavalier way. So it's like, what happened to this character? So it's both very satisfying and unsettling at the same time. So our goal in this process is to really highlight this kind of ping-ponging that I described, highlighting these moments as being unique and also like these overarching through lines. And if the final scene of the play is able to reflect that kind of duality, I think that's what we're seeking.

N Nataki Garrett 35:06

Oh, I love that. I love that. So let's talk a little bit about the audience, and how the audience is going to come into this, and what your expectation is. And I say this because I know that I spent the last year watching plays in the digital landscape, phone open, you know, texting back and forth, you know, being on Facebook, you know, being on

Instagram posting something about what I was watching on Instagram. So what do you think the role of the audience in this digital sphere is going to be?

S Scarlett Kim 35:35

This product is a kind of a call to action to the audience, I think, to kind of really make a choice about how they would like to engage. And I think in some moments, it seems to be more passive, but that's almost a red herring. Because just very quickly, after that moment, there is another moment where we will ask an audience to make a choice. And in a very literal way, for example, in episode three, in the the iconic bedchamber scene, we have filmed that captured that scene in three different ways. And the audience at that point in the experience will be asked to choose, like in a choose your own adventure novel, like, which, which perspective would you like to see the scene through? So there's a constant kind of like, "Oh, we're back to normalcy". And actually, no, now you're being cast in a role, audience member, and you have to make choices about how you would like to engage. And also this is, you know, it's an invitation to the audience to kind of forge their own terms of engagement, and how they would like to engage in this play amongst many other presence of media in their lives, right? So I'm really, I mean, in general, in my practice at large, I'm really thinking about what a captive audience engagement is, in today's times, where that's not really what we do in day to day life. We're always doing a million things. So what does it mean to actually create an artistic experience where it, you have to turn off your phone, you have to like be quiet and like wear a suit and like watch this play. But actually, like, this is a playful, you know, companion to your life. You know, you can have it on when you're making dinner, or you could like engage with it in a like, you can watch a few episodes and come back and watch other episodes. It's very playful and very kind of open in that waym - what we are imagining.

N Nataki Garrett 37:21

A little bit more reflective of our times, like you can put something in a queue and watch it later. You can watch the first episode and make a decision about whether or not you're just going to wait to watch the last one. And that's actually, I think, really, really important for for this time, because I was just recently in New York, and I went to see a musical. And the musical really knew what to do with the audience, in that they had to kind of keep us moving. And I think that there is... and I think the play was like that before. But it's like tight. I mean, you could like bounce a quarter off that play. And then I went to see this other play that was unfolding. And I remember feeling really impatient and feeling like, "come on, let's go!" Right? And I had to go like hey, Nataki. You're actually in a play. And you're watching this unfold you, it's you that has to give in. So it's interesting that even in this, this version, there's this idea of it being hybrid, where it depends on....you enter it where you enter it. And if you want to watch the whole thing at one go, you watch it, if you want to watch the first and the last you watch that, if you want to wait and have it, you know, and queue it up for later... If you want to watch five minutes of it and say you watched the whole thing... All of those things are available to you.

S Scarlett Kim 38:36

Yeah. And I, for me, this goes back to the kind of what is the space question in a way... It's less like here's a three hour play that you're supposed to watch linearly. Or in this like way, you're supposed to watch it - from beginning to end - But it's actually like a sandbox. And there is linearity, of course. And I think because there is that linearity anchor, that we're using the text pretty faithfully from beginning to end that it allows for that kind of more freeform or individualized approach. And something that- what you said also reminded me of, Nataki, was how the audience is literally addressed in each episode is also very unique to each episode. We start off with episode one, which is an episode that I'm directing, in a very kind of frontal facing DIRECT address kind of way. It's very kind of minimalistic, these close ups of heads of actors, like directly addressing the audience. And then, in the episode that you directed, Nataki, there's a totally different approach where in some moments, we see a kind of illusion of space, but then it quickly falls apart into a more abstract space. But actors are sometimes looking out directly to the viewer across the screen, but then like sometimes also in profile actually interacting with each other. So that's been really liberating and fun to say: We're going to cast the audience differently for each episode. You know, in some of the episodes, you're kind of an invisible anonymous audience. In some episodes, you are like at the center of it, like you're the main character, kind of like how Shakespeare was speaking in drafts, like writing and drafts, with this play of mashing together different narrative strategies and different kind of tropes. I feel like we're kind of actually honoring the DNA of the play by trying out different ways of interacting with audience trying out different modes of embodiment. And then there's the larger narrative of how do these episodes get collaged into the into a larger thing.

N

Nataki Garrett 40:37

So this next question also has to do with the audience. But it also has to do with your aesthetic. And I was thinking a little bit about the idea of the purist, these purity Shakespeare, people who, who talk about what Shakespeare would have wanted, or what it would have been like in Shakespeare's time. And I'm curious about your notions about Shakespearian purity in terms of style and taste? And also, if you have a notion about that...what does it mean to move against those ideas? Because I don't personally believe that there's a pure form of performing it. But I know that there are people out there who, who feel like if you don't do it in this sort of Elizabethan dress on a stage where people gesture in these very performative ways that it's not really Shakespeare.

S

Scarlett Kim 41:25

Yeah, I think a lot of my perspective here comes from, you know, growing up in Korea and English is my second language. So when I first fell in love with theater as a child, it was always an element of voyeurism to it. When they do Shakespeare in Korea, it's almost like, to me as a child that always felt like, yes, we're sincerely doing the Victorian like the full thing, but also doing a parody of it. Because, like, it is impossible to do that in the context of Korea without like, having an awareness of it. Like... it's like, isn't it interesting that we're gonna like roleplay, and like, do this version of how it's supposed to be done, but also kind of have fun with it, or even if it doesn't go that far, right? It's like, really examine that as like, this is an idea, one way of doing it. So I think I've been thinking back to that a lot. And actually how, perhaps lucky I was to, like, have that voyeuristic perspective and to... what it means to do classics, because in my, as an artist in my career, I've often go back to classical texts. And I often use that as an opportunity to juxtapose tropes with everything else, right? Juxtapose kind of what things seem to be or what people think things should be, and juxtaposing that with something that is more personal, or day to day, or stripped from its aesthetics. Right? So all that is to say, Yes, totally. Like, of course, you know, I think... I don't actually even think about how do we interrogate a purist way of doing Shakespeare, because I feel just who I am is, it is at the core of what I do. But what's interesting is that in doing that, it's not just like, "F.U. text," it's actually we're doing a deep engagement with the text itself. And to me, the only way to do that - only way to do Shakespeare is by, you know, doing a deep engagement in the text. But then also interrogating the text. It has to be both of those things.

N

Nataki Garrett 43:23

I love this idea of voyeurism, because I feel like what you're speaking to, is that there's really only a tiny subset of people who can enter into this this world without being voyeuristic. Because it was written for the court. It was written for, you know, extremely affluent people to perform with their extremely affluent friends. And it was also written for a tiered audience where, where there was an understanding that a group of people would not be paying attention to the framing of the world. Would not really understand what was happening. And there would be these other tiers of people who would, as the further up in in the in the Globe you got, the more understanding you might have to the worlds that he's creating. So there's a lot of explanation. You know, you said at the beginning that Shakespeare is extremely populist. So I think he's inviting the voyeur, as well as inviting those people who think they understand. And what's so interesting is if you're somebody who thinks you understand, you're you're the one that that actually has the the furthest to go in a Shakespearean text. Thank you for that because I also feel voyeuristic in it. And I feel like my mother would feel voyeuristic. And I feel like people who come from colonized nations feel voyeuristic. But I also think that people who come from from lower classes in England would feel voyeuristic. So I feel like there's this idea that you're either in the know or you're not in the know and yet written into Shakespeare is this idea that actually all the tiers are voyeuristic. There's a squashing of tiers...a mashing of tiers.

S

Scarlett Kim 45:02

Yeah, I really resonate with that. And thank you for reminding us that Shakespeare, you know, he didn't intend the audience to be monolithic to begin with. It was always this kind of like concentric circle of audiences that are all kind of removed. And if you think you're "the audience," you're actually, you know, the person he's making fun of. So that's really central to this play, actually, in particular, because I think "Cymbeline" is about performance, you know, at its at its core, right? It's about the act of performing in day to day life. Performing as a way of surviving, as a way of - as a kind of ritual of existing and surviving, navigating the world. So in a way, I mean, I find this play just inherently meta, in that sense, more than, you know, the Shakespearean canon in general, because it really kind of gets at so many different kinds of performance, like roleplay. Dream. Sleep is a big form of performance here, right? Like, masculinity is a big performance here, you know. Like there's so many forms of performance, that are inside of the play that it's just, like, feels so fresh, and so relevant today to explore.

N

Nataki Garrett 46:15

I love that. So when you first took on this project, you were a guest artist. And I'm just curious about, you know, what the experience was, like coming here to do this work as a guest artists?

S

Scarlett Kim 46:29

Yeah, it's been it's been quite a journey, I started working on this project before I joined OSF as Associate Artistic Director. You know, it was, at first a little bit unnerving to kind of do this experiment in the context of Oregon Shakespeare Festival, even though, you know, I had the invitation from you, Nataki, to kind of, really explore the play experimentally. And, you know, as an experimental artist and practitioner, I was so grateful and blessed to like, okay, let's like, do it, and let's like fully tear it apart and put it back together and do that a million times. But I will say, I felt a little bit like glitchy of like, but like, what does that mean, the context of Oregon Shakespeare Festival container and the context. And it's been really interesting kind of navigating my own assumptions and kind of our, you know, shared assumptions about what it means to do Shakespeare and what it means to, you know, do that in this way, and it's been quite a journey.

N

Nataki Garrett 47:27

So I've been thinking a little bit about, when we post about the digital work on Facebook, we have a number of people who who write back and there's a lot of fear around whether or not they're being invited to engage because I think people have a sort of deep fear of technology. And if you have a deep fear of technology, it means that you are a part of the evolution of technology, because technology was created for the people who have fear of technology to make it more accessible. So it'll be more and more and more accessible. But I was thinking about this, you know, my grandmother passed away now, I think, about 10 years ago, and I was thinking about her and how I would engage her with this work, you know, because she would basically asked me to set the whole thing up for her. And I would have to sit by her while I was, you know, we were figuring out together how to push what button and what was going to take place and how to watch it and how to like, what are what do you read first, and you know, is there a program and, and all of that stuff. And I was thinking about how I longed for that - to be in a space with my grandmother, where I would then be her point of entry. Because for so much of my introduction into the theater world, she was my point of entry. So to be able to offer this opportunity for exchange, I guess what I'm saying is that if you if you find yourself, you know, trying to figure out which button to press, this might be the time to engage somebody who might know more about which button to press. And then and then there's an opportunity for for engagement across generations, which is how I came to the theater, you know, which is because there were multiple generations involved in my my point of entry. So those are all the wonderful things. Scarlett, thank you so much for this lovely conversation and for unpacking yet again another layer of what the possibilities are in the things that we're endeavoring to do here at OSF. Thank you so much.

S

Scarlett Kim 49:27

Thank you, Nataki. Looking forward to next steps!

A

Amanda Bullock 49:30

That's an Nataki Garrett and Scarlett Kim of Oregon Shakespeare Festival in conversation about "The Cymbeline Project." Thank you to Nataki and Scarlett for joining us today. Thank you also to OSF staff Evren Odcikin, Josh Horvath, Donya K. Washington, Liz Lanier, and Randy Pamphlet for their help in making today's episode possible. You will be able to experience "The Cymbeline Project" in all its hybrid glory in November 2022. Look for more information at osfashland.org. This has been Literary Arts The Archive Project. It's a retrospective of some of the most engaging talks from the world's best writers for more than 35 years of literary arts in Portland. The Archive Project is produced in collaboration with Oregon Public Broadcasting. To hear more subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. Our executive producer is Andrew Proctor. The show is produced by Crystal Ligor and Donald Or for radio and podcast with oversight by me Amanda Bullock and support from Liz Olufson. Special thanks to I Literary Arts marketing staff Jyoti Roy and Hope Levy and the entire Literary arts staff, board and community, this show would not be possible

without them. Thanks also to the band Emancipator for our theme music and thanks to all of you for listening. I'm Amanda Bullock in for Andrew Proctor, and this has been another episode of The Archive Project from Literary Arts. Join us next time and find your story here.