

This rough magic: Flute Theatre's *The Tempest* and its players

Robert Shaughnessy

It begins, as it will end, in a circle. Seated on the floor of the arena stage of the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, around a large cloth coloured with concentric swirls of blue gold and white that suggest clear waters, tropical sands and wispy white clouds, are about a dozen young people, alongside them the six actors who play Prospero, Caliban, Ariel, Ferdinand (doubled with Stephano), Miranda, and Trinculo. To the side, equipped with a small drum, sits Kelly Hunter, the show's director and the originator of the methods from which it was devised, and also, as the action unfolds, its Prospero-like facilitator and orchestrator. Surrounding this circle of actors and those whom, for the purposes of this essay, I shall call players, seated on four sides on tiered benches, are the watchers: the parents and carers of this mostly teenaged group. All of the young persons gathered here are autistic; among their number is my own son, Gabriel, who on the day of the performance (26 October 2016) is three months shy of his seventeenth birthday. Autism is a condition that currently affects about 700,000 (or around one per cent) of the population in the United Kingdom,¹ and is characterized by what has until quite recently been officially defined as the 'triad of impairments': that is, difficulties with communication, imagination, and social interaction.² It is a spectrum condition that presents in a wide variety of ways, ranging from the non-verbal, self-harming child in need of constant supervision for their own safety to the savant capabilities of high-functioning individuals capable of exceptional levels of creative and intellectual achievement. In common with most autistic children, Gabriel showed all the signs of normal development until the age of two; after that, regression was rapid and profound, plunging us, his parents and his siblings, into a life that we could never have imagined, and for which we were totally unprepared. For Gabriel, autism is a mix of ability and deficit that includes a preference for routines, ritualized and repetitive behaviours, a vocabulary restricted to single, functional words, short phrases, and surreal personal catchphrases, a slyly unique sense of humour, and a taste for both the *Mr Men* books and the music

of Johnny Cash. It also involves, as it does for many autistic individuals, an extraordinary level of musicality, reflecting what Francesca Happé, commenting on the work of music and autism specialist Adam Ockelford, calls ‘the natural synergy between the structure inherent in music and the cognitive style of the ASC mind’,³ which for Gabriel is manifested in unerringly accurate pitch processing, an immediate grasp of melody, and technically-perfect piano playing. This is the third time in the space of a year that I have brought Gabriel to this show, and given that Shakespearean spectatorship, as Penelope Woods suggests, generally demands a triad of aptitudes, of ‘cognitive dexterity, social awareness, and emotional versatility’,⁴ the question of how Gabriel will connect with *The Tempest*, if at all, remains a very real one. Granted, his older brother and older and younger sisters all had Shakespeare inflicted on them at various points in their youth, so I see no reason for Gabriel to emerge unscathed. This is a play, moreover, with particular and haunting resonances in this context, not least in its Asperger’s-type scholar-father protagonist, so immersed in his books that he fails to spot the theft of a dukedom, its concern with the agony of speechlessness and the power of language, its themes of entrapment, imprisonment and liberty, and its preoccupation with the interplay between vision and sound, and with music:

Where should this music be? I’th’ air, or th’earth?

(1.2.388)

Enter ARIEL with music and song.

(2.1.288)

This is the tune of our catch, played by the picture of Nobody.

(3.2.127-8)

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises...

(3.2.136)

But still, I wonder as I sit, watching: how much of this is about Gabriel, and how much about me?

What unfolds over the course of the next hour or so is not a production of *The Tempest* in the conventional sense, but a distillation of key episodes which are approached as a series of

interactive games, the ground rules of which are set down in the opening moments. Introducing the show to the players and audience, Hunter explains how the players will be taken through a sequence of activities, in which they are free to participate - or not – to whatever degree they find comfortable. Into the first game, which is key to establishing the rules; Hunter holds her hand to her heart, beats twice to the incantatory tune of ‘Hel-lo’, and bids the players, assisted by the actors, and the surrounding audience, to follow suit, and to look around the circle and make eye contact. After a minute or so the collective pulse is stilled, then started, this time combined with names, and one-by-one ‘hellos’, to each player. Some of the players engage more readily than others, and some need more prompting, but there is a lot of eye contact and some laughter; co-opted into the game, those of us watching also find ourselves eased into the show. Next is the game Hunter calls ‘Throwing the face’, where the players are given a series of emotional states (happy face, angry face, disgusted face), asked to show it facially in as extreme a form as they can, and then to ‘throw’ it, with a flick of the head to another player across the circle, ‘as if a mask is being flung...requiring some physical effort’,⁵ who ‘catches’ the face, and passes it on in turn. It is a good warm-up, and it also has a bearing on character and narrative later on, as these are the faces that the lovers, Caliban and Stephano will adopt. The sequence ends with a round of applause – literally, with Hunter modelling the gesture of applauding while also describing a circle in the air, and hands placed on the floor.

The ‘Heartbeat Circle’ is the foundation of the performance, as it is of a body of work that has been in development for the best part of three decades, beginning with Hunter’s initial outreach work for the Royal Shakespeare Company in the early 1990s. Initially conceived as a set of workshop activities, the Hunter Heartbeat Method (HHM) starts from the idea that the simple *di-dum* rhythm that opens and closes every session matches that of iambic pentameter, ‘the rhythm of the heartbeat’, in Hunter’s words, which reveals ‘the ever-changing specificity’ of ‘how it feels to be alive: ‘the rhythm is the *life* of the feeling.’⁶ The regularity of the beat, Hunter found, had a soothing effect even on the most unsettled children, and works to address the ‘dissociation of body and

mind'⁷ in autism. Hunter's observation is confirmed by social cognition research, which has seen problems of communication and social interaction as in part the consequence of disordered patterns of synchrony. In that interpersonal synchronization, whether in theatre-making or in real life, is a matter of 'social communication activities and constructs including joint attention, imitation, turn-taking, non-verbal social communicative exchanges, affect sharing and engagement',⁸ it has been found that 'synchronized bodily coordination was disturbed in social pathologies generally and in particular in children with ASD', that 'the ability of adolescents with autism to synchronize the timing of their speech to that of a conversational partner was poor; and that 'adolescents with ASD do not synchronize gestures with speech.'⁹ Autistic individuals have 'a tendency to focus attention inward on their own bodily states even when engaged in tasks that require interaction with the environment',¹⁰ and experience particular difficulties synchronizing eye contact, impacting upon not only their capacities for communication and social interaction but also their ability to recognize or infer the mental states of others (so-called 'theory of mind').¹¹ Concomitantly, experimental attempts to cultivate synchronized action and movement, such as through dance or music therapy, have shown that these have demonstrably generate, in the words of one study, 'improvement in body awareness, psychological well-being, and social skills' for their autistic participants.¹² The Heartbeat Circle, similarly, offers a regular, and, importantly, repetitive and predictable structure within which synchronized behaviour, and thus the beginnings of communication and interaction, can take place. The Circle thus creates the space for the phenomenon known to the cognitive sciences as entrainment, the fundamental mechanism whereby the co-ordinated actions of individuals create a sense of group identity, purpose and mutual well-being; what William H. McNeill characterized as 'a strange sense of personal enlargement; a sort of swelling out, becoming larger than life, thanks to participation in collective ritual.'¹³



Figure 1. Flute Theatre's *The Tempest*, Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, October 2016.

L-R: Gabriel, Chris, Alfred, Finlay, Lowri, a player

It will already be apparent that, as a work that straddles the domains of Shakespearean theatre-making and applied performance, there is more at stake in this *Tempest* than the usual questions of engagement and effectiveness. Across the broad spectrum of practices that fall under the definition of the latter, as Helen Nicholson (quoting Judith Ackroyd) puts it, there is a shared conviction that 'theatre has the potential to "address something beyond the form itself"', and that 'applied theatre is primarily concerned with developing new possibilities for everyday living rather than separating theatre-going from other aspects of life.'¹⁴ In this spirit, the production to some extent owes its existence to a formal recognition that HHM might work to alleviate aspects of their condition for the autistic players participating in it. In 2011, Hunter began a three-year collaboration between the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Psychology Department, Nisonger Center and Wexner Medical Center at Ohio State University, consisting of an ongoing programme of workshops that led, in July 2014, to the premiere of *The Tempest* at the RSC's Other Place in Stratford.¹⁵ The

first phase of the work was a pilot study, through which was conducted a systematic evaluation of the efficacy the method, as implemented through a twelve-week programme of workshops.

Fourteen young persons, ranging in age from ten to fourteen, were selected for the study, and, using established developmental disability measures, were tested before and after the programme on the basis of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale (VABS). Both evaluate communication skills, reciprocal social interaction, and restricted and repetitive behaviours. The results, according to Margaret Mehling, Marc Tassé and Robin Root, leaders of the project team and authors of the first paper to emerge from the study, indicated that ‘participants’ scores increased across time on measures of social skills, communication and pragmatic language’, and that HHM ‘appears to have the potential to impact core features of autism spectrum disorder.’¹⁶ Throughout the paper, HHM is referred to as an ‘intervention’, on the tacit understanding that the goal is to bring about an improvement in the lives of its players, improvements of the kind that can be identified and measured on the terms of ADOS and VABS.

Since two of the authors (Mehling and Tassé) are psychologists making a case in a journal read by other psychologists for the efficacy of a programme of activities that was partly funded by the United States Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, this emphasis is understandable. Indeed, it scientifically validates Hunter’s own position, which is that ‘[e]xpressing feelings, making eye contact, accessing their mind’s eye and their dreams, keeping a steady heartbeat and recognizing faces are all part of the autism dilemma’, and that the aim is to embed ‘these unattainable skills within games derived from moments of Shakespeare, which the children could play and thereby benefit from’.¹⁷ But the researchers’ outcome-oriented approach to the method also needs to be set alongside Hunter’s insistence that ‘Shakespeare is used not for educational means, but rather to wake the children up to their own lives’, her speculation that it would be ‘interesting to see how important the art of playfulness is within the findings of the research and whether in fact playfulness is deemed measurable at all’, and her recognition that the route to autism is a two-way street, involving ‘having the faith to believe that a child with autism

would “throw me Bottom’s donkey face” is truly playful’, and knowing that ‘it’s only now...that I would name it so.’¹⁸ Moreover, despite the claim to offer an ‘evaluation’ of HHM, however, Mehling, Tassé and Root give no indication of what it is about the specifically *Shakespearean* components of HHM that deserve scrutiny: summarizing the *Tempest* workshop series as a set of games which ‘target skills including eye contact, turn-taking, facial emotion recognition, imitation, improvisation, humour, and communication’, they position the practice within the broad field of ‘drama-based interventions’ that ‘offer opportunities for children with autism spectrum disorder to develop social skills including awareness of others; empathy; perspective taking; turn-taking; balance between listening and responding; gaining, maintaining, and directing the attention of others; adopting different roles appropriate to the setting; recognising rules and conventions of different groups; and recognising the facial expression of emotion’.¹⁹ In a follow-up essay, Post (an actor and theatre professor, and the drama lead for the project), documents the workshop activities in more detail, and emphasizes the core feature of ‘the children’s attention to their own heartbeats helping to ground their use of Shakespeare’s verse in their own organic rhythms’, but likewise stresses the beneficial potential of the method, claiming that the children involved ‘are able to develop and strengthen their communicative and interactive skills...within a supportive context for developing greater possibilities for engagement and interaction.’²⁰

These considerations are more pertinent to the workshop programme than to a show that may well be experienced as a one-off, but both may be considered in the light of Nicola Shaughnessy’s reconsideration of the relationship between instrumentality and artistry in applied performance practice. Proposing that an artificial divide has been promulgated between socially engaged or applied performance and work that pursues disinterestedly ‘artistic’ objectives, she argues that this has caused the aesthetic component of the former to be undervalued, even sidelined: bringing ‘cognitive theory into dialogue with conceptualizations of relational, community and socially situated aesthetics’, she calls for an approach that finds ‘the extraordinary in the ordinary and in value systems which challenge or differ from the individualist and materialist, in

favour of community and in which co-operation and awareness of others is part of the performance experience of encounter.²¹ For HHM, this implies less of concern with whether it *does* good (as measured by ADOS scores and the like) and more with whether it *is* good, or, to use Shaughnessy's term, 'extraordinary', and this is the interest that I pursue in what follows. Shakespeare, as usual, is there already: *The Tempest*, it hardly needs saying, is a work very much preoccupied with the transformative – and also coercive – power of art, and of performance, and with the ethical ramifications of the exercise of that power: 'graves at my command', admits Prospero, 'Have waked their sleepers...By my so potent art' (5.1.48-50), and his release from the island is conditional upon its surrender: 'this rough magic/ I here abjure' (5.1.50-1); 'Let your indulgence set me free' (Epilogue, 20).

Whatever calculable benefits they have for the participants, the games are both an end in themselves and components in a larger design; Flute's *The Tempest* offers both the experience and the spectacle of play. The performance proper begins with neither the storm nor its aftermath but cuts straight to the confrontation between Prospero and Caliban. This consists of three short lines of dialogue (all episodes are distilled down to a handful of keywords) and accompanying actions, modelled by the actors: Joshua Jackson, playing Caliban, drops to a low squat, makes a circular sweep of the floor with his arm, and growls, angry-faced, 'This island's *mine*' (1.2.332); Sifiso Mazibuko, as Prospero, holds the moment, then points: 'Cramps!' (1.2.326) Jackson pantomimes writhing pain for a few moments, and then Mazibuko peremptorily releases him with a handclap: 'Better!' The first player is led into the circle and steered through the moves by his partner-actor, they play through the sequence, and then swap roles (an important rule, adhered to throughout). The players revel in their tasks, acting up the agonized gyrations, teasingly extending the wait for release. Already, the show's thematics of ownership, power and subjugation are in play; and already, thanks to the unpredictable disposition of the players, the architecture of the show is subject to stress-testing. The first pairing proceeds as scripted, but when another player steps in as Prospero he sees an opportunity for comic sabotage. Jackson feeds him his cue, but he is not having it:

This island's mine.

No, it's mine.

This island's mine.

Well, it isn't anymore.

This island's mine.

Face reality.

A wave of laughter surges around the room, and as I scan the faces of my companions on the benches, I see rapt attention, surprised delight and, here and there, a touch of trepidation (will my child join in as expected? will she have a meltdown?). As those who know better than anyone how our children respond to the rules in social situations, we will them and the show on, hoping that our indulgence will, just for a while, set them free. Gabriel, for his part, prefers observing to joining; as ever, he demands visual validation of his doings by breaking frame (for he knows not 'seems') and calling across the space, 'Dad, take a picture.' I demur; the story moves on: with a drum-roll and a guitar note, Ariel springs to his feet (Finlay Cormack, in a faded Superman T-Shirt, briefly channelling Puck), 'I go, I go, I go...', and executes a hop and a skip that Gabriel spontaneously mimics. Forward to the cartoon-style first encounter between Ferdinand and Miranda. Taking the lead from Prospero's 'At the first sight/ They have changed eyes' (1.2.441-2), this has Chris Macdonald's Ferdinand and Lowri Izzard's Miranda pacing the circle, each avoiding the other's eye until, suddenly, their gazes lock; crying, together, 'O, you wonder!' (1.2.427) they make a thumb-and-forefinger circle before both eyes and, gesturing the classic Tex Avery image of love and first sight, shoot them forward with a 'Do-yo-yo-ing!' I love this moment, not least because it is one that Gabriel and I have taken home from our family's last encounter with this show and occasionally replayed as a shared joke; and it is one in which he happily participates. Before we know it, the floor is filled with Mirandas and Ferdinands, a field of eyes on stalks ('Do-yo-yo-ing!'), while Gabriel offers his variant, 'O you wonderful'; the game plays and replays until Hunter senses that it is time to move on, and with a gentle ping of finger-cymbals, we move to the next episode. The percussive score is a crucial

component of the show that is structured and performed like a jazz symphony, one that accommodates space for extended riffing and creative improvisation within its storytelling, which in this version incorporates some of the pre-history of the play. Caliban's memory of being taught 'how/ To name the bigger light and how the less' (1.2.336-7) generates a sequence in which Miranda points first this way and verbalizes ('sun'), then that ('moon'), which he with enormous effort repeats, and a call-and-response:

My name's Miranda. Your name's Ca-li-ban.

Ca-mmm-haaa-ca-ca...

Ca-li-ban.

Ca-ca-ca-ca-...Ca-li-ban. *Ca-li-ban, Ca-li-ban...*

This gradually builds, with a drumbeat and clapping rhythm, to a whole-group chant (which Gabriel joins in), eventually stilled by another quiet ping of cymbals. Trinculo (Tricia Gannon)'s encounter with Stephano (Macdonald) summons the 'sad face' and the 'disgusted face' of the Heartbeat Hello; Caliban marches the whole group round the space, laughing, leaping and squatting to the tune of 'toads, beetles, bats' (1.2.341); Ferdinand and Miranda take each other's hands, and Gabriel, having had enough of doing for now, lies down to listen. And as the ebb and flow of repetition continues, something happens to my sense of time and I surrender to the hypnotic rhythm of the show; I feel that I could be here for hours, even days, and I am not in least bothered when it will end. Looking round the room I sense a web of looks, supportive and sustaining; an invisible safety net, attentive faces willing the piece to work.

I began by posing the question of how much this show was to do with me, and how much with Gabriel. For some, the question might also be: how much is this to do with Shakespeare? This can be read in a number of ways. Perhaps there a few diehards who would regard whittling the play down to seven characters, a handful of scenes and a some choice word and passages as sufficient evidence for it no longer to qualify, but given that, in the eclectic field of contemporary

Shakespearean performance, what Dennis Kennedy once labelled 'Shakespeare without his language'²² is increasingly the norm rather than the exception, they can be safely ignored. Judged by the standards of the past few decades the Flute *Tempest* is no less 'Shakespeare' than Derek Jarman's, Peter Brook's or Greg Doran's.²³ Worth taking more seriously is the suggestion (which is perhaps latent in Mehling, Tassé and Post's account of the OSU pilot) that it is the drama game element, rather than something intrinsic and unique to Shakespeare, that does the real work. In this account, Shakespeare and *The Tempest* are useful placeholders which may mean very little to the participants, a means of legitimating, perhaps even ascribing cultural authority to, a repertoire of techniques that might work just as well (some might argue better) without them.²⁴ In the absence of a control group playing non-Shakespearean analogues of the HHM activities, it is impossible to know either way; but in response it can be said that there is a wide range of levels and points of access to the work and that Shakespeare, in Nicola Shaughnessy's terms, is a relational phenomenon, wherein cultural presence interacts with the textual resources of language, character, situation and narrative are a means of orientation (and an opportunity for buy-in) as much for the actors and audience as for the players. However, the key component that clearly differentiates HHM from a variety of similar, non-Shakespearean drama-centred programmes is, of course, the emphasis on shared rhythmic activity, the 'heartbeat' that pulses throughout all of its activities. As I noted above, there are compelling reasons why, in cognitive, embodied terms, this works with persons with autism, but I am also aware that it risks falling foul of what readers of this volume will recognize as decades-old arguments within Shakespearean performance criticism about false universals. Hunter is quite clear that her project is 'a self-imposed investigation into Shakespeare's validity today',²⁵ and that HHM is a means of intimately grounding that validity in bodily experience. The way that the heartbeat metaphor works in Hunter's work is unique, but it has been mobilized elsewhere in modern verse-speaking training. For leading voice coach and author of a number of widely-used acting manuals, Patsy Rodenburg, the 'fundamental rhythm' of the iambic is the 'life-giving beat', 'the first and last we hear – that of our heart. It releases the physical pace and momentum of the verse, and

illuminates the meaning through the stress. It also charts the heartbeat – including the stoppages or skips – of the character.²⁶ In this understanding, there is a deep organic connection between metre, the body, physical and mental equilibrium, and healthy performance, but also, pragmatically, a definition of verse from that seems immediately tangible, and intuitive. Such thinking has not gone unchallenged. W. B. Worthen, notably, has argued that attempts to frame Shakespearean textuality in terms of contemporary corporeality is an ideological manoeuvre whereby Shakespeare ‘becomes a naturalizing metaphor on the order of the body itself’, representing the universal, transcendent, and natural in ways that both legitimate and tender unquestionable the dominant discourse of the stage.’ In Worthen’s terms, HHM would be one of the means whereby Shakespeare ‘appears to enable the body to recapture itself.’²⁷

Worthen does not think this is a good thing, but I beg to differ: this is demonstrably what Flute’s work does. Tempting as it is to dismiss the concerns of performance scholarship with the thought that few people in the room (other than myself) would have known or cared about them, let me propose instead that work such as this raises more fundamental political questions not only about what ‘Shakespeare’, ‘performance’, and the relationship between them might be, but also about whom has access to and ownership of these, and how. If the practical response to the charge that actors think about Shakespearean textuality in terms of transhistorical bodily metaphors is that this is because it works, and the philosophical one, following Lakoff and Johnson, is that it is hard-wired into the ways we think,²⁸ the ethical one, surely, is that if this is what it takes to make Shakespeare’s work available to those who are otherwise excluded from it, then that is all the justification it needs. Taking a cue from the declaration in Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that ‘participation in the arts is a right, not a privilege’, Blythe A. Corbett has argued that making theatre accessible to autistic persons is not just a matter of adjusting normative performance conditions and conventions to make it temporarily, ‘specially’, available, but, more radically, of transforming our understanding of what mainstream practice is: ‘perhaps the most important question is: why is such access exceptional?’²⁹ *The Tempest* provides

an example of one way this question might be answered, not (or, at least, not for Gabriel) because it will bring about any change or improvement in the condition of those who participate in it, but because the experience of a work of theatre art is in itself worthwhile.

Unusually for a show of this kind, the Flute *Tempest* was afforded a review in the *Guardian*, and its author, Lyn Gardner, seemed to agree. Awarding the production a rare four (out of five) stars, Gardner described it as ‘groundbreaking’ and ‘innovative’, and as ‘a unique theatrical experience – part performance and part workshop – which genuinely puts the sense of play back into Shakespeare’s late work.’ In particular, Gardner felt, ‘it would be impossible for anyone witnessing the final scene, in which Ariel is set free, not to feel a tingle of real joy.’³⁰ The phrasing seems exactly right, and the liberation is, indeed, exquisitely handled: ‘I set *thee* free’ says Prospero to Ariel, who responds, ‘I go, I go’; ‘I’ll miss you so’, chimes his former captor, then both together, ‘So, so, so...’ This segues, quite naturally, into the final round, the Goodbye Heartbeat, and it ends, as it began, in a circle: ‘Good-bye...good-bye...good-bye...’ I carry another memory away with me. Before this ending, there is a moment of calm beauty in an isle full of noises. At the height of the rough-and-tumble cacophony of Caliban’s second scene with Trinculo and Stephano (3.3), a Marx Brothers routine of slaps, pratfalls, slide whistle and parping horns, a stillness descends for Jackson’s softly-spoken occupancy of Caliban’s big moment:

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices,
That if then had I waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
The clouds, methought, would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

(3.3.136-44)

If the first half of this passage, in this setting, pictures the synesthetic acoustic world of autism, what Ockelford defines as its 'Exceptional Early Cognitive Environment', in which the child's experience of music is 'likely to be very different from that of the majority; more vivid, more intense, more exciting, more exhausting' and where 'each pitch may be like a familiar friend in an otherwise confusing world; each with the capacity to evoke a strong emotional response',³¹ its second touches on a loss felt closer to home. Watching, as a parent, our profoundly autistic son engaging in one of the many activities – happy playing Shakespeare, after his fashion – that, after diagnosis we never dreamed he would access, the clouds part to offer a glimpse of a somewhere where things are otherwise; the place where we lived before we knew he was autistic, before everything changed. Reflecting brilliantly and movingly about his autistic son's love of music, Nick Hornby muses that this love is 'the best part of us...probably the richest and strangest part'.³² I do not know whether the *Tempest*-echoes are deliberate...

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made;
Those the pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

(1.2.397-402)

...but the resonances of a song in which a grieving son is conjured to imagine the fantastic metamorphosis in death, of a father still very much alive, are strange and rich indeed. For Hornby, living with his son's condition, as for any parent of a child with a disability, meant learning to 'let go of the ambitions you once had for him very quickly (and you learn too that many of those ambitions were worthless anyway, beside the point, precious, silly, indulgent, intimidatingly restrictive)'.³³ Hornby writes well of the journey through grief to mourning to acceptance that many undergo, but for some there is sadness for what might have been still that lingers on, beneath the joy for what is, and that from time to time resurfaces. Adrift in this realm of Shakespearean late romance, I am in

deeper waters than I thought. Some fifteen years ago, a child was lost; briefly, that child was here again, along with what we imagined to be a very different life ahead of him. It was, of course, just a dream, but for a moment only, I cried to dream again.

How much of this is about me, and how much about Gabriel? The feeling passes, what is, is. On the train home I sound Gabriel out: 'How was *The Tempest*?'; 'Was it good', he replies (it is a statement, not a question). On impulse, I slide a sheet of paper across the table; 'Draw *The Tempest*.' Gabriel frowns for a second, and writes one word at the centre of the page: 'island'. He pauses, then twice adds two names, above and below: 'kelly', and 'rownana'. The first, readers, you know; the second is Rowan Mackenzie, someone who is also researching Flute's work, whom we met in the theatre café before the show.

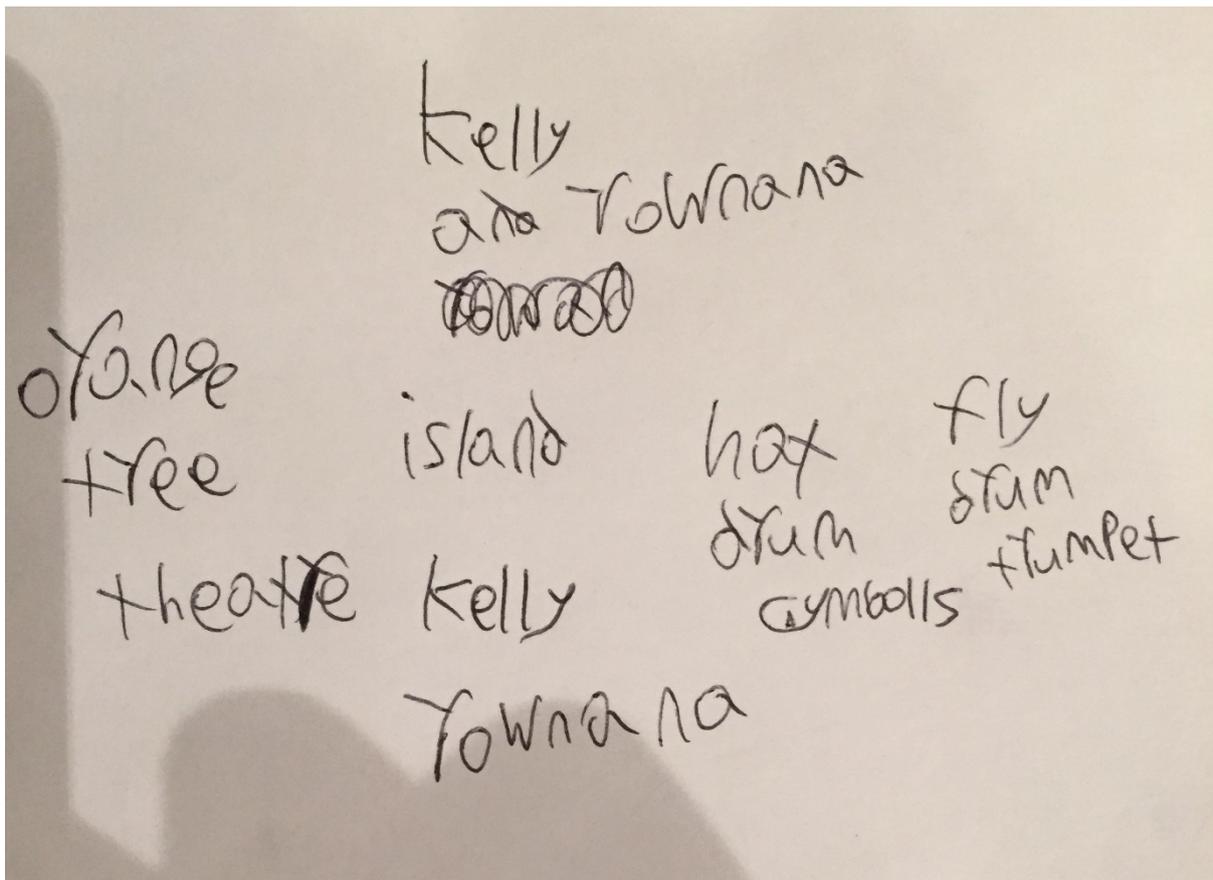


Figure 2. Gabriel's review.

Two columns on the right, and one to the left, complete the picture. The 'hat' is Trinculo's, which Gabriel was invited to try on after it ended, the drum, trumpet and cymbals the ones he played while wearing the hat. As a piece of performance criticism, this pretty well nails it: an imaginary island, floating in space, dressing up, words and music, a venue, a journey, a reunion, and a new encounter. For a shared memory of Shakespeare, it is, perfectly, just enough.

Acknowledgements

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¹ The National Autistic Society, 'About autism', www.autism.org.uk/about.aspx. Accessed 22 February 2017.

² Lorna Wing, *The Triad of Impairments of Social Interaction: An Aid to Diagnosis* (London: National Autistic Society, 1992).

³ Francesca Happé, 'Foreword' to Adam Ockelford, *Music, Language and Autism: Exceptional Strategies for Exceptional Minds* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2013), 9-10.

⁴ Penelope Woods, 'Skilful Spectatorship? Doing (or Being) Audience at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre', *Shakespeare Studies* 43 (2015), 99-113: 99.

⁵ Kelly Hunter, *Shakespeare's Heartbeat: Drama games for children with autism* (London: Routledge, 2015), 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ Tony Charman, 'Commentary: glass half full or half empty? Testing social communication interventions for young children with autism', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 52 (2011), 22-3:

⁹ Paula Fitzpatrick et al., 'Impairments of Social Motor Synchrony Evident in Autism Spectrum Disorder', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7 (2016), 1-13: 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ See Simon Baron-Cohen, *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind* (London: MIT Press, 1997).

¹² Sabine C. Koch et al., 'Fixing the mirrors: A feasibility study of the effects of dance movement therapy on young adults with autism spectrum disorder', *Autism*, 19 (2015), 338-50: 350.

¹³ William H. McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). For the Shakespearean ramifications, see Robert Shaughnessy, 'Connecting the Globe: Actors, Audience and Entrainment', *Shakespeare Survey* 68 (2015), 294-305.

¹⁴ Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, Second Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4. Nicholson quotes Judith Ackroyd, 'Applied Theatre: Problems and Possibilities', *Applied Theatre Journal*, 1 (2000).

¹⁵ The original cast was Greg Hicks (Caliban), Chris Macdonald (Ferdinand and Stephano), Kevin McClatchy (Prosepero), Mahmoud Osmart (Ariel), Robin Post (Trinculo) and Eva Lily Tausig (Miranda).

¹⁶ Margaret H. Mehling, Marc J. Tassé and Robin Root, 'Shakespeare and autism: an exploratory evaluation of the Hunter Heartbeat Method', *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 18 (2016), 1, 12.

¹⁷ Hunter, *Shakespeare's Heartbeat*, 4-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 238, 239.

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- ¹⁹ Mehling, Tassé and Post, 'Shakespeare and autism', 2-3.
- ²⁰ Robin Post, 'Shakespeare and Autism: Reenvisioning Expression, Communication, and Inclusive Communities', in *Creativity and Community among Autism-Spectrum Youth: Creating Positive Social Updrafts through Play and Performance*, ed. Peter Smagorinsky (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 105.
- ²¹ Nicola Shaughnessy, 'Dancing With Difference: Moving Towards a New Aesthetics', in *Applied Theatre: Aesthetics*, ed. Gareth White (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 111.
- ²² Dennis Kennedy, *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- ²³ Derek Jarman's film of *The Tempest* was released in 1980; Peter Brook's *La tempête* premiered at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Paris, in 1990; Greg Doran's RSC *The Tempest* opened in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2016.
- ²⁴ Examples are too numerous to list here, but include the Social Competence Intervention Program, devised by Laura A. Guli, Alison D. Wilkinson and Margaret Semrud-Clikeman, in the United States, and the Sesame Approach in the United Kingdom.
- ²⁵ Hunter, *Shakespeare's Heartbeat*, 230.
- ²⁶ Patsy Rodenburg, *Speaking Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 2005), 97.
- ²⁷ W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99.
- ²⁸ In the new afterword to their ground-breaking work *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write: 'metaphor is a natural phenomenon...which metaphors we have and what they mean

depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices' (247).

²⁹ Blythe A. Corbett, 'Images of Healing and Learning: Autism, Art, and Accessibility to Theater', *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 18 (2016), 1232-40: 1234-6.

³⁰ Lyn Gardner, 'The *Tempest* review – groundbreaking Shakespeare for autistic audiences', *Guardian*, 31 October 2016.

³¹ Ockelford, *Music, Language and Autism*, 226.

³² Nick Hornby, *31 Songs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003), 127.

³³ *Ibid.* 126-7.