

Hosting First Encounters

We are delighted that you will be hosting performances of this year's *First Encounters with Shakespeare: The Tempest* production.

This handbook contains an overview of information you need to prepare for hosting performances in your school. Please read the information carefully.

First Encounters is the Royal Shakespeare Company's touring production, designed to be the perfect introduction to Shakespeare. Touring to schools and venues across the UK, it is aimed at 7 to 13 year olds, but is also suitable for parents and members of the community who might be encountering Shakespeare for the first time.

Key Information about the Production

Running time: the performance will be **80 minutes** long.

Audience size: **200 people** maximum, in discussion with the RSC.

The First Encounters company includes:

- 8 Actors
- 1 Company Manager
- 2 Stage Managers
- 1 Wardrobe Supervisor
- 1 Production Manager

The company travels with **one van** for set and costume.

Stage area: approximately 7metres x 6metres with **audience on 3 sides**.

The production **does not use any theatre lighting**. The production will use whatever lighting is available in the performance space.

The production will use recorded sound.



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Contents

In this pack we have provided information about the production, the support we provide and the support we will need from you whilst we are performing in your school.

1. Questions to consider prior to our recce meeting

- Production (Space, Timings & Logistics) 3
- Audience 6
- Tickets & Marketing 7
- Safeguarding 8
- Participation & Young People 8
- Evaluation 11

2. Timeline for hosting 12

3. Who's Who on First Encounters 14

4. Glossary of Theatre terms 16



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1. Questions to consider prior to our recce meeting



Who is the main contact for First Encounters at the school?

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Secondary contact (in case of illness or absence)

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Who else might need to be involved either beforehand or on the day e.g. Headteacher, a technician or a facilities manager?



Production

TIMINGS

How many performances will you be hosting?

What are your preferred/agreed performance times?

Do the performances need to finish before the end of the school day?

What are the timings of the school day? Please include start of day, lunch time, breaktimes and end of school day.

Is it possible to silence school bells during performance times?

Our usual 'Get-In' time is just after the start of your school day but this can vary depending on the time of your first show. We will agree a Get-In and Get-Out time at the recce meeting. However, it is useful to know...

What is the earliest time the First Encounters company can get into the school and the performance space to set up for the performance?

Our team will need up to 90 mins after the end of our final show to pack up and load the van.

What time do we need to leave the school by?



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PERFORMANCE SPACE / VENUE

First Encounters is designed for performance in schools and can perform in most school halls.

What space will the First Encounters production perform in? Is it a school hall, classroom or theatre studio?

Is this space is used for lunch or other activities? Can they be relocated on the days of the performance?

Please note:

- The dimensions of the space and/or a ground plan would be useful if you have them.
- We don't usually perform on traditional school stages. We prefer the floor of the hall itself.
- The space should be for exclusive use by the company on the days the production is performing.

The space will need to be cleared of all equipment before the performance, ideally before the company arrives at your school.

When can this be done and who will be responsible for this?

We often mark out the floor of our performance space with tape.

Is this possible without damaging the floor in your chosen space?

What is the power supply in the performance space, and where are the plug sockets? We will need this for our sound requirements and staging.

LOGISTICS



Where can we park the van to unload the set and costumes?

Ideally, as close to the performance space as possible.

Where can we leave the van while performing at the school?

(if different from above)



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Will children and young people have access to the van parking area?

Are there times to avoid parking and loading/unloading e.g. when children and parents are arriving at, or leaving the school?

Can we have access to Wi-Fi on the days the production visits your school?

What is the Wi-Fi name and code?

Name:

Passcode:

We will require a dressing room space ideally with two changing spaces (male and female). This space should be appropriately private and not shared with young people, as actors will be changing. We will bring black-out material to cover windows, if needed.

Is there also a room the RSC company can use as a 'green room' (a room for breaks)?

If possible, it is also really useful to have a small space/room to use as an office for the stage manager and production manager.

Can tea, coffee and water be provided? The First Encounters company will bring their own food (although biscuits are very welcome!)

Are the spaces we use for dressing rooms lockable, or will there be locker facilities for the company to store their valuables?

Do you have a washing machine we could use? (not essential)



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Audience

NUMBERS AND AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS

First Encounters productions are aimed at 7–13-year-olds and daytime performances should be made up of young people from within that age range.

Older students, parents and community members are encouraged to attend the evening community performance.

The Production Manager will discuss audience numbers and capacity at the recce meeting, to help agree a final figure if you are unsure.

First Encounters usually performs with the audience on 3 sides.

Audiences should not exceed 200, unless discussed and agreed with the Producer and Production Manager.

Who will be the audience for First Encounters at your school?

Will you be inviting other schools to attend the performance?

Will you be inviting parents and the wider community to the evening performance?

How many young people/audience members can be seated in the space? Our Production Manager can help you work this out. The Production Manager will then agree a seating plan that will be sent to you.

What seating is available i.e. do you have chairs, benches or PE mats?

Is there somewhere students can leave bags and coats outside of the performance space?

Coats and bags often cause obstructions to the performance space and evacuation routes.



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TICKETS

You will need to reserve the Company Manager **5 seats** per performance for RSC visitors and guests. We will provide reserved signs for this. We will also let you know in advance the names of any visitors or guests wishing to attend your school, and ensure we have discussed any necessary safeguarding requirements (some guests may not have DBS-checks, so we will discuss this with you in advance).

Are you selling tickets for your performances?

What will be the ticket price(s)?

When will they go on sale? Note tickets can only go on sale once the seating plan has been agreed with the Production Manager.

How are you selling tickets and what system will you use to sell tickets?

Selling tickets can be done through Eventbrite or school pay systems. We can advise on this, if helpful.

MARKETING

RSC Marketing will automatically supply marketing assets including a trailer and digital poster images. Below is a link to the First Encounters Marketing Pack and Press Pack with information and advice on marketing *First Encounters: The Tempest*.

[First Encounters The Tempest Marketing and Press Pack](#)

Further support is available but usually only needed if you are selling tickets to the community outside of your school; see link for details.



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Safeguarding

What are your school's Safeguarding requirements for visitors?

The First Encounters Company and Creative Associates will all have current DBS-checks and we will provide a Letter of Assurance with the details of these prior to arrival. If you require any further information such as paper copies you must let us know at the recce meeting.

N.B. Most RSC staff and practitioners are registered on the DBS update service so may not have paper copies with them.

What are your procedures for non –DBS-checked visitors?

We may invite visitors to see the performance in school. These may include RSC staff or RSC Board members, press/media or the local MP, or more senior politicians. These people will not usually have DBS-checks however we will provide a list of guests and a member of the RSC Learning team to supervise them while on site. Please do let us know any further safeguarding measures needed for guests at the recce.

Please describe the demographics of the local area and the school/theatre community.

- Are there any recent/upcoming local events it would be useful for us to be aware of?
- What is the general feeling in the area, amongst students, families and staff/audiences here?
- Can you recommend the best ways to travel to the venue, or things to be aware of in terms of travelling to the venue (post codes not working in sat navs, any road works, etc), including parking?
- Can you recommend any licensed/approved taxi companies? How responsive is Uber in the area?
- **Please can you share your relevant RAs and policies with us?**
- Who will be meeting our team on arrival at reception? Is it the lead teacher/contact?
- Who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school?
- Is there anything else you feel it would be useful for our team to be aware of?



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Participation and Young People

Creative Associates and workshops before the production arrives

There is a team of 4 Creative Associates working on First Encounters. One will be assigned to your school.

They are RSC Associate Learning Practitioners, trained and experienced in working with young people. They will be responsible for the participatory elements of the production.

They will make two visits to your school before the production arrives to work with your young people to explore the themes/issues/ideas of the play through practical workshops. They will lead any work that involves the young people taking part in the production. They will also be there on the day(s) the production performs in your school to introduce and support the show.

Your Creative Associate will contact you to arrange their two visits and talk through the participatory elements.

Participation in *The Tempest*

Creative Associates workshops will seek to explore the themes, issues and ideas of the play, including 'decolonialisation', in preparation for seeing the production.

If you have any concerns about exploring this issue with your young people, please do raise this with your RSC Associate Schools Relationship Manager. We will talk about this in more detail at the recce meeting.

Preparing students to see the show

Watching a Shakespeare production is greatly enhanced when young people have done some preparation beforehand. To support this, the RSC will be creating online materials based on this specific production. This will include a synopsis of the play, information about the production and some practical activities that teachers can lead in the classroom, to explore the play.

Do you have RSC Shakespeare Ambassadors?

If you don't currently have RSC Shakespeare Ambassadors, we would still encourage you to work with a group of young people who are passionate about this project and want others to know about it.

It is important to us that the production feels hosted by the young people in the schools it is touring to. This is a great opportunity for your Shakespeare Ambassadors to be involved in the marketing, front of house and audience feedback and data collection.



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Your ambassadors will be involved in the following ways:

Prior to the production arriving in your school

Attending the workshop led by the Creative Associate to learn more about the story, themes and issues explored by the production.

An online meeting with the RSC Creative Learning & Engagement's Marketing Manager in November or December, to discuss ways in which to market the production to their school and/or local community. This meeting will be held on Zoom or Teams, and a teacher must be present at all times;

On the performance days

Greeting the company and creative team when they arrive in your school and helping to show them around;

Greeting audiences' pre-performance and taking or seeing tickets on the doors;

Interviewing audience members pre-performance (asking three questions) and the same audience members post-performance. Ambassadors will be given a voice recorder to capture the interview and ask the audience member to sign permission for their feedback to be used for marketing purposes. This will all be explained in detail during the online meeting.

The role of the Ambassadors is key in helping us collect invaluable audience feedback, to help us understand how many audience members have seen a theatre production or a Shakespeare production before and help us to develop First Encounters for future years.

Do you have students that would benefit from the experience of working with our backstage team?

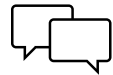
We would like to provide your young people with an opportunity to develop their backstage and technical skills by observing and, where possible, assisting our production team.

There are opportunities for approximately 6 young people to work with our backstage team including:

- **Stage Management / Stage Crew** – to assist the Stage Management team
- **Wardrobe Assistant** – to assist the Wardrobe Supervisor
- **Sound Technicians** – to assist in the set up of sound equipment and observe its operation.



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Evaluation

We are keen to learn about the impact of First Encounters on the young people involved and their school community, so we can continue to tour live theatre to partner communities across England.

After the production has performed, usually with two weeks, we will want to know the answers to the following questions. This doesn't need to be from every audience member but from a good sample of young people who saw the production and those who took part in the Creative Associate workshops.

About the audience, we'd like to know...

- What age/year group saw the performance?
- How many young people saw the performance?
- How many young people took part in the Creative Associate workshops?
- How many adults (parents/community members) saw the performance?
- How many young people/adults in the audience had never seen a piece of theatre before?
- How many young people/adults in the audience had never seen a Shakespeare play before?

From the Young People we'd like to know...

- Describe the performance in one word.
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Do you now want to see more theatre?
- Did the performance help you better understand the play?
- Having seen the play, would you now want to see more theatre? Why?
- What was missing from the performance that would have made it a better experience for you?

From the Teachers involved, we'd like to know...

- What have you observed that has changed about the young people involved in both the Creative Associate workshops and seeing the performance?

This could be things like their confidence, attitude to school, or learning and attainment. This should be observations about two or three individuals rather than a detailed assessment of each young person involved.

- What are the benefits of your young people's participation in First Encounters, both as participants in the workshops and as audience?
- Thinking of the overall process and/or production, what could improve the experience for schools involved in First Encounters?



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2. First Encounters Timeline

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2024

Main Contact in this period is Amy Lancelot, Associate Schools Programme Senior Manager. Amy will talk to you about hosting First Encounters.

- An initial agreement is made for your school to host First Encounters.
- Costs are agreed and a date/dates are set.
- An in-person or online 'recce meeting' is agreed and set. This meeting is to discuss arrangements and preparations for the performance and the participation of young people.
- Amy will introduce you to **Ian Wainwright**, Creative Learning & Engagement Producer who will attend the recce and take over as the First Encounters point of contact for you.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2024

Main Contact in this period is Ian Wainwright (after performance dates, etc., are confirmed)

The following members of the RSC will attend your 'recce meeting':

- **Joe Rose**, RSC Assistant Producer
- **Dan Avery**, Production Manager
- **Ian Wainwright**, Creative Learning & Engagement Producer

If you have hosted First Encounters before, this meeting will likely be online. If you've not hosted First Encounters before, this will be in person so that we can see the performance space and meet the team.

DECEMBER 2024

Main Contact in this period is Ian Wainwright

More details about the production will be sent to you, including images of the set and costume designs. The following will also be available:

- **Marketing** initial 'assets' available e.g. poster images, trailer etc. The Marketing team are available for advice on ticketing, if required.
- **Drop-in sessions** will be available for any questions you might have.
- **Creative Associates** will contact their schools and/or theatre partners to arrange their two visits to work with young people.



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JANUARY 2025

Main Contact in this period is Dan Avery, Production Manager.

Ian Wainwright will introduce you via email to **Dan Avery** and the Company Manager, who will take over as your point of contact for the production. The following will also happen:

- **Rehearsals** begin in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- **Creative Associate** sends more information on the participatory elements.
- **Safeguarding Letter of Assurance** with DBS details of all of those in the company and any accompanying guests will be sent to each school.

FEBRUARY 2025

Main Contact in this period is Dan Avery, Production Manager.

- **Tour begins.**
- **Creative Associates** visit each school twice before the production arrives to work with a group of young people

2 Weeks before First Encounters arrives at your school

Main Contact in this period is the Company Manager

- The **Company Manager** and **Production Manager** will arrange an online meeting with the school to confirm all arrangements and the schedule.

First Encounters arrives at your school!

Main Contact in this period is the Company Manager

1 MONTH AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Main Contact for this period is Ian Wainwright

Ian will follow up with a Feedback Survey and a request for your audience data, including audience numbers and ages.

See Questions above.



3. Who's Who on First Encounters

We have a large team supporting the First Encounters tour. To contact any of the team please email first.encounters@rsc.org.uk and the appropriate member of the team below will get back to you as soon as possible.

Amy Lancelot (She/Her)

RSC Associate Schools Programme Senior Manager

Leads the RSC's Associate Schools Programme and is responsible for initiating conversations with schools about hosting/booking the production.

Joe Rose (He/Him)

RSC Producer

Responsible for all elements of the production itself, including budget. He will be involved in the programming of the First Encounters tour and will have initial conversations with the theatre partners about hosting.

Ian Wainwright (He/Him)

RSC Creative Learning and Engagement Producer

07815 795 653

Responsible for all elements of participation on RSC First Encounters including the team of RSC Creative Associate practitioners. He will attend the online or in person recce meeting with the school.

Louise Clarke (She/Her)

RSC Creative Learning and Engagement Coordinator

Responsible for day-to-day administration of First Encounters.

Dan Avery (He/Him)

RSC Production Manager: First Encounters

Responsible for all physical and technical elements of the production including the set, how the production might fit in the space, transporting the production, as well getting in and setting up for the performance. The Production Manager or Technician will travel with the production to each school. He will attend the online or in person recce meeting with the school.

Notzarina Howell-Jones (Notza) (She/Her)

RSC Marketing Manager – Learning

Responsible for marketing the production. Notza and the marketing team will produce marketing 'assets' for the production including trailers and images. She can also advise and support those schools wanting to sell tickets outside of school.

Philippa Vandome (She/Her)

RSC Marketing Officer – Learning

Works with Notza and the marketing team to produce marketing 'assets' for the production including trailers, images, support and advise schools on selling tickets.



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Rosie Giarratana

First Encounters Company Stage Manager

Responsible for the First Encounters Company (team) day-to-day on the tour. They will contact each school 2 weeks prior to the performance dates to confirm arrangements, finalise any details and update the school on any changes/issues.

Conor Glean, Ibraheem Toure, Tyreke Leslie & Yasmin Taheri

First Encounters Creative Associates

RSC Actors or Directors experienced in working with young people who will lead in-school workshops prior to the production's visit. There is a team of 4 or 5 Creative Associates working on First Encounters. One will be assigned to your school and they will contact you to introduce themselves and arrange their workshops. See *Participation*



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4. Glossary of theatre terms

Get-in: The period of time spent bringing in the set (from the van) and building it. This may include in this case setting up for the show.

Get-out: The period of time taking the set to pieces and taking it out of the building (and loading it into the van).

Mark out: Using tape to mark out on the floor the shape of the set or performance space usually for rehearsals when the set/stage is absent or sometimes for performance to show the edge of the stage or entrances in a room without an obvious stage area.

Green Room: Room where actors and other members of the company can take a break, theatre equivalent to a teacher's staff room.

Running Time: Length of the show.

Marketing Assets: Digital publicity materials such as images, posters, interviews and trailers.

Recce: Short for reconnoiter. A military term meaning to scout out the terrain ahead. In our case a meeting/visit to check out the space we will be working in and school we'll be working with, so we and the school can be prepared. An opportunity for us to ask and answer questions.

Front of House: A place and a job. Used to describe the public/audience area of a theatre where the audience enter (foyer) and where they are seated (the auditorium). It does not include the stage (which is usually just for performers). Also used to describe the role of a person who looks after the audience their safety and their comfort, checking tickets, selling programs, showing them to their seats and guiding them to the exit at the end or in an emergency. It is the opposite of *back of house* or

Backstage: An area for actors, the company and theatre staff.



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