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Findings from the Globe 1999 Season

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA
The Red Company, 1999

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

List of Parts and Doubling

Toby Cockerell <i>soldiers)</i>	Octavia / Egyptian Attendant (1/1 & 1/2) / Messenger 3 (1/4) Varrius / Thidias / Soldier 3 (4/3) / Egyptian (5/1) (<i>other</i>)
Tim Davies	Lepidus / Philo / Schoolmaster / Guard 2 (4/14) / Proculeus (<i>other soldiers</i>)
Jimmy Gardner	Maecenas / Soldier 4 (4/3) (<i>other soldiers</i>)
Roger Gartland	Soothsayer / Messenger 5 (2/5 & 3/3) / Scar Soldier (3/7 & 4/5) Decretas / Guard 4 (4/14) (<i>other soldiers</i>)
James Gillan	Iras / 'The Boy who Sings' (2/7)
Liam Hourican	Eros / Messenger 4 (1/4) / Menecrates / Silius / (<i>other soldiers</i>)
Mark Lewis Jones	Pompey / Messenger 2 (1/2) / Taurus / Soldier to Cleopatra (3/13) Soldiers 6 (4/6) & 9 (4/9) / (Diomedes / Gallus (<i>other soldiers</i>))
Terence Maynard	Agrippa / Demetrius / Soldiers 2 (4/3) & 8 (4/9) (<i>other soldiers</i>)
John McEnergy	Enobarbus / Seleucus
Quill Roberts	Mardian / Dolabella / 2 nd Servant (2/7) / Pacorus / Soldier 5 (4/4) (<i>other soldiers</i>)
Mike Rudko	Alexas / Clown / Ventidius / 1 st Servant (2/7) / Canidius Soldier 7 (4/9) / Guard 3 (4/14) (<i>other soldiers</i>)
Mark Rylance	Cleopatra
Danny Sapani	Charmian
Paul Shelley	Antony
Ben Walden	Octavius Caesar
Benedict Wong	Menas / Messengers 1 (1/2) & 6 (3/7) / Scarus / Soldier 1 (4/3) Guard 1 (4/14 & 5/2) (<i>other soldiers</i>)

The Tiring House Gentlemen appeared as **Servants** and **Soldiers**:

Andrew Jolly
Bryan Paterson
Paul Williams

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Master of Play – Giles Block
Master of Clothing and Properties – Jenny Tiramani
Master of Music – Claire van Kampen

THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

- Rehearsals for the 1999 production of *Antony and Cleopatra* were scheduled around the Red Company's performances of *Julius Caesar*. The first week of rehearsals was devoted to **text work** and to **improvisations** that generated an imagined picture of the lives of the characters prior to the events of the play. The atmosphere of Cleopatra's court grew directly from the improvisational play of the actors playing Egyptians; Giles Block encouraged the actors to build a world for themselves that was limited only by their own imaginations. Such was the reputation of Cleopatra's Egypt; Giles Block hoped that we might retain that element of fantasy in realising that world on the Globe stage today. The first week of rehearsals also saw the naming of scenes (which appear in italics after the Act and Scene number, in the scenes described in rehearsal, below). This practice had proved successful for work on *Julius Caesar* – it helped remind the actors of a moment or event that was in some way central to each scene. The names themselves were (as was the case for *Julius Caesar*) chosen by the actors themselves, in group discussion with Giles Block, at the early stages of read-throughs in the first week of rehearsals.
- The extensive **verse work** undertaken by Giles and the acting company for *Julius Caesar* paid dividends in rehearsals for *Antony and Cleopatra*. Verse work for the second show moved quickly, as the actors began work with a pre-existing vocabulary of "text terms" and a grounded understanding of Giles' approach. Therefore, sessions devoted entirely and exclusively to verse seemed surplus to requirements, given the pressures of combining rehearsals of *Antony and Cleopatra* with performances of *Julius Caesar*.
- **Entrances and Exits:** To keep up the pace and momentum of this lengthy play, MR suggested that it might be useful for one actor to enter through a door a few seconds before the exit of another actor through the same door. This meant that actors avoided bumping into each other when the same "location" was needed for their respective entrance and exit, and that no extra time was lost waiting for one actor to exit before another entered.
- The **yard** was used for several entrances and exits, and so treads had to be put in place by the tiring house gentlemen before use, and removed after use by the actors. These were placed on both corners of the stage, near to the front.
- A so-called **rain mode** of performance had to be learned as a supplement to the usual pattern of blocking, entrances and exits, to protect the actors' valuable clothing on rainy days. Generally, this required entrances that normally took place through the yard to the left of the stage being switched to the left flanking door, with entrances that normally took place through the yard to the right of the stage being switched to the right flanking door.
- **Pillars:** MR suggested that actors tend to drift into the so-called "valley of death" between the pillars because of 'a desire for equality...we tend to draw forward but keep an open line so as not to upstage each other'. This issue has been discussed at length before, but this seemed an explanation not yet fully explored.
- Taking Thomas Platter's account of a 1599 performance of *Julius Caesar* at the first Globe as a reliable reference to company size, the Globe had hired fifteen actors to play both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1999. This meant that issues of **doubling** became paramount, and that

most actors played multiple roles within each play¹. Given several roles of varying sizes, it was inevitable that actors would prioritise their roles, and focus on the larger ones in their personal repertory. Giles Block reminded the company of the importance of the non-speaking/ temporarily silent characters on the stage: 'If you are on the stage, you are helping to dramatise the spoken action of the scene. *Everyone should play*, even if this is done in a very laid-back way. That way, we should rarely get lines of silent characters standing still, waiting to speak.'

- As we worked through the play, GB adopted the following structure to scene work:
 - the actors sat on chairs in a circle for a readthrough of the scene
 - a brief discussion of the scene, and the textual, thematic and/or character issues it raises were discussed
 - the chairs were cleared and work began on staging the scene

MAIN FEATURES OF THE PLAY

Giles Block told the actors that from the very beginning of the play there is tremendous conflict: the Triumvirate that seemed to promise stability at the close of *Julius Caesar* is compromised beyond recognition by the beginning of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Philo and Demetrius are appalled by the latest turn of events, particularly in the way it seems to have affected Antony's personality and demeanour, yet to Alexas, Charmian and Iras, the prospect of a union between Antony and Cleopatra is cause for great celebration and excitement. There is, he explained, a very domestic story at the core of this epic tale. The experience of *Julius Caesar* before beginning work on this play offered the actors an ideal opportunity to consider the impact of change – political and personal – that a few years had made upon the characters common to both plays.

Such a densely packed text demanded a sustained and rigorous concentration on **the telling of the story**. The creative team had spent a considerable amount of the early discussions about this production exploring parallels between the worlds of the play and the world of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Those early discussions informed the foundations of the work, as well as some of the finer nuances of individual performances; on the whole, though, the emphasis was not placed upon allegory, but in finding meaning and resonance that would be alive to the Globe audience of 1999, not 1599.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

- The acting edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* was produced by Giles Block (with the help of Liz Ranft who typed the script). The acting edition was based on the 1623 First Folio version of *Antony and Cleopatra*, with changes to the Folio's punctuation: full stops that occurred within the body of a speech were replaced by commas, or in some cases, colons. Full stops that occurred at the end of a speech were retained. The capitalisation scheme of the Folio version was preserved in the acting edition.

The changes detailed above were an integral part of Giles Block's approach to verse speaking, which was received with unanimous approval over the course of the 1999 season. The changes encourage actors to drive through to the end of a speech (thus maintaining momentum); the changes honour existing (Folio) punctuation marks in so far as they pertain to speaking, and to offering opportunities for the actor to breathe, mid-speech.

The goal of these changes was greater clarity, momentum, and audibility of speech. It is generally believed that tremendous advances were made towards these goals, as a result of Giles Block's verse work in 1999.

¹ See cast list, above.

• Lines cut from the text

Giles Block was anxious to achieve pace and momentum in performance by means other than cutting the text. The only substantial episode to be cut in performance was the dispute between Cleopatra and Seleucus over the inventory of Cleopatra's treasury in Act V, scene 2*. This was a late change, and it was felt necessary because the story seemed to be heading off into another direction at this point in the performance. Giles Block thought that the intrigue between Seleucus and Cleopatra, plus the question of Seleucus's loyalties constituted a red herring that might distract the audience from the larger story.

Line numbers are from the Arden 3 edition of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

I-2 115-117 (oh – earing) ; 199-201 (Much – poison)

II-6 129-133 (Then – is)

III-13 5-6 (whose – other)

V-2 139-178 (where's Seleucus? – pittied)*

• Words changed for clarity

III-6 90 'makes his' to 'make their'

III-13 10 'meered' to 'mooted'

IV-15 61 'woo't' to 'woo'd' (would); 79 'chares' to 'chores'

V-1 36 'launch' to 'lance'; 59 'leave' to 'live'

• Lines given to other characters

III-7 67-69 to Enobarbus

IV-6 7-8 to Dolabella

V-2 34-35 to Gallus

SET AND COSTUMES

In keeping with the artistic brief for the production of *Julius Caesar*, the creative team opted to continue their experiments with original practices for this production. Accordingly, male actors played the female roles, and the clothing was of the kind that Shakespeare would have recognised as familiar. Giles Block felt that the clothing and set decoration should be in harmony with the Globe space, not at odds, or commenting upon it, to aid clarity in storytelling.

The **clothing** worn by Egypt's inhabitants bore a strong resemblance to that worn by certain players of Jacobean court masques – much more elaborate than even the most fanciful doublet and hose. To mark the contrast between worlds, inhabitants of Rome wore doublet and hose of varying degrees of finery, with hats that reflected their status in much the same way as they might have done in London circa 1606.

Many different **locations** needed to be established without recourse to elaborate sets or even minimal furniture. To help this, elementary blocking was employed at an early stage in rehearsals. This seemed to help, rather than constrain, the actors. The "Fortuna" hanging was hung inside the

discovery space, and was visible through open centre doors for the scenes in Egypt. Scenes taking place in Rome were set against a backdrop of closed central doors. The black hangings that had been installed in the Lords' Rooms for *Julius Caesar* were retained for *Antony and Cleopatra*, in keeping with the belief that the stage was hung with black for the playing of tragedies. Two hangings against *frons scenae* (one either side of the central opening) depicting the Roman goddesses of the Sun and the Moon were hung for this play. Both were used as stage dressings, and not as coverings for an open door

SOURCES

Giles Block expressed a strong preference for research and source materials that could be tied directly into specific episodes in the text of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and would have been available to Shakespeare. A prime source that was frequently used during rehearsals was *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, translated by Sir Thomas North, in 1579.

SELECTED SCENES IN REHEARSAL

Act 1, Scene 1: *Love Indeed*

Music: GB explained that pre-show music from the musicians' gallery would be played. The musicians would then withdraw, to play another piece to introduce the world of the Egyptian court, as the discovery space opens to reveal the Fortuna hanging. This helped not only to differentiate music which begins the play from that which precedes it; it helped to establish from the outset the "otherness" of Cleopatra's world, vis-à-vis the world of the Roman triumvirate. Claire van Kampen decided that there should be a flourish prior to the entrance of Philo and Demetrius, through the paged door stage right. Another flourish announced the entrance of Antony, Cleopatra and Attendants through the central discovery space. Philo and Demetrius enter by door SR².

The actors were told that inside the discovery space would be cushions indicating some kind of *boudoir*, out of which Antony and Cleopatra emerged to make their entrance. Mardian and Photinus (Quill Roberts and Liam Hourican) entered through the discovery space to place cushions on the stage floor and define the space.

GB explained that Cleopatra is anxious to parade Antony out in the open, in front of her people, as a great sexual conquest. Having agreed to this, Antony urges Cleopatra to follow him elsewhere, indoors, and they will exit back through the discovery space.

GB had the actors move continually throughout the scene, regardless of whether they were speaking or silent. This perpetual motion gave the actors a chance to focus on the development of a physical life for their characters, in this "court of peerless life" at the start of the play.

GB reminded the actors that at this point in the play, life could hardly be better at the Egyptian court, and the prospects look better still. Charmian voices the general excitement about the possibilities of marriage – there should be a very present possibility of a union between Antony and Cleopatra hanging perceptibly in the air.

GB felt it was important to establish Toby Cockerell's Messenger character in this scene as an Egyptian, who announces the presence of other, Roman messengers. There was a need to make as clear a distinction between the two worlds and their respective inhabitants as possible. To help

² The standard abbreviations, SR (stage right), SL (stage left), C (centre) are used here to refer to directions from the actor's point of view. The corresponding references to stage positions abbreviated to US (upstage) and DS (downstage) are avoided where possible, since these terms relate to a raked stage, which is not a feature at the Globe. Occasionally, when movement needs to be indicated, reference to these terms will be made, in the absence of another more suitable stage language.

clarify this situation, and to indicate that Toby's character is an insider, not a visitor, the following blocking was employed:

- Egyptian Attendant (Toby) enters through the SR door to announce the Roman Messengers' arrival
- Egyptian Attendant moves DSC after Antony's "Grates me, the sum"
- Egyptian Attendant kneels before Antony to deliver the sum or synopsis
- The way is now clear for Cleopatra to indicate the SR door as more (Roman) Messengers (Ben Wong, Mark Lewis Jones) enter

The difference between the two camps was emphasised at every opportunity. GB requested two incense burners for use in the downstage corners of the stage, for this scene.

Act 1, Scene 2: *Fortune Telling*

Charmian's line, 'E'ne as the o'er-flowing Nylus presageth famine' prompted an investigation into the Orisis/Isis myth. Jaq had been researching the mythology of the goddess Isis (goddess of redemption, love and fertility to the ancient Egyptians) to investigate relevance of parallels which Cleopatra draws between the goddess and herself. Jaq noted the parallels between Isis' famous laments for her dead husband/brother and Cleopatra's lament over the body of the dying Antony. Isis' love "reconstructs" and revives the dismembered Osiris' body, and Cleopatra's speech "His legs bestrid the ocean..." recasts Antony in epic, godlike fashion. Charmian is being ironic, for the overflowing Nile, watered by Isis' tears, presages plenty. The water breathes new life into the hitherto barren, arid land, prior to the planting season in November.

GB decided to use the tiring house staff to bring on the banquet mentioned in this scene, rather than the Eunuchs (Quill Roberts and Liam Hourican). This solution was speedier and smoother.

GB asked Antony and the Messenger to enter immediately before (and, therefore, potentially hear) Cleopatra's line "We will not looke upon him, go with us." This way, her line becomes a direct snub, not simply an avoidance tactic.

Act 1, Scene 3: *Parting*

MR suggested that Cleopatra's line "I am sick and sullen" is an interesting direction to Iras and Charmian, along the lines of, "this is how we're going to play this scene – these are the tactics I'm going to use now". We explored the idea that Antony does not hear this line. After that, we explored the same scene with this line used very differently, as a direct address to Antony with the purpose of making him feel the pressure of guilt.

MR fully explored Cleopatra's volatile temper with Antony in this scene. Cornered and powerless to alter the situation as she may be, his Cleopatra seemed nonetheless able to thwart Antony's attempts to pacify her with lightning mood swings. MR discovered that rage at Antony may turn to fiery kisses, and then to feigned indifference, at the drop of a hat.

GB asked Danny Sapani and James Gillan how Charmian and Iras feel about Fulvia's death. He reminded the two actors that this is a complex situation that may provoke ambivalent responses, and suggested that while it may not be necessary to decide what reaction to have and fix it, they needed to be aware that their reactions are closely observed and noted by the audience. This reinforced the principle that he set out at the start of rehearsals for this play (see above).

The issue of how to move speedily from this scene to the next – it represents a change of worlds – was resolved by devising a method of quickly and unobtrusively striking the cushions from the stage. Cleopatra speaks to Antony, but gestures to her attendants Charmian and Iras:

...but, Sir, forgive me (*claps hands to rouse Charmian and Iras*)
Since my becommings kill me, when they do not
Eye well to you, your Honor calles you hence,
Therefore be deafe to unpittied Folly,
And all the Gods go with you, upon your Sword
Sit Lawrell victory, and smooth successe
Be strew'd before your feete.³

Charmian and Iras begin to clear the stage in apparent preparation for a formal send-off for Antony, instead of waiting for Antony and Cleopatra to leave the stage, a few lines later. This premise avoided the impression that the actors were performing stage hands' duties.

Act 1, Scene 4: Rome

GB noted that the scene contains extremely tricky language to negotiate – even the Messengers have complex messages to deliver.

Ben Walden asked if there was anything that we could use in terms of scenery to help create the "Oval Office" feel of this scene. GB was not keen to stop or stall the energy of the scene to "set up" anything. He suggested that a "guarded door" (a tiring house gentleman positioned at one of the flanking doors) might help to intimate this atmosphere. Ben was also concerned that the dynamic of this scene be made as different as possible from the previous scenes (which took place in Egypt) and he wondered how to create such a dynamic within a fairly "static" scene. GB thought the contrast alone with languid Egypt would be sufficient, but Ben wondered about the balcony. Could it, he wondered, be used to suggest Caesar looking out over Rome? GB was open to this idea in principle, but opposed the idea of people sitting around in chairs, which he thought might dissipate energy.

Ben made great use of the "galleries" for his longer speeches. At a point when we were still based in the rehearsal hall, Ben was already experimenting with an imagined audience so that the adjustment to the Globe space would be less severe. The result was that he began to fully open out his longer speeches. He realised the importance of playing to all three levels of gallery, as well as the yard, and he experimented with these different levels often in rehearsals and previews.

This scene progressed in such a way as to emphasise the (two-third) Triumvirate's crisis as Pompey approaches. Octavius and Lepidus bicker with each other over the absent Antony's faults, lacking the stabilising influence of Antony himself. The actors were encouraged to explore choices that highlighted the sense of their instability. Tim Davies explored a physicality that showed the tentative quality of Lepidus, who, having made a political blunder in his meek defence of Antony, is left with much political ground to make up by the end of the scene.

Act 1, Scene 5: *Mandragora*

Mark Rylance, Danny Sapani and James Gillan made effective use of rehearsal clothing. Danny (Charmian) reported that he found his clothing "completely liberating". Good physical work defined the "feminine" quality of the Egyptian court – MR had the idea that this scene takes place during the time of year when the Nile is at its lowest, and the land is arid, before the swell. The change in

³ All quotations from the play are from the First Folio version of 1623.

climate (compared to the scene preceding it) was fully explored through the actors' movements, and this helped the progress of the story in terms of atmosphere and geography.

A music cue was written in, to begin after Charmian's "Madam I trust not so" – before Cleopatra asks Mardian not to sing. The timing of this cue allowed Mardian (Quill Roberts) to "prepare" for his aria rather comically, before being rather coldly shot down.

Act 2, Scene 2: A Blessed Lottery

Initially, GB directed the opening section (a conversation between Lepidus and Enobarbus) in such a way that both men walk together around the perimeter of the stage, outside of the pillars. This is the "longest" entrance possible, versus the "shortest", diagonal entrance, and it allowed time for a conference table to be set in the playing space in the meantime. After trying this, GB thought that there was a danger that this entrance would seem contrived, given the presence of the conference table in the centre of the acting space. As the table-setting became swifter, the actors began to look increasingly as though they were (quite literally) "skirting around" the issue (or at least the table). GB amended the same entrance to a diagonal cross into the space defined by the table.

The table was discarded at a later stage in rehearsals, and did not re-emerge in performance. Its place was supplied by three chairs set by the tiring house gentlemen as Lepidus and Enobarbus entered. Setting the three chairs posed little difficulty for the tiring house men, and so this entrance became gradually swifter and smoother, along a strong diagonal.

Act 2, Scene 7: Pompey's Barge

CvK and Jackie Matthews introduced music and dancing to this scene at an early stage in rehearsals, as soon as the "bare bones" were in place. CvK recorded some Balkan music to use in the rehearsal room. JM and CvK observed as the actors played through the scene as it stood at its latest stage in progress, to get some idea about how they might integrate these new elements. The stage direction we have for this scene in the Folio is as follows: *Musicke playes. Enobarbus places them hand in hand.* This gave rise to much discussion as to what this actually meant. Do the stage directions indicate that Enobarbus leads the assembly in a dance, hand in hand? It was suggested that perhaps this direction refers to a brief demonstration by Enobarbus of how they might proceed with the dance – a quick lesson, perhaps.

• Dance work with Jackie Matthews

JM taught the men a Greek-style dance, with a travelling step: arms aloft, linked hands, in a straightish line. She explained that this simple pattern could be "Egyptianed up" at a later point, if necessary. The steps she demonstrated were very grounded, very earthy, and formed a sharp contrast to the same company's previous experience with the light, graceful leaps of the jig and galliard in *Julius Caesar*. JM explained that to make the dance look more informal, more "macho", it was a good idea to keep the dance travelling, so that it didn't look too "tidy" or symmetrical. The way to achieve this, she explained, is to start slowly, build up speed as you go, and to take bigger steps to the left than you do to the right.

Taking a cue from the text, Antony and Enobarbus led this dance, by example. They were the first to begin dancing as the Boy sings, and the ensemble caught on quickly, and joined in. This stopped the piece looking like a production number, too. The dance started quite slowly, and sped up as the confidence and adrenalin levels rose. Enobarbus and Antony split the group down the middle (being the leaders) and took half the group each with them in two opposing rough figure-of-eights.

The company reviewed the dance steps they had learned. JM reminded the group that the dance had a leftwards momentum, that she described as "like a wave, it moves with real force to the left

and “washes back” to the right”. JM reiterated that in order for a line dance to be effective in using travelling steps at speed, it is vital that the steps stay tight, and that all bodies move together at the same speed. She reminded the actors that distance is not effectively covered when the legs travel further than the torso, for instance.

• Song work with Claire van Kampen

The song was composed by CvK and consisted of two phrases (both with same lyrics: “Cup us till the world go round”): the first was sung by the ensemble, the second featured the 4-part harmony. Then, the two phrases were repeated. CvK explained that this is a compositional feature of many songs from the Balkan region, songs that she used as inspiration for this piece. After the song had been sung twice through, musicians picked up the melody, and then the dance began. The singing ceased as the dancing began: CvK and Jacqui were in agreement that it was neither desirable nor feasible for the actors to attempt to sing and dance at the same time

CvK organised the actors into a circle according to voice pitch, for ease of hearing the various harmonies. The actors in the scene were grouped in the following way:

Basses – Ben Wong, Tez Maynard, Paul Shelley, Mark Lewis-Jones

Tenors – Mike Rudko (one octave higher than basses)

High Tenor-James Gillan (high tenor)

Baritones: John McEnery, Roger Garland, Ben Walden, Quill Roberts, Jimmy Gardner, Liam Hourican

•Harmonies

CvK reviewed the tune of the song she taught to the ensemble at the last rehearsal. Due to the degree of difficulty the harmonies had caused some of the actors on their previous attempts, CvK decided on a change of plan. Of the four parts to the original harmony Claire composed, the high-pitched tenor part seemed to be the most problematic. CvK asked James Gillan, playing the “Boy who sings” to sing this part alone, advising the remaining tenors to sing at a lowered pitch. Though the company boasted several strong singers, the specific qualities of James’s voice seemed best suited to the task in hand. CvK began rehearsing the new configuration of parts by giving each group their first notes (3 beats on same note). Working each group in turn, she then taught them not only the line of harmony, but how to gauge the crucial first note of their line of harmony, by first singing the main melody, initially following “soloist” James Gillan.

CvK led the actors in a review of the harmonies. The two components (song, dance) were then run together, within the context of the scene.

Act 3, Scene 1: *Ventidius*

GB described this scene as needing a “hot entrance”, as if straight from battle. This effect was achieved in part by musicians who underscore the entrance of Ventidius (Mike Rudko) and Silius (Liam Hourican) with a canvas, dragging the body of Pacorus (Quill Roberts). Mark Lewis Jones, Ben Wong and the two tiring house gentlemen swelled the ranks accompanying Ventidius, and they were on hand to take off the body at the end of the scene. A makeshift stretcher for this purpose was devised by inserting two spears into two channels that ran the length of the canvas on both edges.

Act 3, Scene 2: *Octavia Weeps*

A tendency had developed during the early part of rehearsals towards a tripartite focus and a resultant “line of three” formation as this scene was put on its feet. The blocking was adjusted so that Octavius’s line: ‘...most noble Antony/Let not this piece of virtue which is set/Betwixt us..’ is

addressed to Antony as an aside from Octavia. Not only did this prove a more interesting theatrical picture than the “line of three” we had witnessed previously; it also allowed Octavia (Toby Cockerell) to “half-hear” their conversation. Toby found great value in “picking up on the vibes” from Octavius and Antony as a result, and the scene was immeasurably enriched.

GB drew attention to the tension between the private grief of Octavia and Octavius, that needs to be expressed in a public fashion, to be witnessed by the public at large. We needed to respond to that dilemma and to put the weeping Octavia in the centre of the stage so that she remains the focus of the scene. Toby admitted the difficulty of keeping his private thoughts private in such a situation. GB sympathised, and pointed out that this very dilemma is shared by Octavia.

Act 3, Scene 3: *Better News*

GB reminded the cast that the challenge of this scene is partly to avoid repetition of material from the previous scene (Act 2, Scene 5: *Bad News*) with the same Messenger. Also, he reminded Roger Gartland in particular, the challenge for the Messenger is to emerge from his second meeting with Cleopatra with his life and career intact! GB insisted that the actors do not lose sight of how high the stakes are for everyone in this scene. Despite the comedic moments, GB noted, the audience needs to feel that it is most likely that this scene will end unhappily, and that the Messenger will indeed offend once more. The questions that Cleopatra poses are not always easy, and who is to guess whether “shrill” or “low” is better in a woman’s voice? Roger Gartland commented that his character the Messenger must improvise a lot in this scene. GB agreed, and remarked that particularly awkward moments for the Messenger occurred when the questions became specific (“Guess at her years”) rather than “multiple-choice” (“...shrill or low”).

MR suspected that the Messenger has been “briefed” (by Charmian and Iras and Alexas), after the fiasco on his arrival. Cleopatra is not only interrogating the Messenger, but, by association, her own staff. MR added that he felt Alexas was largely responsible for Antony’s absence from Egypt. He saw Cleopatra’s line, ‘That Herod’s head I’ll have, but how/When Antony is gone?’ as a direct condemnation of Alexas.

RG described the Messenger’s development in terms of knowledge painfully gained. By this scene, he noted, the Messenger has learned not to be so blunt with the truth: “spinning” or bending the truth is more appropriate when dealing with Cleopatra. This lesson is difficult for the Messenger to learn because, as RG notes, we know (from Act 2 Scene 5) that the Messenger has a real sense of “fair play”. MR agreed with RG on this point, before reminding him that “fair play” is a redundant concept in Cleopatra’s domain. He joked, “I don’t have to be fair. I’m Queen!”

Act 3, Scene 4: *A Go-Between*

This scene was interesting to work with on the heels of *Julius Caesar*. Antony’s rage that Octavius had read a will in public - and had taken this opportunity to “speak scantily” of Antony at the same time - recalled Mark Antony’s speeches in the Forum to the Plebeians in Act 3 of *Julius Caesar*. Paul Shelley was asked if he thought Antony was especially furious that Octavius seemed to have stolen his “best trick”. PS was amused at this idea.

Act 3, Scene 6: *Castaway*

This scene has many parallels with Act 3, Scene 4 (*A Go Between*): Caesar likewise lists the reasons why war is inevitable between these 2 pillars of the Triumvirate. Octavius rehearses his emotional and political reasons for attacking Antony, prior to Octavia’s arrival, which gives what he has said

before a clear and present relevance and context. For Octavia, her "life's work" (to prevent precisely this conflict) has failed.

Ben Walden expressed concern that there is little evidence in the text to support the view that Caesar's surprise and concern at Octavia's unescorted arrival is calculated, and therefore not genuine. GB reminded him that the more Octavia is seen to be a castaway, the more Rome will support Caesar against Antony. GB acknowledged Caesar's genuine love for his sister, but made the point that Caesar also ensures that this concern is "seen"; he does not dismiss Agrippa and Maecenas, but chooses to reveal (indeed, to *revel* in) Antony's adultery to Antony's wife, in public.

Act 3, Scene 7: *Wars*

From a very early point in the artistic planning for this play, MR and Jenny Tiramani had discussed the representation of Cleopatra in "battle dress" for this scene - 'I will appear there...for a man'. The image conjured was of another Boudicca, in clothing that is both emblematic and martial. In the rehearsal room MR played with some interesting ideas using only the rehearsal clothing available. He used his regular rehearsal clothing – corset and collection of sarongs – and overlaid these with "found items", most remarkably a motorcycle helmet and leather jacket. The curiously eclectic mix of gathered clothing only helped to uncover and develop the appropriate sense of a woman revelling in the chance to "play dress up". MR wielded a plastic toy truncheon to suggest a sword, and swaggered with this in precisely the exaggerated and theatrical manner with which his Cleopatra in performance would eventually brandish her ceremonial sword. This was a game to the Queen of Egypt, it seemed, no less threatening than the previous, overtly sexual games played with Antony in more relaxed times: 'I wore his sword Philippan'. A delicious parallel presented itself: the (male) actor dressed in layers of (rehearsal) clothing, some feminine, some masculine, explored the character of Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, in defence of her realm, dressed in similarly borrowed martial robes which at once celebrated and subverted her femininity. 'I will appear there, for a man', so the line goes.

GB suggested that MR and PS play the scene at a distance from each other, maintaining eye-contact, as the argument against Cleopatra's involvement in the wars raged on between them. PS seemed rapt, in erotic awe at the spectacle of this warrior Queen; Enobarbus' protestations fell on deaf ears and blind eyes, surely reinforcing his contention that Cleopatra might prove a deadly distraction for Antony in battle.

Act 3 scenes 8-10: *Actium*

Given the short scenes and multiple entrances and exits required in this section - underscored by the sounds of fierce sea battle – plus the vital exposition contained therein, these scenes proved time-consuming during technicals. The marching formations of two armies upon the stage were carefully choreographed using combinations of strong diagonals and "long" entrances around the stage perimeter, to give the impression of large groups of men traversing the area. The **noises from within** the tiring house - which represent the sounds of battle - had to be tried with various acoustic adjustments, and different permutations of open and closed doors. The challenge was to present a theatrical impression of a bloody battle, without being overwhelmed by it. A smoke machine was deployed by the tiring-house gentleman to provide a limited burst of smoke within the tiring house at stage level, from which Enobarbus could emerge (via the discovery space) for "Naught, naught, all naught, I can behold no longer".

Act 3, Scene 11: *Shame*

(see also notes to Act 3, Scene 13)

GB encouraged PS to make use of the "long entrance" - to DS of the pillars – for this scene. He also staged the bulk of this scene using the strong, long parallel across the stage as distance between Antony and Cleopatra. Antony remained isolated in front of the SR pillar; Cleopatra was stranded almost against the wall of the *frons scenae*, in line behind the SL pillar.

MR wondered whether it might be a good idea to overlap certain lines in this scene (especially the repeated "no, no no...") and be, as he put it, "less reverent with the cues".

Act 3, Scene 12: *Ambassadors*

Octavius's entrance into this scene was discussed, in terms of establishing a specific locale. GB described the "makeshift" atmosphere he wanted to evoke, to indicate that Caesar is in transit, in camp. GB suggested that Octavius (Ben Walden) enter through the yard, using a set of wooden stairs to reach the stage area. Ben incorporated a diagonal cross to a makeshift camp stool SL, on which he sat before beginning the scene. This seemed to help establish the difference in locale quite quickly and effectively.

The entrance of Octavius Caesar and his party from yard door SR needed to be changed to use the yard door SL. The door we had planned to use was a fire door, and needed to be constantly available as an exit door. Tiring-house Gentleman (Andrew Jolly) was drafted in as a standard-bearer for Octavius Caesar.

Act 3, Scene 13: *Thidias Whipped*

This scene starts with the line "What shall we do?" This curious and rather hesitant moment needs to spring somehow out of the end of Act 3, Scene 11, which is the last time we see Antony and Cleopatra together. MR suggested that the end of the Act 3, Scene 11 should not therefore end with the kind of firm conclusion and resolution that we had been playing with of late. He suggested that one way to sidestep the potentially misleading feeling of "closure" at the end of 3,11 might be to have Antony and Cleopatra exit separately, through "several doors", rather than together, through the same door. All the company agreed on the need to find from somewhere the feeling of indecision and fear that leads Enobarbus to advise "Think and die".

A question came from one of the actors playing Antony's servants in this scene: what might be the cause of the apparent delay in answering Antony's call to whip Thidias? The text seems to indicate that they pause for several lines before obeying his orders. GB invited discussion from all the actors in the scene on this point, and he suggested that it might be helpful to think of themselves as *Egyptian* servants of Cleopatra, who is trying to solve this matter by diplomatic means. This provided a plausible explanation as to why Antony has such an apparent difficulty in ordering them around, at this moment in the play. Another solution was offered: the servants may in fact be *Romans*, Antony's men, and as such are simply shocked and confused by the order (from a Roman) to whip a (Roman) ambassador, Thidias.

Antony's exclamation on entering, 'By Jove that thunders', is a half-line that completes Cleopatra's line to Thidias, 'as it rained kisses'. After some experimentation with entrance "paths" it was established that Antony needs to enter early; in so doing, he not only finds himself in a strong position for his line, but he is able to witness more of Cleopatra's apparent "flirtation" with Thidias. The technical details of entrances in this case helped the actors find added motivations for strong acting choices.

Act 4, Scene 1: *Caesar's Camp*

GB tried staging the beginning of this scene in front of the SL pillar. He was interested in having Caesar, Agrippa and Maecenas enter and exit through the yard, to the sound of military drums. As the groundlings are specifically characterised as an army by the actors in this scene, this reinforced their active role.

Act 4, Scene 2: *Onion-Eyed*

This scene had been foreshadowed by Antony's challenge to Caesar – one-to-one combat – that Caesar publicly laughed at. A discussion developed: we were all puzzled at Antony's strange behaviour, particularly at his insistence on formally thanking members of his household staff for their good service.

The scene grew out of a party for Cleopatra's birthday, a party we imagined takes place within the tiring house. GB wrote in the presence of Eros in this scene (Eros is not mentioned as present in this scene as it appears in the Folio), because this is a time for Antony to pay tribute to some of his household servants. After some discussion with Liam Hourican (the actor playing Eros), GB opted to include Eros, and to add in members of the stage management team as extra servants.

Act 4, Scene 3: *A Company of Soldiers*

Musicke of the Hoboyes is under the Stage is given as the specific stage direction or music cue in the First Folio. The musicians played a piece from the period chosen by CvK that surprised the actors, who had expected the piece to sound "strange" in a *modern* sense, as in "eerie" or "bizarre". This provoked a long and ultimately rewarding discussion among the actors, and CvK was able to give a valuable sense of context to the piece. She had noticed in rehearsal that when the soldiers bid each other "goodnight", they are placed deliberately on their own. The stage direction in the Folio reads *They place themselves in every corner of the stage*. As CvK explained, "the whole scene is set up to isolate people, to create a feeling of displacement and vulnerability". CvK placed the musicians under the floor of the tiring house, rather than underneath the main stage area, to emphasise the feeling of displacement felt by the soldiers. The music was very distant, but still technically "*under the Stage*" and so it was difficult for audiences and soldiers alike to locate.

Act 4, Scene 9: *Death of Enobarbus*

John McEnergy chose a somewhat unusual death for Enobarbus in kneeling position, as if frozen in time and space. There was little to announce the passing of this seasoned soldier, yet the result of these "quiet choices" was very effective in making sense of the Soldier's (somewhat optimistic) line, 'he may recover yet'.

Act 4, Scene 15: *Death of Antony*

Quill Roberts worked as a consultant for the sword business in this scene (with Liam Hourican and Paul Shelley). Quill suggested that the most theatrically effective choice seemed for Eros' suicide to be slow and sustained; the audience should be fully aware that Eros is preparing to kill himself, and not Antony. Eros says "My sword is drawn", but in fact it isn't; Eros will slit his own throat with his knife. We decided that Eros is Greek; Quill thought that if Eros were to fall on his own sword, this would seem "too Roman".

Antony's death by sword, it was suggested, should be a big theatrical moment. Quill choreographed the following: kneeling, Antony raises his sword above his head, holding it with two arms; with one

movement he brings both arms into his stomach and buckles into it. A similarly long withdrawal stroke (after changing his grip on the sword to allow this) read well in every section of the audience.

• On stage rehearsal with pulleys: Hoisting Antony

(This scene was particularly difficult to rehearse in the rehearsal rooms, with actors having to mime the action of the pulley that hoisted Antony up to the balcony level.)

A canvas sling large enough to cradle a man was hooked to a simple rope pulley system through the trap in the heavens. This pulley was operated by MR from the balcony level. Charmian and Iras (Danny Sapani and James Gillan) pushed a specially-constructed bed (as tall as the height of the balcony's balustrades) to the edge of the balcony to allow Antony to "embark" on the balcony level and yet still be seen. Standing on the same bed also allowed MR to be clearly visible from the yard and lower gallery as he pulled on the rope pulley and hoisted PS up⁴. A safety rope was held by JG while DS assisted MR in pulling.

The pulley consisted of two distinctly different ropes through a wooden block fulcrum. The main rope was made of hemp, and so while scoring points in terms of authenticity, this could not be rated by modern safety standards. At the base of the fulcrum was a large metal clip to which was attached the nylon (rated) safety rope. The canvas/hessian sling was attached to the same large metal clip (karabiner). As an additional safety measure, PS wore a nylon wrist strap. Since both ropes were on a non-slip "ratchet" pulley system, the actors pulling did not have to take the full weight of PS at any point. The "authentic" elements (i.e. the non-rated elements) were all backed up by modern "rated" elements that conformed to modern safety standards. This "compromise" ensured not only the actors' safety, but also ease of rehearsal during technicals. The hooking and unhooking of the sling (into and out of the harness) proved more of a challenge than the hoisting itself.

Act V, Scene 1: *Caesar is touched*

Early discussions of this scene brought up the question of how Decretas (Roger Gartland) gains entrance to Caesar's quarters, "armed" (as he appears to be) with the bloody sword of Antony. Roger's idea was that the sword itself is so significant as a talisman, or symbol of Antony, that it overrides all "security" in Caesar's camp. To him, the sword seemed to function rather like a scalp, so to carry the sword aloft, overhead, rather than as a weapon to be drawn on Caesar, was the way to show the importance of this messenger's mission.

Ben Walden (Caesar), GB and several cast members discussed Caesar's ambivalent response to the news of Antony's death. Ben noted that the news is much hoped-for, but Caesar's sense of loss is equally great.

Act V, Scene 2: *Death of Cleopatra*

The need to define several specific locations within the same scene presented a major challenge. GB decided action taking place inside Cleopatra's Monument would need to be played on stage level. At first, GB was intrigued by the possibility of Proculeus (Tim Davies) speaking to Cleopatra across the yard. To establish distance and to make Cleopatra's exchange with Proculeus sufficiently distracting to prevent her noticing the entrance of Caesar's guards, GB thought that Proculeus might have to speak from one of the galleries or from a platform in the yard.

⁴ See below, *The Play in Performance*.

How though, should the assault on the Monument take place? GB suggested that one way of establishing the idea of the "siege" of the Monument would be to have Brian Paterson (Stage Manager) abseil down through the trap in the heavens onto the balcony. Caesar's guards could then enter by the 2 side doors in frons. The idea was that once one man found a way in, the doors of the Monument could be opened from the inside. This idea had its bonuses and drawbacks. MR added a note of caution, saying that we needed to be aware of the implications of using the heavenly trap (normally reserved for the *deus ex machina*) in a much more prosaic way. Also, he added, the trap had recently been used to hoist Antony to his redemption. Any use of the trap would no doubt be a very seductive physical and visual delight for the audience, he noted, but he wanted us to consider whether it was less appropriate for this particular event.

GB on the climax of the play: 'The more I read the scene, the more I think that we have a text that undergoes a change in direction in between 5.1 and 5.2. Shakespeare may have changed his mind about something, or perhaps after setting up the Proculeus intrigue, he worried that the play might run too long, and tried to be economical in 5.2 to tidy everything up quickly.'

The question of when the bed should be brought on stage arose as soon as we began staging the scene. Since it is quite a considerable size, the precise moment needs to be carefully chosen, so as not to preempt, or to draw focus from other events on the stage.

The actors began playing through scene with Iras washing Cleopatra, while Charmian burned incense to bless the space in preparation for the events to follow. We rehearsed this with Proculeus (Tim) standing halfway up a ladder in the corner of the room, diverting Cleopatra's attention as Gallus (Liam Hourican) entered through the door SR. GB asks Liam to speak his line "You see how easy she may be surprised" to Proculeus, before leaving to inform Caesar of his success.

The next question that presented itself was at what point Cleopatra might have her knife taken away from her ("Quick, quick, good hands"). How and when should she be disarmed, determined as she is? GB wonders whether Gallus should delay his exit until this issue is resolved. He thinks, on reflection, that perhaps "Guard her till Caesar come" is misleading exit line. Another possibility is that Gallus's exit may also be interrupted by Cleopatra's brandishing of the knife. This question was not easily resolved. Part of the problem was the amount of human traffic that had to be manipulated, entering and exiting the imagined location of Cleopatra's Monument. Eventually, GB decided to run through the scene up to a point where we ran into difficulty, and to spend the rest of the session roughly drafting in the rest of the entrances and exits through to the end of the play. His primary aim was to have a sketch of the shape of this final scene, which we could fill in at a later point.

A flourish to announce Caesar's entrance into the monument was written in. Another flourish heralded his exit. GB asked the three actors playing women to hurl themselves prostrate onto the floor as Caesar entered, hiding their faces in veils; this justified Caesar's line 'Which is the Queene of Egypt?', which he addressed to Dolabella.

Questions arose about the degree of collusion that might be revealed or intimated, between Seleucus (John McEnery) and Cleopatra (Mark Rylance), regarding the 'breefe of Money Plate and Jewels' that Seleucus is asked to ratify. The related question of the degree to which Cleopatra's rage at Seleucus' apparent betrayal might be a cunning smokescreen was also raised. GB pointed out that Shakespeare often provides a truly comic relief such as this episode, before moments of profound tragedy. That said, following the same rationale, the impact of this episode is all too easily eclipsed by the episode with Cleopatra and the Clown that follows it.⁵

The significance of a **half-line** was highlighted in the following dialogue between Cleopatra and Iras:

⁵ This episode was cut from the final production, in the interests of time and clarity.

Cleo:and I shall see
 Some squeaking *Cleopatra* Boy my greatnesse
 I'th' posture of a Whore

Iras: O the good Gods!

Cleo: **Nay that's certaine.**

Iras: Ile never see't, for I am sure mine Nailles
 Are stronger than mine eyes.

Iras (James Gillan) and GB thought that Cleopatra's half-line (which is short, rather than shared) might indicate a recognition on her part that Iras is weeping, and unable to pick up a cue to speak immediately.

The Clown (Mike Rudko) spoke with an American "hillbilly" accent. This strangely contemporary touch communicated and elucidated his status as a "rural fellow" very clearly. This characterisation also seemed to expand upon the tensions between low comedy and pathos that are written into the scene. In particular, we noted that Cleopatra seems to dismiss, or bid farewell to the Clown several times before he actually exits. GB thought that this might indicate that the women are fully prepared for death, and that they are anxious to get on with it. The episode also presents a technical challenge in that Cleopatra's throne needs to be moved into view at the least distracting point in this scene. The question of when to execute this move was puzzled over, but all agreed that we would have to wait until we were able to use the actual prop, in technicals, on the stage, before the matter could be resolved fully.

The solution presented itself in timing the arrival of the throne after Cleopatra's first "farewell" to the Clown. The arrival of Charmian and Iras carrying in the throne help develop the increasing sense of urgency. The business took place under the cover of Cleopatra's repeated attempts to dismiss the Clown, a passage which might otherwise have seemed repetitious if allowed to become static. By the time the Clown eventually took his leave, all preparations seemed in place, and the focus was fully established on Cleopatra well before she began the famous "immortal longings" speech.

MR was interested in Plutarch's account of Cleopatra's appearance after the death of Antony:

'Cleopatra being layed upon a little low bed in poore estate, when she sawe Caesar come in to her chamber, she sodainely rose up, naked in her smocke, and fell downe at his feete marvelously disfigured: both for that she had plucked her heare from her head, as also for that she had martired all her face with her nailles...To be short, her bodie was not much better than her minde'.

Ever conscious of the power of antithesis in Shakespeare's dramas, MR and JT worked together to present as poor and naked an image of the great Queen of Egypt as could be imagined. MR shaved his own hair off in clumps, which (when painted with stage blood) suggested the frenzy of self-mutilation hinted at by Plutarch. JT clothed Cleopatra in a plain white shift that boasted no ornamentation except spots of blood around the neck and shoulders. It was only when seated upon her throne for the last time that Cleopatra was presented to us as a gilded, reinstated goddess, enclosed in a regal cocoon for eternity. Cloths of gold evoked the former splendour of her youth (as Enobarbus had once seen her), and a serpent-headed crown proclaimed at once her fate and her immortality. It was a memorable sight.

THE PLAY IN PERFORMANCE

• The hoisting of Antony

The first rehearsal of this episode on the Globe stage is described above. During this “pre-technical” rehearsal the actors were introduced to the basic mechanical elements of the pulley system. This made actual technicals somewhat speedier, although the hooking and unhooking of the canvas sling to the pulley ropes needed fine tuning during the technicals proper. GB asked Jaq and several of the actors to check sightlines at various points around the auditorium, and (as suspected) we discovered that the upper galleries afforded only a limited view of Cleopatra when standing. We could see her from the waist down. A partial solution, however, seemed to present itself over the course of the run, which might be attributed to the presence – and an awareness – of an audience.

Over the course of the run of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the event of hoisting Antony changed a great deal as the actors became more confident in operating the apparatus. What seemed initially a precarious perch for Cleopatra (MR), severely compromised by sightline difficulties – standing on a balustrade-level bed on the upper balcony – became a prime position that could be viewed in different ways around the auditorium, to differing effects. When viewed from the yard - particularly from those areas of the yard closest to the edges of the stage - the forced perspective made for an impressive theatre picture: Cleopatra appeared to tower above the other (mortal) characters in the play, stretched full length towards the heavens as she extended herself to pull Antony closer to her. The same event as seen from the upper gallery was partially obscured by the pentice roof: MR pulled on the rope with the weight of his entire body, and so went from fully extended to fully collapsed over the course of a single heave. Crouched and compact before rising to pull again, the upper galleries were able to see Cleopatra “in between” exertions, and thus able to piece out the rest of the event for themselves.

Whether this style of pulling originated utterly out of necessity is not the point: whether by accident or design, this crucial event was afforded its maximum impact, and the sightline problem was redressed as far as possible, without re-blocking the scene.

• Comedy in *Antony and Cleopatra*

The seasons prior to 1999 had proved the success of comedy on the Globe stage. Tragedy was an area less chartered, and so the decision to stage two major Shakespearean tragedies in 1999 had an element of gauntlet-tossing about it. MR was confident that a love of antithesis in language, linked to strong storytelling skills, lay at the core of this enigma.

Over the period of rehearsals the Red Company as a whole developed a work ethic that was serious but never precious, attentive but not overly reverential. All seemed aware that in presenting these classic plays, new ground was being broken; though the plays contained some of the most famous lines from Shakespeare, no rule-of-thumb existed about how to play those lines.

The addition of an audience exposed a strong yet subtle dynamic within the play that few could have predicted. Audiences laughed with abandon at the scenes between MR’s Cleopatra and RG’s hapless Messenger; more perplexingly, the same audiences found themselves amused at the spectacle of PS’s Antony being hoisted above the stage in a canvas harness. This mirth might have been disturbing to the actors, if it were not matched by a tangible pathos that filled the auditorium only seconds later. That audiences might initially laugh at moments of high tragedy was one of the more valuable lessons learned in 1999, as MR noted:

I learned more about the dynamics of the plays this year. The audience teaches me each year to be more confident, to let the play swing into comedy, in order for a bigger swing *back* into tragedy to

occur. I'm starting to feel that maybe we have a bit of a hangover from an age between Shakespeare's and our own – perhaps the Victorian age – when there was a reverence for death and for tragedy. Tragedy became grand, or “serious”, in a romantic sense. Shakespeare's plays come from a time that I believe observed tragedy differently, in a way that I have observed in Northern Ireland, for instance, where tragedy is woven into the fabric of everyday life. I have observed there (and in Shakespeare's plays) an enormous wit, a humour married closely to that sense of tragedy, and I think this might be truer to human nature than the Victorian view. It is perhaps for this reason that we find Shakespeare's plays truer to life today than the Victorian melodramas, which are no longer in the repertoire. As I wonder about the relationship between the audience and the actors in Shakespeare's time, I start to become aware of traditions of playing, and of audience behaviour, and I think that some of these have been inherited by us from times between the two. I think that with both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare's wit is ever present, and the audiences here – perhaps because they are *not* as “reverential” as audiences elsewhere – seem to respond strongly to that antithetical relationship between comedy and tragedy in both plays. I know that some people criticise that, and say that we are down-playing, or making things cruder; this is something to watch out for, something to avoid, something we never consciously work towards. But I'm starting now to think that part of this kind of criticism is a false attachment to a style of play from a more modern theatre that may not be correct here.

If I had played in a film version of *Antony and Cleopatra* I would never have made the kind of discoveries I made this season. This is because I would not have had an audience to teach me that it is alright to laugh at Cleopatra's line ‘How heavy weighs my lord!’ (IV, xv, 32), because the release in laughing opens them up and catches them unaware; fifteen seconds later they see her howling in despair as Antony dies suddenly in her arms. An image I've used to describe this is that of a boxer, who learns where his opponent defends from. He punches a little further out from that spot with every jab, and unconsciously the defendant is moving his guard further and further out, until he becomes unguarded. It is then possible to hit straight in the middle. Shakespeare writes stories very cleverly like this. He removes people's guards, so that a powerful moment can hit them unprepared. Often he achieves this through humour. Often the wisest philosophical statement will be put in the form of a bawdy joke. This is perhaps to do with his deeper observance that the divine is ever present, in our most sensual life as well as our most spiritual.⁶

⁶ Excerpt from an interview with JB in August 1999. See *Research Bulletin: Interviews with the White and Red Companies, the 1999 Season*.