

HELP RAISE THE HEAVENS

by Cindy Venema

Come to the faculty lounge on November 21 and help raise the "heavens" in the name of UPEI! I am not implying an elevated religious ceremony (although some Shakespeare fanatics may consider it as such). This phrase actually has a more tangible meaning upon further explanation. The celestial paradise that this article is referring to is a painted canopy symbolizing the heavens, that is to be placed over the stage of the Globe Theatre. This is an important part in completing the restoration of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

The rebuilding of this theatre in London, England (close to where the original Globe was located) has become an extensive project, involving donations from across the world. The new Globe Theatre will represent art and drama and how they have remained a constant element in our culture, despite our world's ever changing social conditions. The Shakespearean plays that will be performed on this "old-new" stage will show audiences how Shakespeare intended his plays to be acted and watched. For a tiny moment of their lives, audiences will have the feeling of being captured in a timeless theatrical world.

The reason architects are only now able to rebuild the Globe Theatre to a faithful representation is thanks to two archaeological discoveries. In 1988 an excavation produced the foundations of the Rose Theatre, a sister theatre to the Globe. From this find, historians, scholars, and architects were able to confirm what materials were used to construct these two theatres. Some of the materials used included green oak, water reeds, sand, lime putty, and goat hair, all of which are being used in the construction of the Globe. Then in 1989, the original site of the Globe was unearthed. Full excavation was not possible, but enough evidence was exposed to verify certain facts, such as the polygonal shape of the theatre. All of these discoveries are being utilized in the construction of the new Globe on Bankside, London.

When the original Globe Theatre was destroyed, many valuable physical details were lost. However, we do know that this theatre, which Shakespeare was part owner of, was built in 1599 on the outskirts of London. The Globe was an open theatre, where audiences enjoyed plays either standing in the open yard, or in the more expensive covered galleries. Unlike the Skydome, the Globe did not have a retractable roof, but plays were performed whether it rained or shined. Similarly, audiences and actors of the modern world are going to have to deal with the uncontrollable forces of nature

while taking in or performing a play at the Globe Theatre.

This first Globe theatre was burnt to the ground in 1613 by a canon ball that got imbedded in the theatre's thatch roof during a performance. The Globe was rebuilt shortly after, this time with a tiled roof. Unfavourably for Shakespeare, religion prevailed over entertainment during the following years and consequently the Globe Theatre was shut down by Puritans. In 1644 Shakespeare's main performance site was completely demolished, and what was known as the Globe Theatre appeared to become dematerialized to a mere historical name.

Yet, three and a half centuries, later this Shakespearean theatre is being resurrected. Many students are using this restoration as an opportunity to show their support for the arts. The means that they are using to give this support is through a project called Globelink. UPEI has expressed interest in becoming a Globelink school, thanks to the efforts and contacts of professor Shannon Murray. To become an official member of this group, UPEI needs to raise \$500 for the heavens. This stage prop is going to cost 100,000 pounds, but already 80,000 pounds have been donated. If UPEI joins it will become the fifth Canadian school to be a member. 450 other institutes

across 30 countries are already active participants.

The Globelink encourages participating schools to raise money using a Shakespearean theme. Some of the schools have done Shakespeare marathon readings (one school actually did all of Shakespeare's 37 plays). Other schools have organized sonnet gabblings (speed reading Shakespeare's sonnets -- the current record is 11.3 seconds). And yet other school's have hosted debates on Shakespeare. UPEI intends to raise the money through a Bardathon, where 12 hours of Shakespeare will be read in the university's faculty lounge on November 21 from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Anyone is welcome to participate and more than welcome to donate money.

If we do manage to raise 500 dollars, then our school will receive a time capsule that will be buried in the middle of the Globe's stage for archeologists to find centuries down the road. This time capsule can include any small memorabilia we wish to have saved, such as some red sand from PEI's quickly deteriorating shoreline.

The Bardathon will be a great opportunity for our small university to help restore a piece of history and to help raise the heavens through the power of Shakespeare's words. If this isn't incentive enough to become involved, perhaps Professor Murray's promise of good food all day during the Bardathon will tempt you. Remember that "our children's children shall see this and bless Heaven" (King Henry VIII).

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