Peter Holland’s Audience Welcome

For most of his working life, William Shakespeare was a sharer in the King’s Men, London’s leading theatre company. He knew the actors he was writing for and collaborated with them on seeing the plays into performance. All theatre is a collaboration, of course, and, while actors can no longer collaborate directly with Shakespeare, the Actors From The London Stage (AFTLS) company always aim to work with him, respectfully and creatively, throughout the rehearsal process.

Our company’s aim is to make his words exert their magic and their power in performance but we do this in a vital and perhaps unconventional way. We have no massive sets to tower over the performers and no directorial concept to tower over the text of Shakespeare’s play. In fact, AFTLS does not have a director at all; instead, the play has been rehearsed by the actors, working together to create theatre, co-operating with each other in their imaginative engagement with the play’s words.

Now the actors ask you the audience to perform that same kind of imaginative engagement that Shakespeare was thinking about when, in the Prologue to Henry V, he instructed his spectators:

Think, when we speak of horses, that you see them,
Printing their proud hoofs i’th’ receiving earth
For ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.

Now the actors seek a new collaboration, working with you the audience in the way that only live theatre can. It is not a hard job for people to do, even though we are now used to having everything shown us on screen, and even though we usually no longer rely on the powers of the imagination and collaboration to bring a play’s world into being. If you share the fun of collaborating with us, then the excitement of the performance will be richly rewarding for you and for the actors, for this special act of working together, actors and audience combined, marks the latest stage of that long journey _______ (insert name of current production) has made from Shakespeare’s writing the play with and for the actors he knew so well. So, tonight, watch and listen and ‘let us../On your imaginary forces work.’

Peter Holland
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