

Christopher Marlowe and, less obviously, Philip Henslowe are the latest subjects for the original pronunciation treatment. **David Crystal** celebrates a new listening experience beyond Shakespeare.

'OP' MOVING ON

The original pronunciation (OP) movement grows apace. Since I last wrote about it a year ago in *Around the Globe*, three more Shakespeare plays have been produced using this approach – *The Winter's Tale* in Baltimore, *King Lear* in Bloomington, Indiana, and Ben Crystal's *Pericles: Recomposed* at the Savannah Music Festival. But the most interesting development, to my mind, is the way the approach has begun to move away from Shakespeare. In a number of concerts, singers have used OP to perform pieces by Dowland, Byrd, and other composers. Some have combined music and speech, much as the Globe itself did in its CD a decade ago, *This World's Globe*. And for the first time, other writers are being given the OP treatment.

Nowhere else more than at the Globe. As part of the Read not Dead season, Ben's Passion in Practice Shakespeare Ensemble is presenting OP productions of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and Henslowe's *Diary* – the former as their first iteration of a Marlowe Ensemble, and the latter as an anniversarial bow to the man who died just three months before Shakespeare.

Marlowe needs no justification. I'm often asked how his 'mighty lines' would come across in OP. I'm not necessarily expecting to discover new insights about OP from the exercise – though who knows what will emerge in rehearsal – but I am anticipating an entirely new listening experience.

One of the main interests is going to be the general auditory aesthetic – hearing the lines in a fresh way, and especially assonances (similarities between vowels) that have been lost in modern English. Chief amongst these is the name of the man himself: it is /fawstus/, not /fowstus/. That <au> spelling is the clue: it turns up (in the First Folio) in *applaud*, *fault*, *sauce*, and dozens of other words, often alternating with <aw>, which further indicates that pronunciation. As a consequence, note how the name repeatedly chimes with other words:

The form of Faustus' fortunes, good or bad (1.8)

Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art (1.101)

Learn thou of Faustus' manly fortitude, (1.311)

Apart from the OP, Ben tells me he has taken a provocative approach to the A and B texts, and it will be exciting to see how the doctor sells his soul in the fiery Wanamaker.

The task of producing Henslowe in OP presents a different kind of challenge. We probably wouldn't expect to have such a refined auditory experience when reading a businessman's diary. With plays, OP is a means to an end – to heightening the



Illustration Belle Mellor

playgoer's auditory experience so that the characters, action, and atmosphere come alive in an enhanced way. The play's the thing, after all. But what to do with a diary? Anyone who has dipped

into Henslowe knows that it mainly consists of long lists of payments, loans, and receipts, interspersed with some personal details. Reading a selection of these would send an audience to sleep, whatever accent was used. How does one make 'the diary's

the thing'?

Ben took his cue from Hamlet: 'You could for a need study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?' The evening entitled *Master Henslowe's Diary* will allow us to encounter Henslowe's words in the mouths of those who knew him. It's a new piece of drama built from an old diary, for a new-old building and a new-old sound.

Two world firsts. We'll report our discoveries in the next issue of *Around the Globe*, but in the meantime we look forward to sharing more OP with Globe audiences by candlelight...

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The staged reading of *Dr Faustus* in OP takes place on 22 May. *Master Henslowe's Diary* will be explored in OP on 26 May.

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