

Merely Theatre Bring Shakespeare Off Screen & On Stage With 2016 National Tour

Merely Theatre are putting the bard back on the boards in a new UK tour, with dates across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They want audiences to remember the thrills of 'in the flesh' theatre.

London, England -- January 20, 2016 (FPRC) -- Theatre in the cinema was created to help people who couldn't reach London's biggest theatres, or couldn't afford a ticket, to see their shows. In 2015, Shakespeare productions have been silver-screened as never before thanks to stars like Kenneth Branagh and Benedict Cumberbatch. Unfortunately, Lyn Gardner wrote in May of this year how such screenings could see a decline in touring productions, and by December, her fears began to look increasingly justified. Merely Theatre believe there's no substitute for the live experience. In 2016, they will put quality Shakespeare back onto stages throughout the country, to bring the live experience back to life.

The 2016 UK Tour, supported using public funding by Arts Council England and produced by The Production Exchange, will see the company perform over forty shows across nearly twenty different venues in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The five-hand performances of Henry V and A Midsummer Night's Dream, will begin on January 22nd at the Uppingham Theatre and concluding on May 7th at the Kings Theatre, Edinburgh. Full details and booking information is available [here](#).

After years working together in London, this is the company's first national tour, and the challenges facing small theatre companies are greater than ever. Audiences are increasingly risk averse, and must choose between London's biggest institutions on the screen, and emerging companies on local stages. This means Merely's work must stand up against that of the biggest companies in theatre to have a chance. Early five-star reviews together with audience feedback suggest the company will pull it off.

Artistic Director Scott Ellis said of the tour, "This is our first national tour and it's really exciting for us as a company. Many of us have worked together under the Merely banner for years, honing our style. It's great to be able to take this to audiences nationwide. This is the kind of theatre that really has to be seen live: you can't leap through a screen, but you can leap off a stage. The actors have an active relationship with the audience in every scene, getting face to face with them in a lot of cases."

In the cinema, audiences watch another audience watching the show, through many cameras, at the whim of an editor, putting layers between them and the show. In live theatre, the audience's experience is raw and unmediated, and this is what Merely count on.

Associate Producer Emmy Rose explained, "We believe in bringing the show to the audience. The dynamic between the audience and our actors is integral to the way we do things. We hammer in clarity every rehearsal, so while there's this immense energy on stage, it's all focused, and it's all designed to connect with each person watching. It makes the shows so accessible."

The company operates a progressive 50/50 gender-blind company of five men and five women. For their five-hand productions of A Midsummer Night's Dream and Henry V, there is a company of ten:

five men and five women, with a male and a female actor ready to play every role. From that cast of ten, five are selected for any one performance, with the gender balance shifting fluidly between shows. For example, some audiences will see a female Henry V, and others will see a male Titania.

Ellis said of the shows, "There's no screen, no cameras, no editor getting between us, dictating the focus. Our shows are sweaty, intense, immediate experiences. The way Shakespeare should be done: live and alive."

About Merely Theatre

The actors, the audience, the text. Merely is characterised by playful use of space and audience interaction. Their dynamic, irreverent but focused use of text ensures modern audiences are as engaged and entertained as when the words were written. For more information please visit: <http://merelytheatre.co.uk/>

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Keywords

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[five-star reviews](#)

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