



National Shakespeare Day

British Shakespeare Company launches its campaign for a National Shakespeare Day (23 April)

'As a huge fan of Burns Night celebrations myself, I think this is a really interesting idea and certainly well worth exploring. Shakespeare is one of England's towering literary figures and anything that celebrates his life and work, and anything which helps stimulate wider interests in his writings, should be encouraged'

Tessa Jowell, Culture Secretary

National Shakespeare Day is the brainchild of Robert J Williamson, artistic director of the British Shakespeare Company. William Shakespeare was born on 23 April 1564 and died on 23 April 1616. He's recognised across the world as the greatest literary mind in the history of the planet, and his magnificent work unites the whole world in appreciation of his genius. Globe theatre replicas can now be found in Japan, Germany, Italy and the USA.

Robert J Williamson says: *'Shakespeare's magnificent work unite the whole world in appreciation of his genius. What greater role model for the people of Great Britain? Should we not have a day to recognise this home grown genius? This campaign has one purpose only, that is to have the 23 April officially recognized as National Shakespeare Day'*.

Senior Cabinet ministers are backing the campaign to celebrate the life and work of the playwright. John Reid, the Home Secretary, and Tessa Jowell, the Culture Secretary, have both lent strong support to the idea and hope the celebrations would develop into an English version of Burns Night, when Scottish revellers mark the anniversary of their national poet.

The British Shakespeare Company is the UK's leading exponent of magical open-air theatre. For over a thousand years companies have created theatres in the centre of towns, erecting a pageant wagon or scaffolding stage, and performing great historical and classical drama for a mass audience. Shakespeare himself, whilst growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon, would have witnessed such companies performing in the heart of his home town. Wishing to continue this exciting and

accessible tradition, actor-manager, Robert J Williamson founded the British Shakespeare Company 11 years ago, and has achieved consistent critical acclaim for its productions ever since. The British Shakespeare Company hopes to create fun educational packs for schools, and Williamson proposes special performances of Shakespeare's plays as well as public readings of excerpts from his drama and poems on National Shakespeare Day.

To sign the online petition to win official recognition for a National Shakespeare Day, go to:

www.britishshakespearecompany.com/shakespeareday

The British Shakespeare Company is currently developing a dedicated National Shakespeare Day website.

www.shakespeareday.com is still under construction but you will soon be able to find out ways of celebrating National Shakespeare Day such as What to Eat and Drink, featuring Elizabethan recipes, and selection of Shakespeare's verse under a What to Read section.

www.britishshakespearecompany.co.uk

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