

CA Prize-winner 2018: Greg Doran



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The 2018 Classical Association Prize was awarded to Gregory Doran, Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, in recognition of recent RSC projects inspired by the ancient world, all of which have well and truly captured the public imagination.

Greg studied English and Drama at the University of Bristol, before training as an actor at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Initially joining the Royal Shakespeare Company as an actor in 1987, he went on to become Assistant Director the following season. Now well-known as one of the greatest Shakespeareans of his generation, having directed well over half the canon, his first solo directing project for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1992 was not a Shakespeare play, but Derek Walcott's *Odyssey*.

In 2016, with Greg at the helm, the RSC announced that the Spring/Summer 2017 Season was to be their Rome Season. With Angus Jackson appointed as Season Director, it was to feature four of Shakespeare's most exciting, political and bloody thrillers: *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Titus Andronicus*. When the Rome season came to an end in January of this year, these four plays had been performed to packed theatres a total of 293 times.

Greg also decided that the RSC should do something special to mark the 2000th anniversary of the death of Ovid in 2017. One of the crowning events of this series was a selection of *Tales from Ovid's Metamorphoses*, translated by Ted Hughes, and read by RSC actors past and present. This was later recorded for the BBC and was screened alongside a documentary about Ovid in which Greg eloquently and infectiously told of his love for the world's greatest storyteller, whose stories have the power, he said, 'to explain us to ourselves'.

Greg is passionate about making Shakespeare more accessible, but at the same time preserving the allusions to classical authors, which he noticed directors were increasingly tempted to cut for fear that they might no longer resonate with a young audience. Speaking to *The Guardian*, Greg noted: 'These

stories should be there in the curriculum at an early stage. They are not just crucial to your understanding of Shakespeare. Whether it's Renaissance art, whether it's understanding human nature, they're so important. There are Ovid references in almost every play.' The Ovid celebration therefore also included the staging of 3 new plays for 8 to 11-year-olds, based on tales from Ovid, and a set of resources and workshops for Key Stage 2 pupils. Speaking on the decision to take adaptations of Ovid into schools, Greg said he felt it was imperative to introduce children to Ovid 'before they hit cynical, before they're intimidated'.

2017 also saw Greg take on the challenge of directing an epic 7-hour staging in two parts of Robert Harris' bestselling Cicero trilogy, adapted for the stage by Mike Poulton. After a sell-out season at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, this summer saw the production move to the Gielgud Theatre in the West End where it will run until 8 September 2018.

Upon receiving his well-earned prize, Greg said: 'I am both delighted and honoured to receive this prestigious award from the Classical Association. Ovid was clearly one of Shakespeare's very favourite poets, so extending interest and excitement in Ovid in turn increases our understanding of Shakespeare. I thank the Classical Association for their recognition of our work at the Royal Shakespeare Company.'

*Dr Sharon Marshall (University of Exeter)
CA Outreach Officer 2017-2020*

