

# The South Bank Show

ITV Television, presented by Melvyn Bragg



The South Bank is the area along the southern part of the River Thames in London where the original Globe theatre was built in 1599. Little remained after the theatre burnt down in 1613 but in the 1990s Shakespeare enthusiasts around the world helped in the realisation of a new replica of the Globe Theatre, just a few hundred metres away from the original. It was built using all the original materials, from the wooden nails<sup>1</sup> to its thatched roof<sup>2</sup> and now, just as in Shakespeare's time, it is possible to see plays performed there throughout the summer.

*The South Bank Show*, so called because it is broadcast from the south bank of the River Thames, is a TV programme which began in January 1978 with the aim of presenting a mixture of both popular culture and high art. It has now become one of the longest running programmes on UK television and is presented in over 60 countries worldwide.

Speaking at the beginning of the third millennium, Melvyn Bragg dedicated this particular edition of *The South Bank Show* to Shakespeare's genius.

1. wooden nails: chiodi di legno.
2. thatched roof: tetto di paglia.

## Over to you

### Part 1

**1** Listen and watch the first part of the programme twice and answer the following questions.

1. In a popular poll (sondaggio) what title was given to Shakespeare at the end of the 20th century?
2. What nickname is used for the Globe Theatre? Choose from the following.
  - a. ☐ the wooden 'S'      b. ☐ the wooden 'O'
  - c. ☐ the Wooden Globe
3. Tick from the list below the countries and cities which Melvyn Bragg says pay homage to Shakespeare in some way.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Amsterdam	<input type="checkbox"/> New York	<input type="checkbox"/> Milan
<input type="checkbox"/> Tokyo	<input type="checkbox"/> Spain	<input type="checkbox"/> Germany
<input type="checkbox"/> Bulgaria	<input type="checkbox"/> France	<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico
<input type="checkbox"/> Stratford-Ontario		
4. Melvyn Bragg says that the playwright is the 'best candidate' for what? Complete. 'For a .....'
5. What has contributed to a revival in Shakespeare's popularity of the last ten years?
6. Complete Ben Jonson's words about Shakespeare cited at the end of the extract.

Ben Jonson says that he was, 'not ..... but for all time.'

### Part 2

**1** In Part 2 writer Anthony Holden speaks about things that would surprise Shakespeare if he could see how the world reacts to his work today. Watch and listen then answer true or false to the following.

1. Shakespeare thought his poetry was more important than his plays. ☐ T ☐ F
2. Shakespeare would be very surprised at the popularity of his plays. ☐ T ☐ F
3. His plays are performed above all in Europe. ☐ T ☐ F
4. They have been performed for over 600 years. ☐ T ☐ F
5. Shakespeare may not have realised how talented he was. ☐ T ☐ F

### Discussion

**2** Have you seen any performances of Shakespeare's works? If so, which? Did you enjoy it/them? Why? Why not? Discuss in class your opinions of any of his works you've seen.