

Shakespeare's Globe theatre aims to take 'Hamlet' production on world tour



An Aug. 1, 2007, photo from files showing a general view of The Globe Theatre, central London. The London theater says it plans to tour a production of "Hamlet" to every country in the world, 205 nations in all. The small-scale production, performed by a cast of eight, will tour the world between April 2014 and April 23, 2016 — the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. (AP / PA, Stephen Kelly, File)

Jill Lawless, The Associated Press
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LONDON -- Shakespeare's Globe theatre is about to take the Bard's words literally -- "All the world's a stage."

The London theatre announced Tuesday that it plans to tour a production of "Hamlet" to every country in the world, some 205 nations and territories in all.

The small-scale production, performed by a cast of eight, will tour the world between April 2014 and April 23, 2016 -- the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

"By train, coach, plane and boat, we aim to take this wonderful, iconic, multifarious play to as many fresh ears as we possibly can," said artistic director Dominic Dromgoole.

The target of 205 nations and territories could vary a little, and exactly what constitutes a country is in some cases contested. The United Nations has 193 member states, while there were 204 teams in the London Olympics.

"We are aware that it is insanely ambitious," said Globe spokeswoman Emma Draper. But she said the company -- and the British Council, a government-backed agency that will support the tour -- believed it was possible.

Venues have yet to be determined, but will include Helsingor in Denmark -- also known as Elsinore, where Shakespeare's tragedy is set -- and Kenya's Rift Valley. The tour will start and end at Shakespeare's Globe, a replica Elizabethan playhouse on the south bank of the River Thames in London.

The tour is the flipside of last year's Globe to Globe festival, which brought troupes from around the world to London to perform Shakespeare's plays in 37 languages.

Theater director Peter Brook said "Hamlet" was "the most all-encompassing" and universal of Shakespeare's plays.

"The six simplest words in the English language are 'to be or not to be,'" he said. "There is hardly a corner of the planet where these words have not been translated.

"To take 'Hamlet' in its original language around the world is a bold and dynamic project," he said.

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