

BELL SHAKESPEARE.



**MEDIA RELEASE
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University of Melbourne and Bell Shakespeare announce new cultural partnership.

University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts and Bell Shakespeare have this evening launched a new cultural partnership inspired by their shared commitment to making Shakespeare accessible for all, prioritising diversity and focusing on Australia and place.



Back row, left to right: James Evans, Philip Crutchfield KC, Peter Evans, Professor Sara Wills, Associate Professor David McKinnis, Jane Hansen AO, Professor Russell Goulbourne and Debra Reinecke; Front row, left to right: Bell Shakespeare actors Lizzie Brennan, Michael Wahr and Katie-Jean Harding

Bell Shakespeare has enjoyed collaborating with University of Melbourne Associate Professor David McKinnis over a number of years. One of the world's most sought-after

Shakespeare experts, McInnis was also recently appointed to Bell Shakespeare's board. Now, both organisations are excited to formalise the collaboration in a cultural partnership.

University of Melbourne has long shared an appreciation of Shakespeare with its students and community and maintained a belief in the power of these complex texts to teach us how to think, not what to think. This partnership provides myriad ways to share knowledge, experience, time and opportunities which over time will benefit students, teaching staff, alumni and members of the public.

For Bell Shakespeare, the partnership will actively increase engagement with Melbourne academics and audiences, collaborating on public programming and consolidating its position as the national Shakespeare company. Like University of Melbourne, Bell Shakespeare wants to provide opportunities for life-long learning that encourage an appreciation of the text in performance and how it relates to our modern and specifically Australian context.

Artistic Director Peter Evans says, *'We believe the plays are a lens through which we can explore and question our present and imagine the future. It is wonderful to formalise this partnership with one of Australia's most highly respected institutions, the University of Melbourne, particularly given they are so genuine in their belief that Shakespeare is for all - not an elite few – which mirrors our own philosophy.'*

University of Melbourne Dean of the Faculty of Arts Reverend Professor Russell Goulbourne said *'The University of Melbourne shares the values that drive Bell Shakespeare – Respect, Imagination, Knowledge and Resilience. Along with Bell Shakespeare, we also want to ensure the legacy of the Bard continues to take its rightful place in the minds of the next generation of our students, and of the community more broadly. We are thrilled to be working with Bell Shakespeare to make this a reality.'*

The partnership was officially launched at a sold-out presentation hosted by Associate Professor David McInnis and featuring Bell Shakespeare's Associate Director James Evans and Bell Shakespeare actors. *A Celebration of the First Folio* marked the 400th anniversary of the publication of the First Folio.