

These Mortals

International ensemble for actor-led multilingual Shakespeare

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Company profile

These Mortals is a new international ensemble built on decades of professional experience. Its name comes from Puck's 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!' We bring artists from different countries, cultures and disciplines together to make inventive, portable Shakespeare. Through precise provocations - clay, found text, movement, rhythm, sound and breath - we free the actor's imagination from the literal and allow each play to reveal its own physical and vocal world.

We work across gender, ethnicity and language, discovering each character through what the actor brings to it. English opens into the performers' own languages, then rhythm, sound, breath and silence. Our first production, WOOD, is a five-performer reimagining of A Midsummer Night's Dream developed through two years of international research. It plays indoors or outdoors with no set, minimal technology and everything carried in two suitcases.

Research and development

- **2024 Twelfth Night, Florence** Paul Brennen and Joe Windley begin their intensive collaboration, exploring where words come from and how they become action.
- **2025 Into the Forest, Norra Backen** The first Midsummer investigation: clay, poetry, place, mother tongue and visible transformation, accompanied by Tattie Chater Davies's original soundscape.
- **2025 The Tempest, Tuscany** A five-day international residency deepening the relationship between language, embodied voice, partner and space.
- **2025 to 2026 London laboratories** Ongoing professional development through Shakespeare scenes, new writing, embodied voice and ensemble practice.
- **2026 Macbeth, Florence** Research into imagination, rhythm and the acoustics of language and scene.
- **2026 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Norra Backen** A second residency led by Paul, Joe and Giaele Mattioli, culminating in a public sharing and the foundations of WOOD.

Creative leads

- **Paul Brennen** Actor, director, writer and teacher. Theatre includes The Duchess of Malfi and Troilus and Cressida with Cheek by Jowl, and Twelfth Night and Three Sisters with Filter Theatre. He has performed in more than twenty Shakespeare plays internationally. His BBC Radio 4 writing includes The Taxman, for which he received a Sony Award; The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner received Fringe awards for writing and directing.
- **Joe Windley** Internationally recognised voice, speech and dialect coach. Trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, where he later led Voice Studies, Joe is a former Head of Voice at RADA. His work connects breath and acoustics to impulse, body, imagination and relationship.
- **Giaele Mattioli** London-based movement director and performer with an MFA from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and a BA (Hons) from London Contemporary Dance School. Her practice brings animal movement, sacred dance and devised physical theatre into dialogue with Commedia dell'Arte, mask work and puppetry.

Working method

Our work frees the actor's imagination from the literal. A partner, target, object, material, place, sound or rhythm provokes action; found text, clay and physical play open routes into the language. Actors may learn the lines by rote so the words live in the body and can be played freely. Imagination first and last; testing and shaping what has been found, moulding it in new ways.