



BEN CRYSTAL

ACTOR / WRITER / PRODUCER

Ben was the co-writer of *Shakespeare's Words* (Penguin 2002) and *The Shakespeare Miscellany* (Penguin 2005) with his father David Crystal. His first solo book, *Shakespeare on Toast – Getting a Taste for the Bard* (Icon 2008) was shortlisted for the 2010 Educational Writer of the Year Award. *Springboard Shakespeare*, a quartet series of introductions for Arden Shakespeare / Bloomsbury - was published

June 2013 and *An Illustrated Dictionary of Shakespeare* was published April 2015 with OUP (writing again with his father).

In 2011 he performed the title role in the world contemporary premier of *Hamlet* in Original Pronunciation, and in 2012 he was the curator and creative director on a CD of *Shakespeare in Original Pronunciation* for the British Library.

He is the artistic director of *Passion in Practice* and its Shakespeare Ensemble. Together they have performed staged readings in OP of *Macbeth*, *Henry V*, and *Dr Faustus* at the Wanamaker Playhouse, Shakespeare's Globe, and produced cue-script rehearsed sold-out limited-runs of these plays at a Wanamaker-like Loft in London.

In 2015, they performed *Pericles* in OP at Daniel Harding's *Interplay* Festival at the Berwaldhallen in Stockholm. *Pericles: Recomposed* was raised in three days, underscored by Max Richter's *Four Seasons: Recomposed*, and played live by the Trondheim Soloists with violinist Daniel Hope.

In 2016, they performed *Twelfth Night* at the Middle Temple for the British Council *Shakespeare Lives!* programme, re-raised *Pericles: Recomposed* for the Savannah Music Festival, and curated the British Library Shakespeare's 450th Birthday Night celebrations.

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passioninpractice.com

The Books

Shakespeare on Toast knocks the stuffing from the staid old myth of Shakespeare, revealing the man and his plays for what they really are: modern, thrilling and uplifting drama.

"A masterclass for modern beginners and old hands alike"

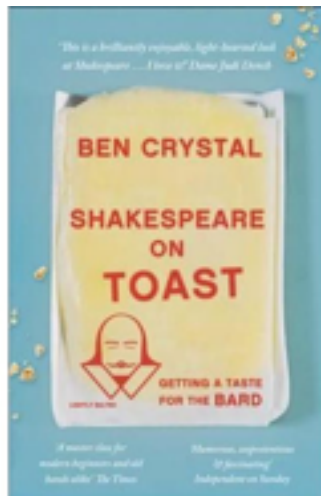
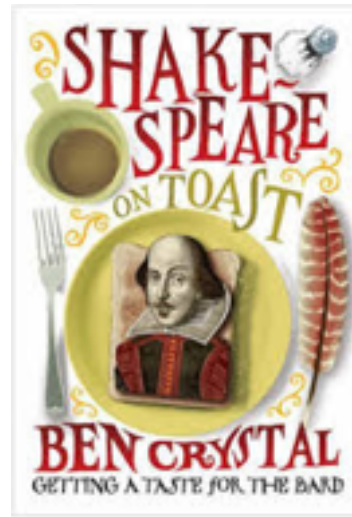
The Times

"Humorous, unpretentious, & fascinating"

Independent on Sunday

"This is a brilliantly enjoyable, light-hearted look at Shakespeare... I love it!"

Dame Judi Dench



Ben Crystal brings the bright words and colourful characters of the world's greatest writer wonderfully to life, offering the key to understanding Shakespeare's plays and unlocking the so-called difficult bits.

Defly told by the Jamie Oliver of Shakespeare, *Shakespeare on Toast* is a fun guidebook that takes us beyond a mere introduction and into exciting territory as a manual to finding Shakespeare's own voice.

www.shakespeareontost.com

Springboard Shakespeare - Pocket guides to Shakespeare's plays

Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth and *Dream* are the most studied and performed of Shakespeare's plays. These accessible introductions offer a springboard into each play, taking a hands-on, performance-based approach, exploring the challenges and the rewards it presents to actors, audiences and students.

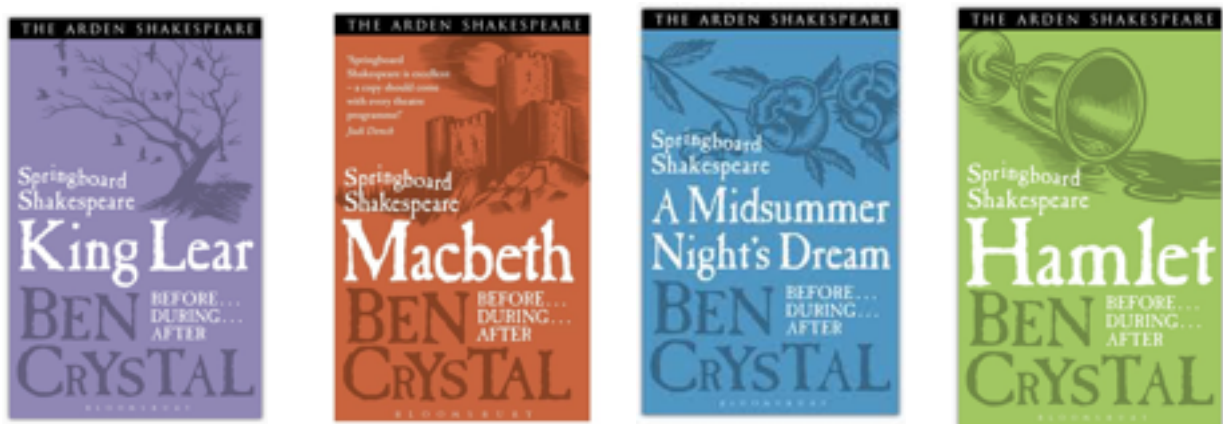
Springboard Shakespeare has a three-part structure: whether you're watching or reading, Ben Crystal takes you through exactly what you need to know Before, During and After the play. He combines a genuine passion and understanding of Shakespeare with his experience as an actor, giving the reader a clear route to thinking about, understanding and enjoying four of Shakespeare's greatest works.

"Springboard Shakespeare is excellent - a copy should come with every theatre programme!"

Dame Judi Dench

"Springboard Shakespeare is the perfect tool for actors, students, theatre-goers and anyone interested in understanding Shakespeare. Ben Crystal has created guides that are a valuable and accessible way to enjoy Shakespeare's genius."

Sir Kenneth Branagh



"Springboard Shakespeare is brisk, punchy and full of illumination!"

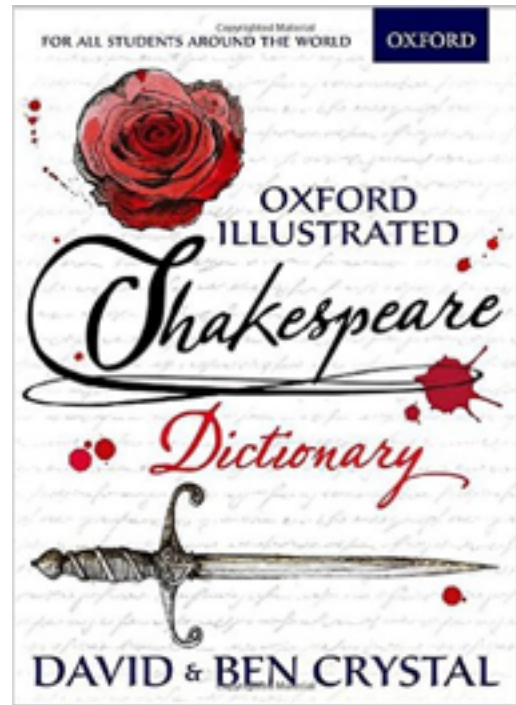
**Dominic Dromgoole, Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe
2006-16**

www.springboardshakespeare.com

***The Oxford Shakespeare Illustrated Dictionary,* with David Crystal**

The *Oxford Illustrated Shakespeare Dictionary* is the first of its kind, a brand new illustrated alphabetical dictionary of all the words and meanings students of Shakespeare need to know. Every word has an example sentence selected from the twelve most studied plays, including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Henry V*.

Usage notes and theatre notes provide additional background to Shakespearean times and the performance of his plays. Further support is provided by language panels on select topics like *the humours*, *swearing*, and *stage directions*, and full-colour illustrated thematic spreads on special feature topics from *clothes* and *armour* to *music* and *recreation*.



The dictionary is easy to use with its clear signposting, accessible design, and expertly levelled contemporary look and feel.

It is the perfect support for a full understanding of Shakespeare,

created by renowned authors Professor David Crystal and actor Ben Crystal, a father and son team who combine for the first time the academic and the theatre, bringing together language, literature, and lexicography in this unique Shakespeare dictionary of global appeal.

The Talks

(all 1hr: 45mins, 15 mins Q&A)

Shakespeare on Toast

This is less of a talk and more of a performance. Ben makes sense of Shakespeare by putting him back into context. Including an exploration of Elizabethan theatre and what a trip to a Shakespeare play in 1600 would be like, a master-class on the poetry style Shakespeare wrote in, and a look at Original Pronunciation (the accent Shakespeare would have spoken in).

This is relevant for all ages - younger people experiencing the Bard for the first time through to older audience members who love Shakespeare and want to learn something new...

Shakespeare - Love, Sex & Comedy

Diving through Shakespeare's writings of love, sex and comedy, Ben Crystal ('the Jamie Oliver of Shakespeare' **BBC Radio 5**), rediscovers the Bard as master dramatist: a true man of the theatre, who had a terrific sense of what makes a captivating play.

The theatres Shakespeare wrote for were two-way, dynamic – a shared experience with the audience, an afternoon's journey of love, betrayal, death, lust, comedy and, sometimes, the odd song. The author of *Shakespeare on Toast* tackles Shakespeare's attitude to love, sex and comedy, and finds a lot more tragedy than comedy, more betrayal than love, and more mystery than sex...

Shakespeare's Sonnets

The sonnets... Thought to be the Bard's autobiography by some, but by others... something else entirely. Written in his early career while the theatres were closed, these densely packed poems can be seen as 154 mini-experiments, as Shakespeare flexed his quill, warming up to write his plays.

Modern readings make them sound beautiful though the rhymes often now don't work - but spoken in Shakespeare's accent they once more become wonderful, earthy declarations of love. Ben Crystal reintroduces these poems as heart-breaking works, begging to be spoken out-loud...

Shakespeare, Language and the Elizabethan Mind

What would it have been like to go to the theatre in Shakespeare's time? How did his plays tap into his audience's views on life and love? How did the social, cultural and political developments of the time shape his writing?

His audience had a tremendous ability to suspend their disbelief, and a great appetite for story-telling; they would have been thrilled by his language play, by the new words he invented and by the semi-familiar worlds he and his actors took them to. His works are revitalised when seen through the eyes and minds of the people he was trying to entertain. And his London was going through a period of great change, as the language was being reinvented, and the world was rocked with the death of Elizabeth, and James' accession to the English throne.

Actor and author Ben Crystal (*Shakespeare's Words, Shakespeare on Toast*) dives into the hearts, minds, ears and words of Shakespeare's world.

Original Pronunciation

What did Shakespeare's accent - and that of his actors and audience - sound like? What can we learn from hearing and speaking his works in that accent? And with no recordings or transcriptions available to us, how do we know?

Actor and author Ben Crystal (*Shakespeare's Words, Shakespeare on Toast*) explores the fascinating 400 year old sound of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, *Original Pronunciation*, showing a world hidden beneath our modern accent readings full of rhyme, rhythm, and a very subtle humour. And a not-so-subtle one too.

Hamlet - the contemporary World Premiere in Original Pronunciation

What is it like to play Hamlet, arguably the greatest character ever written in the English language?

From an email out of the blue, actor and author (Shakespeare on Toast, Springboard Shakespeare, Shakespeare's Words) finds himself on a year-long roller-coaster ride, performing the lead role in the modern contemporary world premiere of Hamlet in Original Pronunciation/

Join actor and author Ben Crystal as he is propelled from London to the dry Nevada desert, into a world of psychology, philosophy, and some of the greatest lines ever written.

The Once and Future Shakespeare

As we approach Shakespeare's 450th birthday celebration, what do the next 50 years hold for his works?

Actor and producer Ben Crystal, author of Shakespeare on Toast, Springboard Shakespeare, and co-author of Shakespeare's Words and the Shakespeare's Miscellany) discusses why our current approach to Shakespeare's works may need to change, how we can learn from the practices of the past to see our way forward, and the dramatic effect these lessons may have on the existing canon.

Excerpts from Shakespeare will be performed by Ben and members of his Shakespeare ensemble. All trained in cue-script rehearsal techniques, where each is only given their lines, and the first encounter with one's fellow actors is on stage, in front of a paying audience...

Speaking the bright and beautiful English of Shakespeare

The guardian of English poetry, the inventor of over 1,000 words still in use today, and one of the greatest players with our language, Shakespeare has given us a treasure trove of English to read - funny how so much of it doesn't make sense until it's spoken out-loud.

Actor and author Ben Crystal explores the accent, the theatrical conventions, and the world of Shakespeare, to reveal a bright and beautiful English.

Terms & Conditions for performances, talks & workshops (2016)

Every talk is delivered without notes, tailored to each particular venue and audience.

Commissions accepted.

Workshops given.

All performances, talks and workshops include a Q&A in which participants can pose questions on any aspect of Shakespeare, not just the topic of the preceding session(s)

For sessions involving extra actors, additional fees apply based on Equity rates, plus expenses

Package/honorarium rates can be negotiated

Have Bard, Will Travel

Expenses

Day travel to venue plus overnight accommodation for two people may be required, depending on the location of the venue

Cancellation/Postponement Policy:

In the event of cancellation or postponement of confirmed events, the following charges apply:

notification 30 days or less in advance: 100% of the agreed fee

notification 31-60 days in advance: 50% of the agreed fee

notification 61-90 days in advance: 25% of the agreed fee