Interval Drinks podcast, Series 3

Elizabeth Freestone and Liz Bentley - transcript

Welcome: Welcome to the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Host (Ibraheem Toure): This is Interval Drinks, a podcast in which Royal Shakespeare Company resident artists talk to people who have inspired them over a drink.

Liz: This seems to have been played out and picked up in Shakespeare's writings The climate, the environment, the elements play a particular role.

Host (Ibraheem Toure): That safe space, that brave space that we develop in the rehearsal room and how we take that to our communities and show them that this is the truth and we're using these stories to just access that.

Erica Whyman: In that moment, it's not logical to him that you could be more moved by a play, and yet he knows it's true. He knows it's true that there is something possible at the distance between the audience and the stage that means you can feel things you can't perhaps afford to feel. I mean, you can find yourself in somebody else's tragedy or strife.

Host (Ibraheem Toure): Have you collected your drinks? Okay, let's begin. This week, director and climate activist Elizabeth Freestone will be catching up with Liz Bentley, Chief Executive of the Royal Meteorological Society.

Elizabeth: Welcome to Interval Drinks, the Royal Shakespeare Company podcast in which we talk to people who inspire us. My name is Elizabeth Freestone and I'm a director and I'm also an environmental consultant and activist, and I'm the director of a most recent production of The Tempest at the RSC, which played in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre early in 2023. I'm here talking to the amazing Liz Bentley, who is the chief executive of the Royal Meteorological Society. Hello, Liz. Thank you for coming to talk to me. Do you want to just introduce yourself to our listeners and tell everyone a little bit about what you do?

Liz: Thanks, Elizabeth. Yes. So I'm a meteorologist and I've worked in meteorology for over 30 years now. I grew up in Yorkshire on top of the Pennines, and the weather was always a little bit more extreme up there. I think a career in meteorology was on the cards for me, probably in my early teens. I went on to do a degree in mathematics and a PhD in mathematics before joining the Met Office. The Met Office is one of the biggest employers of meteorologists in the UK and I probably spent about half of my career in the Met Office in forecasting roles, in research roles and moving into kind of more managerial roles as I went through that time. Then had a stint at the BBC looking after the BBC Weather Centre, a stint in government working with the Ministry of Defence before I joined the Royal Meteorological Society about 13 years ago. And I've been here in various roles, most recently as Chief executive.

Elizabeth: Wow! Thank you. That couldn't be more impressive as a CV. And obviously I'm dying to ask you about the MOD and all the secrets that you got up to, but I won't because that's that's a different podcast. I must just ask you, though, about how talking about and interrogating the weather has changed over that time as we have learnt more and more about the climate emergency and that means. How is that shifted.

Liz: For climate particularly, it has changed enormously. So I've probably been involved in climate change communication for about 15 years. At the beginning, most of that conversation was around 'Is climate change real?' If you did media interviews, you would probably put up against the climate skeptic, and that has changed. There are still some skeptics out there, but the conversation has changed and people readily accept that our climate is changing. So people now are more interested in understanding what the impacts of climate change are going to be, and particularly what can I do? What can we do as individuals to help mitigate and to adapt to a changing climate? And my role here at the Royal Met Society has changed in trying to educate people and empower people to come on this journey with us.

Elizabeth: So it seems like one of those key bits of education is about helping people understand the difference between weather and climate, which are two very different ideas actually, and they're often, I think, used interchangeably. I just wonder if you could sort of explain to us that difference.

Liz: Yeah. So we're all very familiar with weather. It's around us all the time. Hot and cold, wet and dry. We see the weather forecasts every day. You know, we talk about the weather with strangers. It's part of our everyday life. And we can measure the weather using instruments. So we have thermometers to measure temperature and we have barometers to measure air pressure. And we keep a record of these measurements and we can see how the weather varies over different timescales and at different locations. Climate is the average of that weather data and it's typically averaged over a 30 year period. So if you were going on holiday somewhere, I don't know, maybe you're going to Sydney in Australia, you would have a look and see what the weather might be like at a certain time of year and you'd be looking at the climate of weather in Sydney. So if you went to Sydney in April, you'd expect the temperature to be about 23 degrees and you might expect there to be a certain amount of rainfall that month, and that's the climatology of Sydney. When you get there, the weather could be something completely different. So it could be hotter or colder than that, wetter or drier than that. And so quite simply the climate is kind of what you expect to happen and the weather is actually what happens. And a nice analogy that we use when we talk about weather and climate is your wardrobe. So the wardrobe you have at home effectively makes up your climate. So if you live in the UK, you'll have a range of winter clothes and summer clothes. If you live in a cold climate, you'll have more winter clothes and less summer clothes and vice versa. And the weather is the item of clothing that you choose for that particular day.

Elizabeth: Thank you. That's very helpful and very clear. My brother will probably listen to this podcast and he will really laugh because as a child I could never pick the right item of clothing for the right day. It could be sunny in December, and so I would put on shorts and a vest. I just kind of I've always kind of managed to get it wrong.

Liz: But the weather changes so much in the UK. It can be winter in the morning and summer in the afternoon. So, you know, we have to be very flexible, don't we?

Elizabeth: Yeah, that's true. So the RSC is one of many organisations that say that they recognise now that we are in a time of climate emergency. But perhaps you could just say something about sort of what exactly that is.

Liz: We keep these long term records of the weather data and that helps us to look at how the climate has changed and it has changed. You know, we've seen significant changes here in the UK and we're seeing global changes as well. So typically records go back to the mid 1800s. So we've got a good 150, 170 years worth of data and particularly in the last three decades we've seen temperatures increase globally and we've seen our weather patterns change as well. So since pre-industrial times, so the mid 1800s, our global average temperatures have increased by 1.2°C. It doesn't sound like very much, but it actually has a huge significant change in our weather patterns and in our temperature extremes. And so what we're seeing are many more heat extremes, so more frequent heat wave events that are more prolonged. And when they happen, they're much more intense. So we get these record breaking events like we saw in the UK in 2022, where we, you know, we exceeded 40°C. Now, I never thought in my lifetime as a meteorologist we would see 40 degrees plus in the UK. We saw it for the first time in the forecast that predicts our weather last year and it actually happened for real.

Elizabeth: Can you just take us into that moment? And so what was it like then when you know, you and your colleagues saw that that prediction was coming in?

Liz: We weren't expecting it this early. The first signal was in the models, the climate, the weather models that we use day to day. We could see some of them going for 40 degrees plus a few days in advance. And there was a lot of discussion with meteorologists that I've never seen this before. We've never seen this in models. How likely is it to happen? You know, there's some good confidence there in the model, but, you know, it's probably unlikely to be that extreme. And then as we got closer to the time, oh my goodness, this is going to happen. And normally when we get these record events, they're quite localized. So you might find that there's a few places in London because of the urban heat island effect that have a higher temperature. This was widespread heat pretty much all the way across England and into Wales. And I think that was, you know, the real kind of, it hit home that this is you know, this is really extreme. We're not built for 40 degrees plus our infrastructure, our you know, we don't have air conditioning readily in our houses. If you live in the Mediterranean, you're geared up for temperatures into the high 30s and possibly into the 40s. We're not here. So our infrastructure starts to break down and it has a real impact on our health. It's a

real difficult challenge for us in the UK because we tend to celebrate heat, but actually there's some real negative connotations.

Liz: Once the temperature gets above 27°C, our bodies really start to struggle and particularly nighttime temperatures that are high. Our bodies don't have time to rest and so mortality rates start to increase. It is a real problem and we have to get that message out to the public that heat isn't a good thing. If we look at our climate models and the projections in the future, we're looking at hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. And last year painted that picture. We had our first heat warnings coming out, a red warning for heat last summer. And that's there really for us as the public to kind of take action. But it's really there for the frontline assistants because the people that are most vulnerable are the very old, probably in care homes, possibly in hospitals. Those buildings aren't built for that kind of heat. And therefore, those people are not being protected by an environment that keeps them cool. And the very young are also very vulnerable as well. You know, babies don't have, the bodies don't regulate that heat. So it becomes a real challenge. And it's how we can provide assistance and guidance to those people to protect themselves. So we have to become much more resilient to our changing climate.

Elizabeth: I'm quite interested in the idea of sort of vulnerability, and it was something we talked about a lot in our rehearsal process in The Tempest, because it's set on this island. The text sort of supports the idea that the island is somewhere in the Mediterranean because the characters say that they're travelling from North Africa and they're heading back to Italy. There are also some suppositions that perhaps it's somewhere in the in the Caribbean. We deliberately didn't set it anywhere specific. I was very conscious of not wanting to give the impression that it's just a low lying island somewhere else in the world, that is in danger. We know from our research and colleagues who came in and helped us with some of that that we are low lying islands around the UK. I just wonder if you could share some thoughts about about how islands in particular might be affected by these extreme weather events.

Liz: I guess the big thing is sea level rise, a warmer world. It's not just heat on the land, but it's heat in the ocean. And a warmer ocean, basically takes up more volume. We call it thermal expansion. So the volume of the water takes up greater space and therefore sea level rises. Also, a warmer world means glaciers melt, land ice melts, and that flows

into the oceans as well. So there are two mechanisms that are causing sea level rise, and we've seen about 28cm of sea level rise since the pre-industrial times. Now, if you live on an island nation, that has a huge impact. So again, if you look at somewhere like the Solomon Islands, they've lost six of their islands in the last 50, 60 years or so because of sea level rise. And there are other islands like the Maldives, a place called Tuvalu. Again, you may remember it was around Cop26, which happened in Glasgow a couple of years ago, the Foreign Minister for Tuvalu did a press conference and he was stood in the sea next to his island. He had his suit on. He'd rolled his trouser legs up and he was knee deep in water. But his key message was to get across that, you know, quite simply his island is sinking.

Elizabeth: Thinking more about the kinds of people who are who are sort of at most at risk and feel sort of vulnerable. I think I'm right in saying the climate crisis is sort of projected or certainly is impacting women disproportionately around the world. And our production featured a female Prospero. So it was very much centred about a mother daughter relationship and them being in a survival situation effectively on a, you know, on an island where they were sort of having to scavenge and repurpose whatever had detritus had washed up in order to live. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about why exactly that is.

Liz: You're right. The most people are at risk of climate change are women. And if you think about more developing nations, so poorer countries, it tends to be women who work the land, are involved in kind of farm land, agricultural practices to provide food sources for their community. They spend longer hours hunting for food, for fuel, for water. They're struggling to grow crops, and that's already happening. So when these climate disasters strike, it's women that perish more. Clearly we recognise that at the moment we see that's a problem and it's going to get worse as we go forward. But I guess there's an optimistic view on this, is that women have a valuable kind of insight into how we can better manage these risks around climate change because they're having to deal with it on a day to day basis. So if we can get them to share their experiences, their traditional knowledge to help us manage natural resources, I think we can learn a lot from that. And I think that's something that the United Nations is doing. So they have a United Nations women's group and they pull together, you know, women who are having to deal with this now, the experiences and knowledge that they've gained so that we can share, that we can help to mitigate, to help to reduce that

warming influence in future, but more importantly, to become more resilient to climate change.

Elizabeth: Just going back to what you were saying about time, actually the length of time it takes for an activity now to sort of impact and manifest itself in climate and how that appears to us sort of later down the line. And I know that's something that people often talk about. You know, what is the little difference that I make now? It's not a sort of straightforward in our in our imaginations anyway. It's not a kind of a direct cause, you know, sort of cause and effect. And I know some people were sort of, thinking about the storm at the beginning of The Tempest and going, Oh, well, well, it's human. You know, it doesn't it's not related to the climate emergency because it's human made, because Prospero is kind of making it. And but for me, that's sort of the point. Of course, it's human made. You know, we are the weather makers now through our, you know, hubris. We are now directly impacting the weather that we all sort of have to live with. So how can we sort of help people draw that line, I guess, between our personal actions and the state of the world?

Liz: Yeah. And this is something I get asked an awful lot as we've gone through this last decade and we've seen climate change playing out on our doorstep here and now, it's much easier to kind of have that urgency in the conversation. So the next question is, is that call to action really. We have a responsibility here in the UK. We are one of the main reasons why our climate has changed. If you look back at the the carbon emissions that the UK and the Commonwealth has, you know, emitted into the atmosphere over the last 150 years or so, we have made a huge contribution to that. If you think carbon dioxide stays in the atmosphere for longer than a hundred years, so things we were emitting a hundred years ago are still in the atmosphere causing climate change. We had a huge role to play and we have a huge role to play in reducing our carbon emissions going forward. I encourage individuals to do things, but I also encourage people to do it on a community level. Coming together as a community, whether that's a locality community - your village, your town, or whether it's a group of people who are have similar interests coming together to do something. The key for me is giving people the information of what the best activities are. So let me just give you a quick example. An average person in the UK emits about eight and a half tonnes of carbon every year and that varies. So if you're a wealthy person, it's probably double

that. And if you're a poor person it's probably about two and a half tonnes of carbon. So eight and a half is your average.

Liz: A lot of us recycle because we think that's making an important contribution to reducing our carbon footprint. Recycling accounts for about 0.01 tonnes of our carbon emissions. It's really small, it's important and I would encourage people to carry on doing that, but it's a really small part. The big things are around our energy consumption and our transportation. So if you drive a car and you decided to become car free, completely car free, you could save two and a half tonnes of carbon a year. And even if you transferred from a petrol or diesel car to an electric car, that's about two tonnes. So that's a massive difference that you can make by making a conscious decision about your transport. And renewable energy, so if you if you move from an energy supplier that relies on oil and gas to a renewable energy supplier, again, that's about two tonnes of carbon. And that doesn't make any physical difference to me, it's just my supplier, really. I might even save some money by doing that as well, but people aren't aware of that. We think recycling is a good thing and we think recycling is making a huge impact and it has an impact. But there are bigger things that are happening and yet people aren't aware of that. And so I see my role as as educating people, giving people the information and empowering them to go and make those changes.

Liz: You've co-written the anthology 100 Plays to Change the World, these 100 plays that address the climate crisis. Where did your interest come in climate change and environmental issues? What triggered your emotion?

Elizabeth: I've been on quite a what now feels like quite a sort of a slow burn. That's not a deliberate pun, a slow burn sort of journey. I had a very rural upbringing and I've always kind of lived in and amongst the natural world. And then for some years I ran a rural touring company where we were commissioning work specifically for small communities. So new plays and I think doing that really focused my mind on different kinds of communities who were actually kind of living on the front line of this already because of various challenges that they were going through, and that could be biodiversity loss impacting agricultural output. I began to see it in the context of the climate crisis and then through some other work I then did as a freelance director - I then did quite a lot of traveling around the world - I suddenly thought, 'Gosh, we're actually amongst it right now.' When the pandemic hit, I found myself working as a

carpenter, working in a small company, with materials. And I was thinking a lot about then about where this would come from and how we were recycling some of these materials. And again, my body sort of got very invested in a kind of a different way of being in the world.

Elizabeth: And at the same time, I decided that I would do a master's degree. And so I did a master's in environmental humanities, which effectively is about how the arts can better communicate the narrative of the climate crisis. And it was inspiring and galvanizing and terrifying all at the same time. And I kind of came out of that year, that first sort of pandemic year, realising actually that activism in the arts can play a really useful role. So anyway, as part of all of that, I then I started wanting to look at actually existing plays in the world that were speaking about the climate crisis. My wife and I decided that we would write this book called 100 Plays to Change the World, because we realized that there are so many of them already out there and people don't necessarily think that they are. There are lots of ways of reading the classic plays, reading, you know, Chekhov or Ibsen or Shakespeare through a climate prism, whether it's The Cherry Orchard or King Lear. But there are also new plays being written all over the world from writers who are directly experiencing the effects of the climate crisis. Then it became very clear that writers who are from communities most at risk are writing actually the most thrilling, exciting, funny, strange, brave work.

Elizabeth: Writers from Australia, for example, or from South America, are writing about the Amazon burning, or they're writing about, you know, the forest fires or sort of whatever it is. And so we just had this extraordinary amount of amazing material that we felt should have a wider audience. And so we put this anthology of plays together. You can go into a project like that and slightly think, Oh, are they all going to just be about polar bears? Or, you know, is every play going to have a polar bear in it? Or are they all about, you know, the ice melting? And of course they're not, because the climate crisis manifests in so many different ways for so many different communities. And it was sort of very revelatory thinking that actually you can have a fantastic night out at the theatre, like really, you know, funny and moving and go on an amazing journey with the characters, but be in conversation, you know, or be asked to be in conversation with what's happening in the world and what the human impact of our behavior is happening in the world.

Liz: So you say there's hundreds of plays out there that have this, but what particularly led you towards The Tempest?

Elizabeth: I guess the obvious open door is that it starts with probably the most freak weather event in certainly Shakespeare in theatre history. But very quickly, I think I went beyond that into realising that it's a play about living with the elements, actually, and how to live better with the elements and better with ourselves. It's a play also about healing and redemption and hope. Nobody, apart from Ariel actually as a spirit, is from this island. Everybody, Caliban arrived, you know, in his mummy's tummy and then Prospero and Miranda arrived and then all the team from Milan and Naples kind of arrive. And it's a great leveller. Shakespeare does that amazing thing of putting everybody in the same survival situation. So hierarchy goes out the window. Anybody could be anything on that island. And it really began to speak to me about actually in the face of an environmental crisis. We are humanity. You know, you might think that you're in the West and that you can build yourself a bunker, but it's you know, the roaring sea does not care for you. I think there's an amazing line in the play 'what care these roarers for the name of a king.' I think the crisis itself is a great leveller and it felt really important then to me in the making of the show that it was hopeful. It feels very easy to me to make kind of dystopian work, do a very bleak production, and it's all kind of, you know, grey and stark and everyone's kind of really angry and sort of messed up.

Elizabeth: To me, that's a very easy choice. It's the harder choice, but the more, I think, exciting choice to say, well, actually, here's a way we can heal. Here's what a future could look like. So we deliberately sort of made this very hopeful show, that tries to tell the story that you can heal the planet and heal each other at the same time. So in the course of our production, the detritus on the island - so it's set on this toxic island, it's covered in, you know, covered in human waste and oil and everything - it actually gets completely cleaned up and all of the rubbish is recycled. It becomes used as puppetry in the show. And then all of it kind of gets cleansed as the characters learn to be better about themselves. I was very conscious that often a lot of young people study The Tempest at school, so I kind of knew that we would have a fair amount of students watching the show, sort of primary and secondary and college students, and they are a generation who really suffer from eco anxiety. They're really struggling with it. And again, that's part of the reason why I wanted it to present this very positive version of the future at the end. Theatre is traditionally a very high waste industry. We have been

really guilty in the past of building amazing pieces of sets and costumes and props, kind of creating it all from scratch, often from very unsustainable materials.

Elizabeth: And then we use them on the on our shows for, you know, eight, ten, 12 weeks, however long the run is. And then they just get scrapped at the end because the next show is coming in. It's also quite a resource high industry with the amount of tech as well. Lighting was traditionally made from tungsten. The carbon footprint of that is kind of shocking to sort of think about now and industry wide. There's been a fairly recent awareness of that and a shift in behaviour. So we now use different kinds of lighting and etc. So on this particular production, because I was trying to highlight the kind of climate narrative, it felt really important to me that the way in which we made that mirrored - that the form and function were all telling the same story. And so we set ourselves quite a high goal with this, that we would not make anything new, not make anything from scratch. So the set is made from previous productions. So the designer Tom Piper and I went around the RSC stores and we also taken bits from previous shows that we've both done. So we started talking to other theatres and saying, okay, we'd like to keep that and share that, which has opened up this kind of lovely - going back to community - conversation about it that we can all kind of do it together.

Elizabeth: We worked with a local to Stratford-upon-Avon litter picking company called Rubbish Friends who are volunteers and they go around Stratford and they clear our river and its environs from rubbish. So we worked with them and they collected all of the rubbish that is then used in the show. Our props department went on beach cleaning expeditions, so they went and picked up real detritus from the UK's beaches and brought that back. And then we washed it all and we made sure it was all kind of safe to use. And when we started rehearsals, we started with a room full of rubbish. We didn't go in knowing exactly what we were going to do with it all or how we how it was going to be used in the show. But we started with creative and environmental provocation. We worked with a local local woodland trust and a local forest who coppiced bits of tree for us to provide all of the organic material, because in the show there's a big sort of reveal of a forest at the end. We did everything we really could. All of the costumes are from the RSC stores, reused upcycled. It takes a long time, you know, it's a very different way of making theatre. You have to be really thorough and really rigorous and kind of hold your nerve actually a lot of the time and go, 'No, we can't have that, so let's do this instead.'

Liz: And that's really powerful for me because the play itself has a narrative and there's an educational kind of focus around the climate crisis, but the action of purposely deciding to do it in a sustainable way is extremely valuable.

Elizabeth: So, Liz, there are lots of sort of scholars now who are starting to look at Shakespeare's plays and think about what the environment was like when he was writing. We now know that he was writing at a time which I think people call the Little Ice Age, where temperatures were for quite a long period below the average. I just wonder if you might be able to tell us a little bit about what that exactly was and I suppose how that might have affected his society at the time.

Liz: So this is a really interesting period. So as you say, we call it the Little Ice Age. It's a period that started in about 1300 where temperatures dropped away. And there's a couple of suggestions of why that might have happened linked with solar activity. So the sun might have been less active for a period of time. We may have had some significant volcanic eruptions, which leads to kind of temporary cooling and the kind of Earth's weather patterns could have been a little bit different, leading to certain areas getting much cooler conditions, particularly the European region having that. So 1560 through to 1600 was probably the coolest extent where it was more extreme. Temperatures were probably about two degrees Celsius colder than the average doesn't sound very much. But actually that had a significant impact on the climate, particularly in Europe and North America. And so what we experienced in Europe were, I think, heavier rainfall events, much cooler temperatures during that period. If you go back a generation to Henry VIII, the climate was that little bit more temperate. So even within a change of generation, Henry VIII's climate would have been less severe, probably have less impact on agriculture and impact on humans. Whereas once we once we moved into that Elizabethan period, the climate changed quite dramatically in just a generation.

Liz: And so this seems to have been played out and picked up in Shakespeare's writings. The climate, the environment, the elements play a particular role. We've tried to collate historical record from things like ice cores so we can look at what the climate might have looked like by drilling down deep into ice cores and looking at the air bubbles in the ice core and having a look at the amount of greenhouse gases that we had in the atmosphere and so forth, We can look at tree rings as well. So depending on

whether it was a warm year or a cold year, we get a difference in the thickness of a tree ring so we can learn. So it was a period of time where we didn't have a huge amount of data. Actually, the writings of Shakespeare have helped to piece that together. And as you say, you know, this was probably a period of time where the weather was that more extreme, more storms, colder weather, heavier impact on agriculture and farming and on us as humans living in those climates. We had frost fairs. The River Thames was freezing over on a regular basis. So a very different climate than we live in today.

Elizabeth: Some of the things that Shakespeare said about the weather in Verona or something, for example, and think, Oh God, he was wrong. He must have not known anything about that. But actually he's probably a really helpful sort of environmental time capsule actually, that we can read a lot of what was really happening there. And I think what's beginning to happen now is that people are looking at those plays and going, oh, actually, maybe the I don't know, maybe the food riots in I don't know, in Coriolanus are actually, you know, actually because of what was happening climatically at that time, and maybe the storms in the famous kind of storm plays of you know Lear and The Tempest and Pericles and Comedy of Errors where actually there was loads of storms in Shakespeare plays and suddenly you go, of course, that was probably his sort of lived experience. I think often he's seen as this writer of this kind of golden age, and there was this very bucolic English landscape. And, you know, it was all kind of dreamy Forest of Arden and lots of sort of sprites kind of jumping around the place. The grass was green and the environment was very stable.

Elizabeth: But of course, we now know it wasn't because, you know, partly because of the little Ice age, but also because at his time that was the beginnings of industrialisation. People changing their heating in their homes from wood to coal happened in Shakespeare's lifetime. And you can chart that through the plays where he starts introducing words to do with coal and coke and sea coal and everything. Deforestation began to happen in his lifetime. And I find it very interesting now to sort of look at the plays and sort of go, okay, maybe there's much more in these visually and in the language that we could unlock that can actually speak to the crisis today in very revealing ways. You know, I sometimes think that what I'm doing as a theatre maker is a bit like your kind of 0.01% of recycling, like it has such a tiny... realistically in the world, it might be a small, very small percentage of the audience come out of the of a show and

it's slightly alters their worldview in some form. Do you think that the arts generally can help in this, kind of how we communicate the narrative of the climate crisis?

Liz: Absolutely. We all have a role to play I think as educators. I can reach certain audiences. I've got people who connect with me because of their interest in weather and climate, but I struggle to reach audiences that, you know, are, I guess, less science focused. So we do a lot of work at the Royal Met Society to try and connect through art and music because we can reach very different audiences of people and get those messages out. For me, it's about trying to take people on a journey of this behavioural change, and that starts with knowledge. It starts with education. So anything that we can do in any of our industries and communities to to get those messages across, factual information. To do it in a way that is interesting, stimulating, it resonates with a certain audience. They leave the theatre asking questions, interested in finding out more. This is part of that kind of journey. But I think it's not just the narrative, as I said earlier, it's actually the physical. The fact that you decided to make the whole event sustainable, to really think consciously about your actions, not just the narrative. And I think that is the powerful message here because we can talk and we can educate people, but it's action that's needed. So there's a body called Albert that work within TV production. And if you ever watch a television program at the end, it often comes up with Albert the certification that this program has been done sustainably. And I wonder whether there's a body within theatre.

Elizabeth: Yeah, there is a sort of a similar initiative called the Green Book, which is a series of guidance really for theatre makers, whether it's anything from how we make a show to how we encourage an audience to travel to a show, you know, everything that we can sort of do. And it definitely has traction and I think is being implemented in really inventive and brilliant ways across the industry. For me, the next step of that actually is joining up conversations and in thinking of ourselves as one community that can share resources, certainly share our physical resources like our sets and our costumes and in I think in much more sort of dynamic and equitable ways sort of across how we're all kind of working.

Liz: There's a growing swell of people who really want to make a change, want to do something. It feels to me like we're reaching that tipping point where it will become normal for people to go on this climate journey. At the moment, it still feels like it's not

quite part of our normal day to day kind of routine to kind of question and think and make these decisions, but doesn't feel like we're far away. That if the people around us, our communities, our neighbours, our friends, our family are kind of doing something, you tend to follow, You think it's normal to do that. And I think once we start to really get to that tipping point, I think we'll see, you know, a significant change quite quickly.

Elizabeth: Yeah, I totally agree. I think we're just about, aren't we, on that level of what's now going to be socially acceptable and what isn't. And I think the next couple of years that's really going to happen. We've got lots of very lovely reviews for the show, but the best review for me was one of the local papers here. The Stratford Observer said that the headline was 'The Tempest leads to surge of interest in litter picking'. And I think the local community groups have been inundated with people wanting to get involved. And I don't take that as just credit from the show, but actually it demonstrates that, like you say, there is appetite now for people to kind of be physically proactive in how they how we all change. Liz, we're sort of very nearly at time. I feel like the interval bell is ringing and we're soon to be back in.

Welcome: Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. The performance is about to continue.

Elizabeth: So I must just ask you a final question. Who would you like to have a drink with, an interval drink with? And what might you have?

Liz: I was fortunate enough to go and see The Tempest and I went with my daughter. So she was a great companion. But I have a more climate kind of focused companion. My drink was a G and T. I did have an interval drink, a gin and tonic, sustainable gin, preferably from a carbon neutral company again. So the person I would want to have a conversation with is a lady called Eunice Foote, who was an American scientist and a women's rights campaigner. She was born in 1819, but she was the first scientist, not the first female scientist, but the first scientist to conclude that there were certain gases in our atmosphere that when exposed to sunlight, would warm. So the greenhouse gases that we know about today, and this was back in the 1800s. So a real inspiration to me as a scientist, but as a female scientist of that time. So yeah, I'd love to have an interval drink with Eunice.

Elizabeth: Can I come too, please? I'd like to have a chat with her as well. Well, thank you so much, Liz, for sharing all of your insight with us. I found that really fascinating. Thanks, everybody for listening and enjoy your sustainable carbon neutral G and Ts.

Host (Ibraheem Toure): Join me, Ibrahim Toure, next week when I'll be catching up with director, theatre maker and artistic director of Trybe House Theatre, Philip J Morris. Remember, you can listen again to past episodes on the Royal Shakespeare Company website. Just search RSC Interval drinks.