

Case study

Raising awareness through digital animation

Royal Shakespeare Company's
Midsummer Night's Dreaming trailer
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Background

In June 2013 the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) collaborated with Google+ to produce a digital theatre project, *Midsummer Night's Dreaming*. The project was launched in May 2013, with the use of a "Billy Shakespeare" animated trailer to explain the play synopsis to potential new audiences.

Objectives

- Succinctly explain the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in advance of the project
- Have a trailer with a "share-ability" factor to spread the word about the project
- Create engaging and inclusive content – viewers don't need to be a Shakespeare / RSC buff to enjoy the video
- A trailer which isn't what audiences would expect from the RSC

Target audience

- RSC core audiences
- General theatre audiences with an interest in digital
- Educators – the video can be used as a learning resource
- International audiences – who perhaps want to engage with the RSC in a digital way

Process

The Billy Shakespeare character was created by [The Brothers McLeod](#) and had been used in previous video content commissioned by the RSC.

When it came to launching the digital project *Midsummer Night's Dreaming* we wanted to produce a launch trailer that would capture the imaginations of our audiences, and appeal to those people who perhaps don't have a lot of prior knowledge about Shakespeare or the RSC.

We already knew that the previous content created for us by The Brothers McLeod had proved popular with audiences, and by working with Google we knew that video content would be shared in a way our content hadn't been shared before – we wanted something that would be "sticky", that YouTube users as well as RSC audiences would want to share. Animation lent itself perfectly to the project, which is about digital experimentation and positioning the RSC differently as a digital innovator.

The trailer was the main content we had available for launch and it was used in email, on social media and embedded in news websites (eg *The Guardian*) and blogs.

Outcomes

To date the trailer has had over 390,000 views on YouTube and most importantly raised awareness of the project and the RSC. Having tangible content to offer news websites and blogs meant that the launch story reached a number of outlets.

Off the back of the trailer Billy Shakespeare became an integral part of the *Midsummer Night's Dreaming* project, with his own Google+ page and a familiar face in the online community.

Key points for effective practice

- Have a clear idea of what it is you want to communicate to your audiences
- Don't create something too long – online audiences have a short attention span
- Consider that that this may be the first time someone becomes aware of your organisation / project – what will the first impression be, and what will be the call to action, we used annotations on our YouTube video to link through to the website for more information.

Conclusion

In this instance Billy Shakespeare really worked for the RSC. Our collaborators at Google bought into the concept, meaning that they were prepared to share the trailer with their own networks and channels, allowing us to reach a wider audience, many of whom would have been new to the RSC.