



Press Contacts:

Elizabeth Boone, The WNET Group, 212.560.8831, booneb@wnet.org

Press Materials: pbs.org/pressroom or thirteen.org/pressroom

***Great Performances* Traces the History of Shakespeare's First Folio and Spotlights the Impact of Shakespeare on Today's World in New Documentary Premiering Friday, November 17 on PBS**

Narrated by Emmy, Tony and Grammy Award winner Audra McDonald featuring Emmy Award winner Brian Cox and an appearance by King Charles III

With only half of Shakespeare's plays published before his death, often in inaccurate and incomplete versions, the First Folio is the first published collection of William Shakespeare's full plays. Produced seven years after Shakespeare's death, it preserved the other half of the Bard's works including beloved plays like "The Tempest," "Julius Caesar," "Twelfth Night" and "Macbeth" which would have otherwise been lost to time. As Professor Jonathan Bate explains: "The First Folio is the most important secular book in the history of the Western World." The new documentary ***Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio*** premieres Friday, November 17 at 9 p.m. ET on PBS ([check local listings](#)), pbs.org and the [PBS App](#), during the 400th anniversary year of the printing of the First Folio.

Narrated by Emmy, Tony, and Grammy Award winner **Audra McDonald** and from the directors and producers of The WNET Group's *Shakespeare Uncovered*, ***Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio*** tells the story of Shakespeare's fellow actors John Heminges and Henry Condell's enterprise to create the book including the struggle to secure the finance, their difficulty tracing the scripts, the dilemma of choosing between versions of the published plays available, and the challenge of printing the 900-page volume with all the complexities and inadequacies of 17th century printing techniques.

Only approximately 750 First Folios have been printed, and these copies have made their way around the world. ***Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio*** showcases several folios with notable owners including one examined by King Charles III that was owned and cherished by King Charles I right up to his execution that includes the markings he made inside. The film also uncovers the mystery owner of a folio whose owner had remained anonymous for four centuries and was revealed to be the celebrated English poet John Milton. Emmy Award-winning actor **Brian Cox** and wife and fellow actor **Nicole Ansari** also discover more about great American Shakespeare lover and folio collector who amassed a third of all known folios, Henry Folger, and dive deeper into his obsession to possess one particular copy. ***Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio*** also follows the trail of the infamous stolen Durham folio as it made its way across the Atlantic and was finally identified and recovered 20 years later.

Featuring numerous museums and universities, ***Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio*** spotlights the work of the Public Theater in New York City, including their bilingual musical version of “Comedy of Errors” that tours New York’s diverse neighborhoods. The film additionally spotlights 11-year-old students from the Bronx who make their own sense of the tragedy of “Romeo and Juliet,” and also goes behind the scenes of Kenny Leon’s Shakespeare in the Park production of “Hamlet,” set in Atlanta, Georgia that uncovers a Shakespeare who challenges racism and violence in America today.

For more than 50 years on PBS, ***Great Performances*** has provided an unparalleled showcase of the best in all genres of the performing arts, serving as America’s most prestigious and enduring broadcaster of cultural programming. Showcasing a diverse range of artists from around the world, the series has earned 67 Emmy Awards and six Peabody Awards. The [Great Performances website](#) hosts exclusive videos, interviews, photos, full episodes and more. The series is produced by The WNET Group. ***Great Performances*** is available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on [PBS.org](#) and the [PBS App](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO.

Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio is written and directed by Nicola Stockley and produced by Richard Denton. Stephen Segaller is executive producer. For ***Great Performances***, Stephanie Dawson is producer, Bill O’Donnell is series producer and David Horn is executive producer.

Funding for ***Great Performances – Making Shakespeare: The First Folio*** is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Charles & Lucille King Family Foundation. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this film do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Websites: <http://pbs.org/gperf>, <http://facebook.com/GreatPerformances>, [@GPerfPBS](https://twitter.com/GPerfPBS),
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About The WNET Group

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