

had to be good to get across the din and distractions, then'.

The topic is, of course, one of Wanamaker's consuming passions. 'The spirit of those days is what's missing now: the feeling of being out-of-doors, yet surrounded by faces. Today we're tough enough for racing and the Proms, it seems, so why not outdoor theatre? Look at Regent's Park and the summer seasons there.'

And the acoustics? 'I swear that those acoustics are going to be marvellous. Even ATV's set for their Life of Shakespeare had good acoustics. And their Globe was a gem'. He tried valiantly, at the time, to find a way of transporting the set down to Southwark when the series was over. But he couldn't raise the cost of the transport.

He's hoping to see building start early next year and a final opening date of early 1985. Public subsidy is something he is not keen on, hence ancillary activities like catering to support it. The Globe will be a joint Southwark-Freshwater Group project and will rise about 125 yards from the original site (which now lies under John Courage's nearby brewery). It will stand a few feet above ground level and probably overlook the Thames. 'The Globe was erected in 1599, but being the basic bones of the first theatre, from Shoreditch, it was really the first. Very few people realise this' he explains secretly.

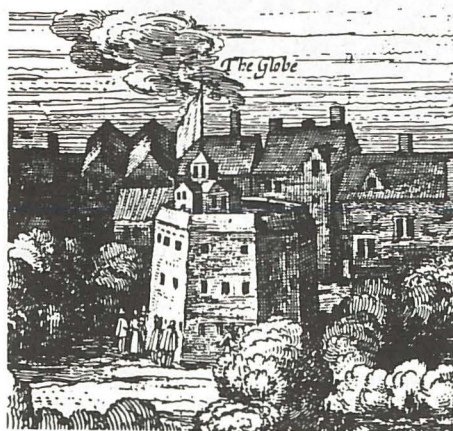
Strange though it may seem, the biggest obstacles are now out of the way. The project's credibility, especially with an American in charge, was a huge problem. And outline planning permission equally so. Fund-raising is 'relatively simple' he quips. But despite the intended humour of the remark, he is right. 'There are complications, true, in launching the various activities you need to get going. But it's far easier than launching a mere idea' he stresses.

Just how Wanamaker became tied up with all this is a chapter in itself. Furthermore, although his name is familiar to most people in theatre, few know much about him when pressed. How many would remember, for instance, that he played Iago to Paul Robeson's Othello in the 1959-60 season at Stratford-on-Avon, with Tony Richardson directing? The season included Flora Robson, Charles Laughton, Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft, Olivier and Finney. How many remember his 1962 productions of King Priam or La Forza del Destino at Covent Garden?

Going back almost exactly 40 years, a young actor, fresh from drama school in Chicago arrived in New York and plunged into radio soap opera for a living. ('It was quite an art form then' he adds). The young Wanamaker was determined to make his mark and although radio brought him into contact with such contemporary giants as Orson Welles, he had an eye on Broadway. An entree with the influential Group Theater movement, which had disbanded a year before, opened the door to men like Elia Kazan, then a young director 'virtually working on his first production'. Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Clifford Odets, all came within his circle, with critics like

Harold Clurman and such seminal directors as Lee Strasberg.

A promising career was interrupted by the war, which was spent mostly in the Far East. On his return, he was thrown back into the thick of it: his second day after demob he had to go to rehearsals in uniform - he'd had no time to go down to the shops for new civvies!



Detail from the Visscher View of London, 1616 showing the first Globe

He was soon in a playwright's company, this time even better than before. The leading writers of the day were involved: Robert C. Sherwood, Elmer Rice and Maxwell Anderson. The first play was a moralistic treatise on Joan of Arc set in modern society with morals to match. It was called Joan of Lorraine and starred Ingrid Bergman, then at the height of her film stardom, in her Broadway debut. A couple of weeks into rehearsals, the director was dropped. Would Wanamaker like to take over, while keeping his co-starring role? With only a few weeks until it opened, there was no alternative. But on opening night it all gelled. The show had rave reviews and in particular, the new discovery, Sam Wanamaker, plucked from relative obscurity into the limelight. The effect on his career was 'a kind of ballistic missile, which shot into the air'. He had offers to go to Hollywood (who were always pinching new talent) on an acting-directing contract with Warners. The fruits of success were starting to taste sweet, when an unfortunate intrusion cut across his life. The investigations of the Un-American Activities Committee singled him out as a black sheep from his associations with various prominent American intellectuals, some on the Hollywood Ten list.

He explains in his own words. 'While there was this hostility to Russia and Communism, at the same time the communists and capitalists had a common enemy in Europe, the Fascists and Hitler. So we found ourselves on the same side.

'Up to that time American propaganda had been violently hostile to the Soviet Union, and then suddenly we became their "allies". And we had to support them. So a lot of ordinary Americans became friendly with them, through cultural exchanges and so on.

'Then Churchill's "Iron Curtain Speech" changed it all back again and American right-wingers decided enough

was enough'. Wanamaker, a Jew, remembers that the volte-face was easier for some than others, depending on their integrity and wartime involvements. 'You couldn't just turn it off, you know, especially after the Hitler thing. I think most thinking people were involved with the McCarthy era, either privately or publicly'.

But it all affected him badly. 'My career, having been at a very high level at that point, started to encounter tough attitudes, professionally. Either you could take a determined stance on the issue of the constitutional right of a committee to question your beliefs in a free country, or else accept passively what was happening. The issue was not your politics, but the right to hold those views under the Bill of Rights,' he explains. 'Semi-Fascist things happened in America, too. And bit by bit, we so-called activists were isolated and became subjects of attack as "pinkos".'

The unhappy era, which Wanamaker admits changed the course of his career for 20 years, coincided with his first visit to England to do a film, which, as luck would have it, was sensitive politically, although already highly acclaimed. He was eventually subpoenaed in 1951 while abroad, to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee. He declined to leave this country and was granted residency status here. He didn't return to work in America until 1960. To have returned while under the subpoena would have meant public blacklisting. Even British films slowly ceased to use him though, since his involvement would have impaired its export potential to the big film market, America. 'The period changed my whole life' he remembers, ruefully.

Wanamaker is a dynamic personality, and like so many foreigners living in this country, he found our way of life and the inscrutable British character 'marvellous, but alien'. No feeling of a second home, developed, as it should have. 'You don't actually become part of English society, you're still . . .' he trails off. It is difficult to verbalise. 'You are not made to feel that you belong'. It took him a long time to learn that over here, people do not always say what they mean or mean what they say. It was hard going on the young wunderkind who, on top of feeling resentful at being effectively exiled from his country, felt alienated in the new.

But he survived, and a successful film, television and stage career got back underway by the mid-sixties, although inevitably not with the impetus he achieved earlier. It couldn't have. By the late sixties, during a period of temporary quiet, he hit upon the Globe project as an emotional lightning rod for his pent-up frustrations, never dreaming it would take longer than a couple of years all told. The work provided a positive outlet for something that had fascinated him since his childhood, ever since the British Trade Fair came to Chicago with The Globe as its exhibit.

What on earth made him believe he could, or would, succeed, though? An American, with few connections and no money to speak of? It seems hare-brained.