**Directors Notes:**

How you have approached the themes in the play….

*I have been fascinated by all the spying and surveillance that occurs in Hamlet. Polonius sends someone to spy on his son whilst at university in France. Claudius and Polonius spy on Hamlet and Ophelia having a private conversation in the palace corridors. Polonius spies on Hamlet and Gertrude talking in her Chamber. This led me to ask what kind of society would it be with everyone keeping tabs on each other? And then from that question I built the world of the play. Clearly it’s a paranoid, uneasy. Closed world. Why is everyone spying on each other? There must be a lack of trust and a fear of revolt.*

We have not set the play in a specific time or location but all the physical rules of the world are the same as in late 16th century England when Shakespeare was writing the play so people fight with swords, there are no electrical devices and so on. We have modelled our Court on the court of Elizabeth I -which by now was a very suspicious, uncertain place with lots of factions jostling for power and influence and a sense of uncertainty hanging over it because of an unclear plan of succession.

We have, in the set design and colour palette, been influenced by Scandinavian materials – natural wood and fabric – and by a dark colour palette of grey and black. Our chequered floor pattern is taken from the pattern at Helsingor Castle where the play is set. There is the continual sound of the sea in our production because Helsingor Castle sits on a promontory looking out to sea and there is lots of threat of invasion in the play, so we wanted to bring that to life.

*Quotes highlighting key moments..*

**Look you, sir,  
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,  
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,  
What company, at what expense; and finding  
By this encompassment and drift of question  
That they do know my son, come you more nearer  
Than your particular demands will touch it.  
(II.i.6–12)**

**For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither.  
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here  
Affront Ophelia. Her father and myself,  
We'll so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,  
We may of their encounter frankly judge,  
And gather by him, as he is behaved,  
If 't be th' affliction of his love or no  
That thus he suffers for.  
(III.i.29–36)**

**This bodes some strange eruption to our state  
(I.i.68)**

**Something is rotten in the state of Denmark**

(i.IV)

But if you hold it fit, after the play

Let his queen mother all alone entreat him

To show his griefs: let her be round with him,

And I’ll be placed, so please you, in the ear

Of all their conference. If she find him not,

To England send him, or confine him where

Your wisdom best shall think

(III.!)