

**A361: Shakespeare**  
**A361/08: King Lear – Workshop 1**

**Executive Producer: Nat Taylor**  
**Producer: David Hoyle**  
**Production Assistant: Anne Pearson**

**Contributor(s) in clip:**  
**John Russell-Brown**  
**Julian Glover**

**Clip transcript: A361 King Lear workshop 1**

**Julian Glover as King Lear**

Know that we have divided in three our Kingdom, and 'tis our past intent to shake all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths, while we, unburdened, crawl towards death. Our son of Cornwall, and you, our no-less loving son of Albany, it is this hour our constant will to publish our daughters several dowers, that future strife may be prevented now. The Princes France and Burgundy, great rivals in our youngest daughter's love, long in our court have made their amorous sojourn, and here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters, since now we will divest us both of rule, interest of territory, cares of state, which of you shall we say doth love us most, that we are greatest bounty may extend where nature doth with merit challenge. Gonerill, our eldest-born, speak first...

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes, OK very good. The contrast to the scene we've just done couldn't be more...

**Julian Glover**

Absolutely not

**John Russell-Brown**

More, astonishing. I mean the first thing is the way his control over syntax, so that what he has to say can contain a parenthesis and yet come to a full close. The marvellous way in which he can bring every degree of attention down to that simple word "love" which is like the kind of trigger for the whole play. What he cares about here is not merely his power, but actually something very secret which is called love. A simple monosyllable, and there's a whole syntax in the metre of that speech that brings it all down to that crucial point.

**Julian Glover**

But what's amazing is that what he's doing at this advanced time in his life is to actually challenge them on the most important thing in the world, which is love, which is the most outrageous thing he could possibly do, and I think he's been working on it for a long time.

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes, and I was very interested as you did that. There was on your face a flicker of humour at the ironies, "...and we unburdened crawl towards death..." You're not going to crawl towards death – You're going.

**Julian Glover**

No way

**John Russell-Brown**

...hunting it with a hundred knights. But you're saying that – I wonder whether that irony, that is the irony actually should, could in fact be more private, that you get the humour for yourself, but you will not show it to them!

**Julian Glover**

Oh well, that's interesting, um, one would have to debate whether it's more valuable...

**John Russell-Brown**

Exactly...

**Julian Glover**

To show them the humour or not.

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes, in the strategy of the whole play I think it's terribly, terribly difficult decisions, the sort of, there are about half a dozen decisions to make about this first scene, the one is that, could we...

**Julian Glover**

Yeah. It's also very interesting, that word he uses, "We express our darker purpose", he uses the word "darker" for the word "hidden", so he does put a mystery onto it anyway, doesn't he?

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes well...

**Julian Glover**

He chooses the word "darker" rather than "hidden" or any other synonym.

**John Russell-Brown**

I think there's two ways of taking this first scene, one to take all... well two major ways, and this is a major decision – that is, to play the sub-text about darker purposes and the sly intention and putting them on the spot and judging them, and show us Lear enjoying doing that, which I think was the decision which you had made in that. I'd like to see you do it with the other decision, so that you use "darkest" in the most openest way, just take it as secret, and you just feed yourself the knowledge which you have within yourself, it will be not shown in the expressive quality of "dark" or "crawl", it will be shown in the way in which you are capable of keeping your own attention inside it.

**Julian Glover**

That's right, and also of watching them all the time for what they're doing.

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes

**Julian Glover**

And you come to this extraordinary word – "love" – and what are they going to do about it.

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes, that's right.

**Julian Glover**

How will these mere underlings cope with this one?

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes

**Julian Glover**

Because I'm just about to give you the world.

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes. Do you see if you play against that sub-text, I mean externally in the words. I think it tingles with that kind of consciousness which comes right down

**Julian Glover**

Are you saying technically speaking, that you're suggesting that it should be rather blander?

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes

**Julian Glover**

And more ordinary?

**John Russell-Brown**

Yes. But inside your mind is very quick, your eyes are watchful and you are feeding on the ironies as you go through. Show as little of it as you can, except in the efficiency with which you speak.

**Julian Glover**

Right

**John Russell-Brown**

Just try it, see, see if that can be done.