



# The HandleBards

A Midsummer Night's Dream: 2017 Marketing Pack

[www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com)

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Shakespeare, but not too serious.

“The HandleBards:  
Shakespeare on bikes.”

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The HandleBards perform A Midsummer Night's Dream at The Courts Garden.



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# Contact information & resources.

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The HandleBards cycling Shakespeare troupe.

## Producers

Paul Moss (paul@handlebards.com / 07986 784 207)  
Tom Dixon (tom@handlebards.com / 07799 151 420)

## Marketing Director

Callum Cheatle (callum@handlebards.com)

Contact Callum for any marketing or press queries, or for photo / artwork requests.



"Lulla, lulla, lullaby..." - A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act II, Scene II)



"What, jealous Oberon!" - A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act II, Scene I)







# Who are the HandleBards?



Spot the audience member.

"Extremely energetic, charmingly chaotic, environmentally sustainable Shakespeare."

## We set the world on wheels...

The HandleBards began because adventures are fun – we love to explore. We are troupes of cycling actors who carry with us all of the necessary set, props and costume to perform extremely energetic, charmingly chaotic, environmentally sustainable Shakespeare plays across the globe.

Our shows have received critical acclaim from national press ("gloriously eccentric and very, very funny" - The Stage), regional press ("chaotic, clever and charming" - The Shields Gazette) and audience members ("you have converted an 11 year old boy into a Shakespeare fan") alike.

In 2014, we won the Edinburgh Fringe Sustainable Practice Award from Creative Carbon Scotland, which assessed sustainable design, communication of sustainable message and a high-quality production. We were nominated again in 2015, and in 2016 were commended for 'consistency in sustainability excellence' and nominated for the Stage's inaugural Sustainability Award. On average, we

save about 50.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per tour by travelling by bicycle instead of by van.

Travelling by bicycle also allows us to connect with local communities in a much deeper way than any other touring theatre company - our slower speed of travel means we spend longer than most in every area we visit. We also engage local musicians at as many of our shows as possible.

We're very inquisitive souls, and we realise that we're not going to learn anything from slopping about on the sofa. So instead we prefer to say "yes" and just go for it! It's probably this mentality that's lead to us cycling around the world to perform Shakespeare. That, and the fact that we love it when people say we're mad.

We think that sleep can wait. We love to explore. We love to find the funny.



Hermia, Helena, Demetrius and Lysander - the lovers in A Midsummer Night's Dream.



# A proven track record.



Carrying our bikes to the top of Dunsinane Hill, for a world-first production of Macbeth.

"We have cycled over 6000 miles since 2013, performing 10 plays to over 50,000 people at 150 venues across 12 countries."

## Some of our highlights:

- We have cycled over 6000 miles since 2013, performing 10 plays to over 50,000 people at 150 venues across 12 countries.
- We promote British culture abroad, through our international tours to countries like Zimbabwe, Sudan, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore and India.
- We promote local musicians and small-business owners whenever possible, by working alongside them at our shows.
- We try to ensure that a large percentage of our shows are free (or cheap) for the public, therefore providing a low-barrier entry point to Shakespeare for many who would otherwise be unable to enjoy his work.
- We are the first and only theatre company to have performed Macbeth where it is actually set - on the top of Dunsinane Hill.
- In 2016, our all-female troupe became the first ever all-female theatre troupe to perform in Sudan.

## We're also happy that we:

- Provide laughter to thousands of people a year, through great entertainment.
- Promote environmental sustainability, cycling and healthy-living in everything that we do.
- Ensure that Shakespeare becomes accessible, relevant and engaging to many who would never consider indulging in the Bard or his work.
- Through our performances and our work in schools, make Shakespeare fun and exciting for thousands of children a year.
- Provide an opportunity for personal and professional development like none other, for around 25 up-and-coming theatre-makers a year.
- Through our merchandise sales, promote a fair-trade, self-help women's group in Kenya.



Single sex casts always require a tad of (often hilarious) gender swapping.







# Selling points & target audiences.



The HandleBards all-male troupe get ready to perform.

## Key selling points.

Some suggestions for why people should come to a HandleBards show.

- The Handlebards is a mad adventure, and audiences love mad adventures.
- Suitable for all ages – as popular with grown-ups as with children.
- Environmentally sustainable theatre.
- The only cycling theatre troupe in existence.
- Only four actors (of the same sex) in each cast - so lots of cross-dressing and quick-changes on stage.
- All previous HandleBards tours have been incredibly well received by audiences, press and media across the UK.
- And, our shows are held in beautiful venues like yours - so that opens up loads more selling points!

## Target audiences.

Here are some ideas for the types of audience member that might be keen to come to a HandleBards show, and therefore the types of audience member that it's probably worth focussing our marketing towards.

- All ages - our shows are great for both young and old.
- Families.
- Cyclists.
- Shakespeare buffs.
- Comedy lovers.
- Environmentalists.
- Countryside fanatics.
- Heritage lovers.
- Youth theatre or youth theatre outings.
- School groups.
- Cycling club outings.
- Casual picnickers and fans of the outdoors.



Titania and her fairy train.



The moment when a HandleBard portrayed true emotion on stage...







# Show copy.



Please find below some draft copy for use in brochures, on websites and in emails. Please feel free to edit to suit your needs. If you would like to run your ammended copy past us, please email it to [callum@handlebards.com](mailto:callum@handlebards.com).

## Version 1 (167 Words)

The HandleBards are the world's first cycling theatre company. Before touring their "beautifully bonkers" production of A Midsummer Night's Dream around the world, they pedalled it 1500 miles around the UK by bicycle, with all the necessary set, props and costume in tow. Now, the show is back by popular demand - and, in usual HandleBards style, we can expect riotous amounts of energy, a fair old whack of chaos, and a great deal of laughter.

Join the HandleBards' all-male troupe in the beautiful **[INSERT VENUE NAME]** for A Midsummer Night's Dream as you've never seen it before!

And what's the play about? Well - Four young lovers find themselves enveloped in the dream-like arms of a magical forest full of sprites, where a feuding Fairy King and Queen are at war over the possession of an Indian boy. A group of amateur actors share the same forest. They're rehearsing for a play. Fairies and humans collide. Hilarity ensues.

Visit [www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com) to find out more!

## Version 2 (79 Words)

The HandleBards are the world's first cycling theatre company. Before touring their "beautifully bonkers" production of A Midsummer Night's Dream around the world, they pedalled it 1500 miles around the UK by bicycle, with all the necessary set, props and costume in tow. Now, the show is back by popular demand - and, in usual HandleBards style, expect riotous amounts of energy, a fair old whack of chaos, and a great deal of laughter.

Visit [www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com) to find out more!



"Over hill, over dale, through bush, through briar." - A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act II, Scene I)







# Suggested Press Release copy



Demetrius and Lysander fight for the prize.

The HandleBards are the world's first cycling theatre company. Since 2013, their two troupes (one all-male, the other all-female) have pedalled over 6000 miles across the UK to perform their unique brand of "charmingly chaotic, environmentally sustainable, bicycle-powered Shakespeare".

This summer, they're returning to **[INSERT COUNTY]** to perform their hit all-male production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at **[INSERT VENUE NAME]** on the **[INSERT DATE(S)]**.

Producer Paul Moss explains that, in usual HandleBards style, we can expect "riotous amounts of energy, a fair old whack of chaos, and a great deal of laughter" from the show.

The HandleBards pride themselves on just how accessible they're able to make Shakespeare and his plays. "The key is not to take it all so seriously," explains Paul. "We only ever cast four actors in our productions, for the very reason that it's nearly impossible to perform a Shakespeare play with just four actors - attempting it always leads to hilarity both on and off stage, it's really a lot of fun."

2017 will mark The HandleBards' fifth UK summer season, having begun their adventure in 2013 with a 967 mile cycle from Glasgow to London. Back then, it was theatre on a shoestring - and not meant figuratively - the boys used shoelaces and a sponge to attach their trailers to their bikes.

Since then, the group have gone from strength-to-strength; they've grown

from a set of friends with cheap bikes and a rickety old trailer to an internationally successful theatre company, who have performed their brand of fast-paced, bicycle-powered Shakespeare in twelve countries across three continents, winning the support of legions of fans, including British bicycle manufacturer Pashley, whose hand-crafted bikes the HandleBards will be riding throughout 2017.

"We're on a journey to become the world's front-runners in sustainable theatre," explains Paul. "This year we're planting trees to offset 100% of our carbon emissions. For years now, climate change (not 'fake news' by the way!) has been on the discourse agenda, but nothing will really change until we all stop complaining about how awful it all is, and actually do something to change the way we live our lives. Climate change needs real advocates, and we're prepared to be just that for the cultural fields."

The HandleBards also work hard to grow real engagement with local communities. They invite local musicians to play at their shows, and encourage localities to see their shows as an opportunity for the whole community to get together over something positive.

"Why not knock on your neighbour's door and invite them to share a picnic at the show with you?" suggests Paul.

The HandleBards all-female troupe will also tour the UK this summer, with *As You Like It*. Find out more and book tickets for both shows at [www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com).



The moment you get an audience member who fancies a career as a "method actor".







# Social Media



Audiences enjoying the summer sun.

Here are a few suggestions on how to make your social media support for the tour even more effective, and ensure show consistency between yourself, your fellow venues and us.

Please tag us in all your social media posts. This will enable us to re-tweet and help you reach more people.

Here are our social media tags:

- Twitter: @HandleBards
- Facebook: HandleBards
- Instagram: HandleBards (tag us at @HandleBards)

rather than just giving them the hard-sell. We'll help by providing you with photos, videos and gossip along the way.

Remember, social media is not a one-way conversation – always reply to engaged followers.

Ask your friends and local partners to post about the tour too.



Entertainment for all.

Remember not to start a marketing tweet with an '@' symbol. This limits the reach of the tweet only to people that follow both you and the person you're tagging. You'll reach more people if you put a '.' before the '@' or if you place the tag a little way into your tweet.

Using relevant but general hash-tags (e.g. #bicycle, #Shakespeare etc) can further increase the reach of your posts to a relevant audience.

Tag local groups, celebrities, and media channels when talking about the tour to help spread the word.

Be interesting and provide your audience with interesting content



The HandleBards perform at The Royal Shakespeare Company's outdoor theatre space.



# Box Office cheat sheet.



A little audience participation goes a long way.

Here is some useful information for answering most questions that potential audience members ask before they book tickets:

**2017 shows:** A Midsummer Night's Dream (all-male), As You Like It (all-female).

**Show length:** Approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes plus a 15 minute interval (the actors will also stay around after the show to answer any questions). Shows should be listed as 2 hours including interval.

**Age suitability:** Suitable for all ages, but recommended for ages 5+.

**Language:** Performed in English (original Shakespeare script).

**Cast size:** Four (either all-male or all-female, depending on the show).

**Website for more information:** [www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com)

**Bicycles:** The HandleBards will be using Pashley Pathfinders throughout 2017.

**Touring history:** This is the HandleBards fifth year on the road. Previously they have performed - Twelfth Night & Romeo And Juliet

(2013), Macbeth & The Comedy Of Errors (2014), A Midsummer Night's Dream & Hamlet (2015), Romeo & Juliet & The Taming Of The Shrew & Richard III & Much Ado About Nothing (2016). Every summer they undertake a cycling Shakespeare tour, and every autumn/winter they undertake a schools' tour. In the spring, they tour internationally - this year to India, Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar.

**Company contact details:** For all marketing enquiries (including press enquiries), please contact Callum Cheatle on [callum@handlebards.com](mailto:callum@handlebards.com). For everything else, please contact Paul Moss on [paul@handlebards.com](mailto:paul@handlebards.com).

**If you are running your own ticketing, please email weekly sales reports to [info@handlebards.com](mailto:info@handlebards.com). This will allow us to manage our marketing budget to ensure as large an audience as possible at your venue. Thank you!**



Bikes and bike parts are used throughout our shows.



Love makes us do the craziest things.







# Suggested marketing timing plan.



The HandleBards perform for a full crowd at the Sheffield Amphitheatre.

"We feel privileged to have been able to accumulate a large and proactively enthusiastic fanbase."

## Every week.

Send updated ticket sales to [info@handlebards.com](mailto:info@handlebards.com) (if you are running your own ticketing). Post content about the show on your social media channels. Tag us in your posts.

## 2 months to go.

Call local magazines and other long-lead publications to let them know about the show, and ask if they'll run a preview article. Follow up this call by sending a press release (see draft copy for this on page 12 of this pack).

## 6 weeks to go.

Distribute flyers and posters around the local area (tourist information, cafés, restaurants, bars, other venues). Also put flyers, posters and banners up around your venue.

## 1 month to go.

Send an email to your mailing list, letting them know about the show and informing them of how to get tickets.

## 3 weeks to go.

Call local newspapers and other short-lead publications to let them know about the show, and ask if they'll run a preview article. Follow up this call by sending a press release (see draft copy for this on page 12 of this pack).

## 2 weeks to go.

Call local radio & TV stations to let them know about the show and ask about the possibility of an interview with the HandleBards (work with Callum Cheatle on this – [callum@handlebards.com](mailto:callum@handlebards.com)). Follow up this call by sending a press release (see draft copy for this on page 12 of this pack).

## 1 week to go.

Call local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations to ask for a last minute preview. Also offer free tickets and ask if they'd like to review the performance(s).

## 5 days to go.

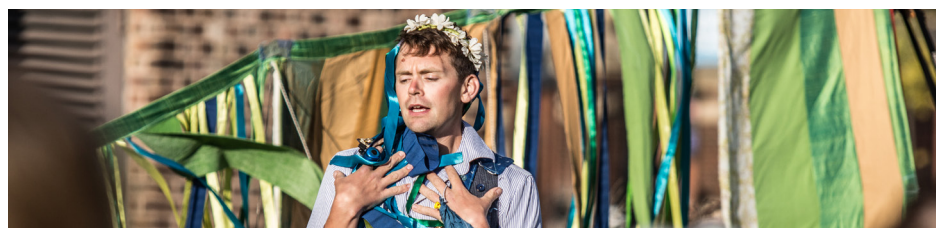
Send another email to your mailing list, to remind them to get their tickets.

## 4-1 days to go.

Daily posts to your social media channels, reminding your audience that the show is soon to take place. Use the photos and videos you've been sent to improve engagement.

## On the day.

Last minute ticket reminder on social media channels (if it's a sunny day, it might be worth referencing the beautiful weather!).



Sometimes, boys play girls playing boys.



# Marketing resources.



"Have you the lion's part written?" - A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act I, Scene II)

## Marketing resources.

Here is an overview of assets available for use when marketing our shows. If you are missing any of the below, or need marketing assistance then please drop Callum an email at [callum@handlebards.com](mailto:callum@handlebards.com). Similarly, if you require artwork of specific dimensions for website or print use - please just ask, and Callum will be happy to provide you with what you need.

### Print & Artwork

A3 and A4 posters, DL flyers and A5 programmes (and a PVC banner if you've requested it) are being delivered to your venue. Please distribute the posters and flyers around your local area, but keep the programmes – we'll sell these before the show. If you'd like to print A5 venue-specific flyers, please let Callum know and he'll be happy to supply artwork for this purpose.

### Production / Promotion Photos

Callum will have already sent you a variety of photos for use in your marketing campaign. More will be sent to you in the run-up to the show.

### Box Office cheat sheet.

You'll find this later in this pack. Please print a copy for your front of

house / box office staff to inform and enthuse them about the show.

### Website

Please create a link to our website from your website: [www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com).

### Social Media

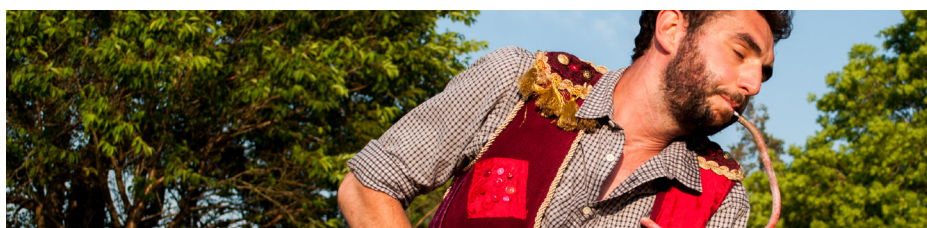
Please talk about us on your social media channels. We'll arm you with lots of content over the upcoming months – video (including a trailer), photos, stories, gossip etc. Please tag us too (and we'll re-post) - we're 'HandleBards' on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram.

## Press resources.

If you're asked for photos by the press, please direct them to the following webpage: [www.handlebards.com/press-resources](http://www.handlebards.com/press-resources). From there, they can download photos and press-releases. For interview requests, please put them in touch with us directly.



Comedy, History or Tragedy?



Often, HandleBards shows incorporate live music played on both real and improvised instruments.







# The HandleBards: Ride On.

Ride on with us throughout the countryside,  
With comedies and tragedies galore;  
Four actors upon bikes are wont to ride,  
With legs exhausted and with bottoms sore.  
A journey thorough bush and thorough briar,  
On a-roads, b-roads, cycle-paths we steer.  
On pedalled steeds we stow all we require –  
Set, props and costumes, scripts and camping gear.  
Hey ho, the wind and rain may slow our ride,  
Our chains may bear the whips and scorns of grime,  
But this dry-witted, wet quartet provide  
A stonking, bonkers, entertaining time.  
So join this ped'ling Shakespeare troupe anon,  
The HandleBards: ride on, dear friends, ride on.

[www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com)

