



Activities: Key Stage 4&5

First interview with Charlyne Francis playing Donna Joan

- 1) Find the Week 1 audio interview with Charlyne Francis who is playing Donna Joan. Charlyne discusses the character of Donna Joan (time code 6m 15s to 7m 30s) and the reasons for her being a villain. Charlyne suggests that making the character a woman, as in this production, adds a further layer to the reasons for her behaviour. For instance she mentions that women are often left out of discussions by men.
- 2) Work with a group of fellow students. Discuss the decision to make the character female in this production. Decide how this decision adds to the power of the play for the audience and how it links with the theme of the position of the other women in the play such as Hero and Beatrice.
- 3) Create a chart with two columns, and leave space underneath. In the first list the reasons which explain the behaviour of Don John in the play. In the second column add comments explaining the ways in which the part being played as a woman adds to the reasons for the character's behaviour.
- 4) Now, consider other villains from the Shakespeare plays you have studied. Which of these villains would work if the character was made female? Why? Which would not? How might switching the gender of the villain alter the dramatic impact? Find evidence to support your ideas. In the space underneath your chart, capture your groups' ideas from this activity.
- 5) Share your work with other groups, comparing the choices you have made.