

Shakespeare’s dreams take over a Lecce castle

Posted on July 20, 2026 by Sylvie Marchand

LECCE, Apulia — Shakespeare has moved into a castle in Italy’s heel. *La materia dei sogni* (the stuff of dreams), a new immersive exhibition in the underground halls of the Castello Carlo V in Lecce, opened on July 17 and will run through January 10, 2027.

“The exhibition *La materia dei sogni* at the Castello Carlo V in Lecce offers an immersive experience that leads the visitor to an understanding of one of the fundamental themes of Shakespeare’s work,” art critic Maria Laura Perilli told Italy Now. It focusses on “power, its contradictions, and the cracks hidden behind every form of dominion.”

The project is promoted by the Castello Svevo of Bari, part of Italy’s regional directorate of national museums in Apulia, and curated by Peter Bottazzi and Silvia Rigon with scientific guidance from Michael Dobson, director of the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon.

“It has been thrilling to help devise an installation that translates the rich, metaphorical, and polyphonic universe of Shakespeare’s theatre not onto a stage but into a place,” said Dobson, “to allow Shakespeare to haunt and inhabit a castle with all the visionary force of the dreams of his imagination.”

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/shakespeares-dreams-take-over-a-lecce-castle/



Exhibit (*Credits: Video Foto Spot*)

Curators Bottazzi and Rigon describe the exhibition as an attempt not to retell Shakespeare's story but to restore his extraordinary capacity to generate, still today, new questions, new interpretations, and new forms of imagination.

On July 21 the project will be presented at the World Shakespeare Congress, meeting in Verona this week for the first time in Italy, said Anita Guarnieri, director of the Castello Svevo of Bari.

Seven installations

Visitors enter through *La Barca di Prospero* (Prospero's boat), a vessel symbolically built from all of Shakespeare's works, surrounded by verses read aloud in many languages. *Tra le Crepe del Potere* (through the cracks of power) uses luminous sculptures and projections to evoke the conspiracies and betrayals that run through the plays.

Of particular interest is the showcasing of the "expression of soft power which, through the evocative language of art and technology, invites reflection on the complexity of the human soul," Perilli said.

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Exhibit (*Credits: Video Foto Spot*)

Soliloquio transforms Hamlet's To be or not to be into a multisensory room, while *Il Fantastico* animates songs from The Tempest, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Hamlet through videomapping. *Radio Shakespeare* broadcasts celebrated monologues, *Attraverso le Parole* (through the words) dissolves pages and letters into light, and a *Laboratorio Shakespeare* documents the playwright's life and times.

A castle connection

The setting is deliberate. The fortress, which organisers describe as the largest fortified structure in Apulia, took its present form under Emperor Charles V during Shakespeare's own lifetime, and Lecce's theatrical tradition stretches from its Roman amphitheatre to the playhouses later built beside the castle walls.

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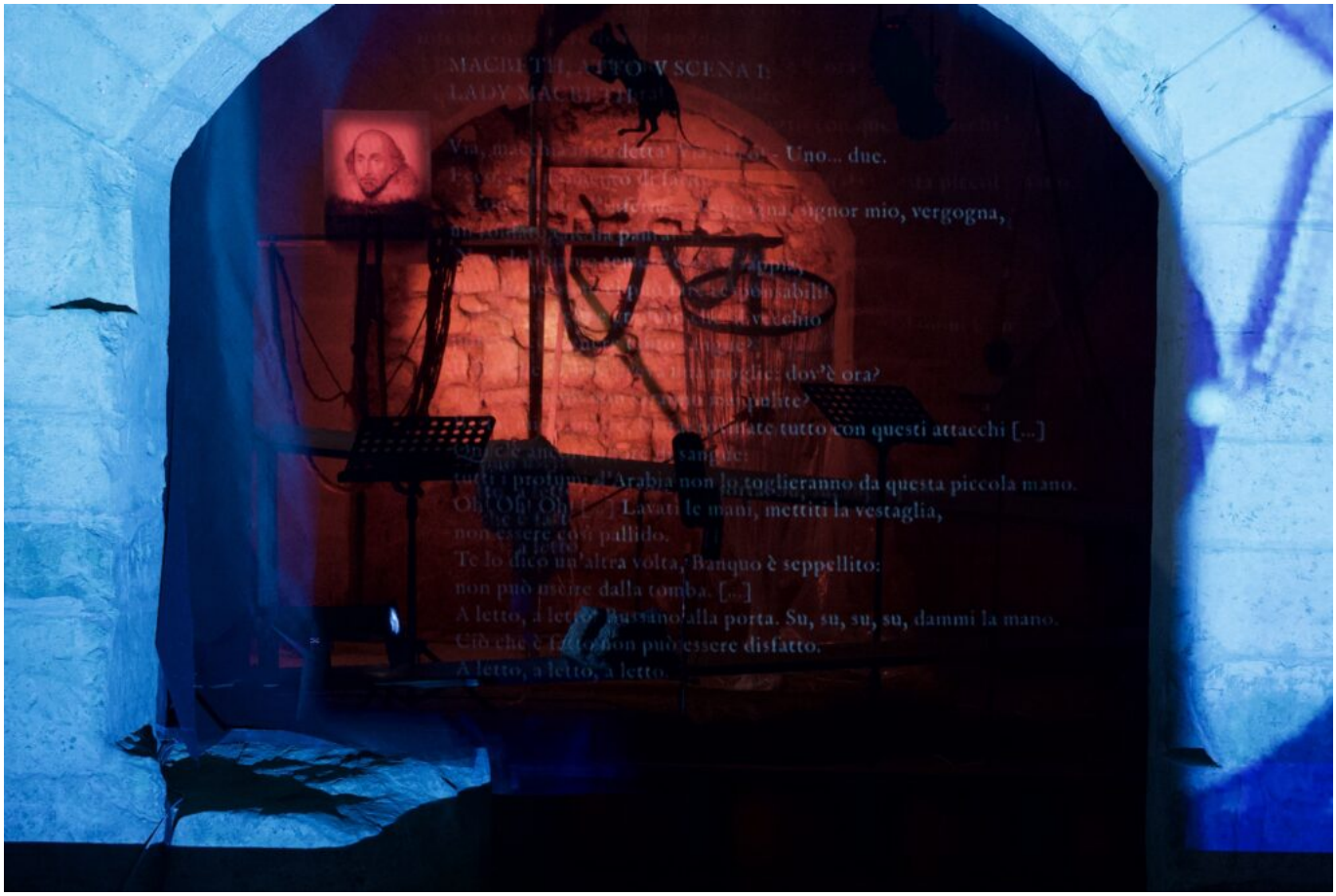


Exhibit (*Credits: Video Foto Spot*)

Workshops, school activities, and performances will follow during the run.

Shakespeare wrote that we are such stuff as dreams are made on. Until next January, a sixteenth century fortress is taking him at his word.

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