



For Immediate Release

Press Contacts:

Melanie Bender Martin, mbmartin@folger.edu, 443-421-0875

Peter Eramo, Jr., peramo@folger.edu, 202-675-0344

Karen Baratz, karen@baratzpr.com, 240-497-1811

Folger Shakespeare Library Names Dr. Farah Karim-Cooper as Director

Dr. Karim-Cooper is a proven leader and respected scholar with 20 years of experience at Shakespeare's Globe in London

Washington, DC (May 20, 2024) — The Folger Shakespeare Library's Board of Governors announced today that they have appointed Dr. Farah Karim-Cooper as the new director of the 92-year-old institution following a 10-month international search. Karim-Cooper currently serves on the executive leadership team at Shakespeare's Globe as the Director of Education (Higher Education & Research). She is Professor of Shakespeare Studies at Kings College London and the author of popular commercial, trade and scholarly publications. Karim-Cooper succeeds Michael Witmore, who has served as director since 2011. Karim-Cooper will begin in her new role as the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library on October 7, 2024.

The Folger's [Director Search Committee](#) was unanimous in its decision to recommend Karim-Cooper to the Board of Governors. Chaired by board member Rebecca Bushnell and Board Chair D. Jarrett Arp, the group was tasked with identifying a leader who can guide the Folger from a period of great transformation and crystalize the institution's scope and ambition as it approaches its second century. Karim-Cooper's experience and leadership encompass education, research & collections, performance, public engagement, and capital building projects. Her work has uniquely situated her to consider the role of the humanities in today's world and the possibilities for an organization like the Folger.

"The Search Committee and the Board of Governors were impressed with Farah's deep, diversified track record and experiences, which traverse the world of Shakespeare studies, performance, collections, media, and connecting with a variety of audiences," said Arp. "She has a well-earned reputation as an inclusive, thoughtful, and engaging leader. Farah is a natural fit to guide the Folger as we welcome the public, increase our visibility, and build for the Folger's second century."

Karim-Cooper is widely recognized as a Shakespeare scholar and a public scholar. She served as President of the Shakespeare Association of America from 2021-2022 after serving 5 years on their Board of Trustees. Her most recent book, *The Great White Bard: How to Love Shakespeare While Talking About Race* (2023) was voted a top book of 2023 by *Time* Magazine, NPR, and *The New Yorker*. She is a field leader in examining Shakespeare's plays through the lens of race and social justice. In 2018 she founded and curated the Globe's Shakespeare and Race Festival and conceived and curated the Antiracist Shakespeare Webinar series from 2021-2024. She is an executive board member for RaceB4Race, a consortium of scholars and institutions working on issues of race in premodern literature, history, and culture. In the UK, she founded the first ever Early Modern Scholars of Colour network.



She has a track record for bringing to life visionary, strategic initiatives. At the Globe, Karim-Cooper championed and created the business model for a new Research & Collections Centre that will open in 2025. She spearheaded and now serves as Co-Director of the Shakespeare Centre London, a major research partnership between Shakespeare’s Globe and King’s College London. Karim-Cooper was instrumental in returning the Globe to operations after the pandemic, as she worked in concert with leadership to re-staff and regenerate business at the Globe.

“I am thrilled to take up the role of Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library. After twenty years at Shakespeare’s Globe developing a scholarly profile while leading research, education, collections and public programming, this role is the natural next step on my lifelong journey with Shakespeare. The Folger is a world-renowned and beloved institution, a significant beacon of knowledge that daily demonstrates the importance of the humanities,” Karim-Cooper said. “I am truly honored to uphold its founding mission while forging new ways to demonstrate how Shakespeare’s work speaks to our moment. Above all, I look forward to working with the Folger’s passionate staff and its remarkable Board of Governors to lead this miraculous institution into its second century.”

Karim-Cooper was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and grew up in Houston, Texas. She holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from Royal Holloway, University of London and received a B.A. in English Literature from California State University, Fullerton. She has published more than 40 chapters in books, reviews and articles, and is a co-General Editor for Arden’s Shakespeare in the Theatre series and their Critical Intersections Series. She has published several books on Shakespeare, theatre, performance and culture, including: *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006, revised ed. 2019) and *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (Arden, 2016). She co-edited *Shakespeare’s Globe: A Theatrical Experiment* with Christie Carson (Cambridge University Press, 2008); *Shakespeare’s Theatres and Effects of Performance* with Tiffany Stern (Arden, 2012) and *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse* with Andrew Gurr (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Karim-Cooper edited a collection of essays for Arden, *Titus Andronicus: The State of Play* (2019) and edited the text of John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* for the *Routledge Anthology of Early Modern Drama*, collated by Jeremy Lopez (2020).

Bushnell, the Search Co-Chair and a professor emerita of early modern studies at the University of Pennsylvania, said “this extensive record of scholarship demonstrates Farah’s decades-long experience with libraries like the Folger. She can dig deep into the archives and rare books, but she can also bring what she finds there to invigorate the scholarship of the twenty-first century, to make the past come alive for new audiences.”

Karim-Cooper will be the eighth director of the Folger Shakespeare Library and the first person of color to hold the position. After Michael Witmore steps down on June 30, Greg Prickman, the Eric Weinmann Librarian and Director of Collections and Exhibitions, will serve as interim director until Karim-Cooper starts in October.



About the Folger Shakespeare Library

The Folger Shakespeare Library makes Shakespeare’s stories and the world in which he lived accessible. Anchored by the world’s largest Shakespeare collection, the Folger is a place where curiosity and creativity are embraced, and conversation is always encouraged. Visitors to the Folger can choose how they want to experience the arts and humanities, from interactive exhibitions to captivating performances, and from pathbreaking research to transformative educational programming. The Folger welcomes everyone to connect in their own way—from communities throughout Washington DC to communities across the globe. Learn more at folger.edu.

#