

# PART XXII

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Joseph Roach, Yale University, United States*

The theater dies every night, and yet Shakespearean performance endures as both history and a living tradition. Performances yield tangible evidence of their memorableness in the form of scripts, documents, images, eyewitness accounts, architectural and archaeological remains, prompt books, memoirs, reviews, and musical scores, but also embodied practices, anecdotes, and lore. What historians know and how they know it points to a contradiction at the heart of performance as a live art. On the one hand, theatrical performance, unlike film or media, is what it is because it disappears when it is over. On the other hand, commonsense experience suggests that actors and directors are right when they allow that their performances and productions take part in a more or less continuous tradition in which artists inherit ideas and techniques from previous generations and pass them on to the next. In such circumstances, performance truly becomes itself through reappearance.

The superabundance of Shakespeare productions in all venues across four centuries and in every corner of the globe requires a scheme of analysis that highlights the principal topics of performance history while selecting and organizing the illustrative details within them. Asking and answering the questions that most interest performance historians produces a list of seven keywords, the alliteration of which is mainly coincidental, each one standing for a category of research in performance history: *periods, plays, persons, processes, productions, places, and publics*.

### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Documents, practices, legends
- Seven keywords for research in performance history
- Periods
- Plays: *which* play?
- Plays: what *kind* of play?
- Persons
- Persons: overplaying and underplaying
- Persons: playing well
- Processes
- Productions
- Places: playhouses
- Places: changes in stage configuration
- Places: theater districts
- Publics

### 212. 1 *HENRY IV*: PLAYHOUSE BEGINNINGS

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When 1 Henry IV was first performed in 1596–97, Shakespeare's company may have been in transition among several playhouses. Until the former Theatre was taken apart, moved from the northern edge of the city to the south bank of the Thames, and reconstructed as the Globe (1599), they probably used either the Curtain or the Swan. Henry IV would have been well adapted to travel within London or beyond, when the theaters were temporarily closed. From the text, we can conjecture that the players must have required only a few portable properties: a crown; a throne; a joint stool; Falstaff's mug, cushion, and bottle; Hotspur's letter; and assorted weapons. Spectators entering the playhouse might well have seen a stage that would have been bare except, perhaps, for a throne, some rushes on the floor, and hangings at the rear.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Primacy of actors in the original staging
- The growth of acting traditions
- Falstaff as star attraction

213. *KING LEAR* FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

*Jay L. Halio, University of Delaware, United States*

Whatever its success, or lack of it, under the Stuarts, *King Lear* underwent a sea change during the Restoration. Officially closed in 1642, theaters did not reopen until after the monarchy was restored in 1660 and the court returned from exile in France, bringing with it much French influence. Public theaters were now enclosed, proscenium staging became the norm, movable painted flats provided scenic effects, and actresses took women's parts. Available evidence does not point to *Lear* as a frequently performed play. The theme of fallen royalty and the absence of a love story may explain its lack of popularity. The situation changed after 1681, when Nahum Tate rewrote it to suit contemporary taste. Tate not only overhauled Shakespeare's language; he drastically altered the structure of the play and its plot, changed several characters, and eliminated the Fool. Most notably, he restored the happy ending of the Lear legend.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Nahum Tate's rewriting
- Eighteenth-century hybrids
- Garrick, Coleman, Kemble
- Booth, Kean, Macready
- <sup>a</sup> Sets and spectacles in the nineteenth century
- Characterizations and concepts
- *King Lear* abroad

214. *HAMLET* AND THE ACTORS: RESTORATION TO VICTORIAN PLAYERS

*Philip Edwards, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom, and  
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The stage history of *Hamlet* is richly documented. A great deal of information is available on scenery and settings, costume, stage business, and how the great actors of the past handled individual scenes. A continuous feature of this production history is cuts: lines, speeches, scenes and parts of scenes, and entire characters that have regularly been excised from *Hamlet* when the play was scripted for the stage. A brief history of these cuts can tell us a great deal about the *Hamlet* that was actually presented to audiences from 1603 to the end of the nineteenth century. Returns to fuller versions in the early twentieth century have had little influence on the "director's theater" of our own day.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The 1603 quarto as evidence of performance
- A continuous acting tradition?
- Garrick plays the devil
- Kemble, Kean, Macready
- Getting back to "the Entirety"
- Twentieth-century postscript

215. *HENRY V*: VICTORIAN STAGINGS

*Andrew Gurr, University of Reading, United Kingdom*

Victorian stagings of *Henry V* illustrate the conflicting forces at work in nineteenth-century productions of Shakespeare: antiquarian accuracy in scenery and costumes versus engagement with contemporary events such as the Crimean War, and demand for spectacle versus feeling for Shakespeare's poetry. The cost of increasingly scenic and lavish stagings was

Shakespeare's text: by the mid-nineteenth century, the standard stage version of the play was only about two-thirds the length of the Folio. Debate about the relative importance of poetry and spectacle, which rumbled through the reception of nineteenth-century stagings of *Henry V*, here reached its apogee in critical responses to Charles Calvert's production of the 1870s, which toured widely.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Antiquarianism, spectacle, topicality
- Performances beyond London
- The glories of war, the costs of war
- Character, poetry, spectacle

216. *ROMEO AND JULIET*: VICTORIAN ACTRESSES

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Whereas virtually every important nineteenth-century actor failed as Romeo, virtually every important nineteenth-century actress succeeded as Juliet. In part, this has to do with the importance of Juliet in the canon of nineteenth-century women's parts; it was typically a debut role, and if one failed in it, one was unlikely to have much of a subsequent career. Despite the disproportionate hardships women faced in an ill-paid and highly competitive industry where they were often regarded as little better than prostitutes, women achieved increasing numbers and economic success on the stage in the nineteenth century, and *Romeo and Juliet* was one of the chief vehicles by which they did so. Indeed, the history of nineteenth-century theater is a long catalogue of triumphant debuts as Juliet.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Eliza O'Neill and Fanny Kemble
- Helena Faucit
- Charlotte Cushman's Romeo, 1845

217. *THE TEMPEST*: THE DESIGN OF PROSPERO'S ISLAND, 1930S–1980S

*Christine Dymkowski, Royal Holloway College, University of London, United Kingdom*

Twentieth-century preoccupation with thematic approaches to *The Tempest* has affected not only the spectacle of the storm scene but also the design of Prospero's island. Whereas the Restoration adapters and their eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and even early twentieth-century successors were content to depict luxuriant foliage, golden sands, gleaming seas, and any other natural feature mentioned in the text, modern directors and designers often use the set to signal their approach to the meaning of the play: the set becomes metaphor rather than illustration. The potential for this practice was created early in the twentieth century with the arrival of permanent sets; that is, a single (although often modifiable) setting in place of myriad scenes to depict each new location Shakespeare creates.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- J. Gower Park's cubist island
- Loudon Sainthill's suboceanic island
- Mental islands
- The island as stage, studio, laboratory, empty space
- Confusions, dislocations, dissents

218. *TITUS ANDRONICUS*: STAGE AND SCREEN AFTER 1955

*Alan Hughes, University of Victoria, Canada, and Sue Hall-Smith, independent scholar, United Kingdom*

The seminal 1955 production of *Titus Andronicus* directed by Peter Brook at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, conferred an element of respectability on a play that has been generally regarded as a tasteless spectacle of gratuitous violence, practically unperformable, and a somewhat dubious member of the Shakespearean canon. At the

same time, the violence enacted in the play has increasingly found an echo in political events, which has given particular immediacy to its portrayal of the human condition in extremis. The frequency with which the play is now performed across the globe demonstrates its relevance to contemporary concerns. More than two hundred productions have been mounted in the course of the last fifty years on film as well as onstage.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Political *Titus*
- *Titus* in broader worlds
- *Titus* face to face
- Filmic *Titus*

219. *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW: KATHERINA ONSTAGE FROM THE 1970S TO THE 1990S*

*Elizabeth Schafer, Royal Holloway College, University of London, United Kingdom*

How tragic or comic Katherina's story becomes is often related to her demonstrated ability to be violent. Really ferocious Katherinas might always choose to pick up the boxing gloves again. Annie-get-your-gun Katherinas might reload their rifles. Less violent Katherinas, although they make the point that society is constructing Katherina unfairly, seem more victimized. What kind of violence actresses can enact onstage also varies: shrewish violence in nineteenth-century prompt books tends to center around pulling hair, biting, and throwing pillows, cushions, and books. More recent shrews are more likely to throw right hooks and dole out half Nelsons. Stagings of Katherina's violence from the 1970s to the 1990s engage issues of sexuality and race as well as gender politics.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Varieties of comic violence
- Violence and alternative sexualities
- Period violence

220. *JULIUS CAESAR: STAGE INTERPRETATIONS FROM THE 1970S TO THE 1990S*

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*Julius Caesar* may be considered by many people to be one of Shakespeare's "driest" works (memories of bad teaching at school or university?), but this judgment has not kept directors from staging the play. The schedules of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) indicate productions at an average of every three or four years since the 1950s. Between 1978 and 1998, *Julius Caesar* was second among the eight most popular Shakespeare plays performed by the RSC. Stage productions during this period reveal a surprising degree of innovation and experimentation. Even though not all attempts are convincing, they invariably result in the encouragement of fresh thoughts and insights.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Historical references
- Political analogues
- Key properties
- The crowds
- Audience involvement
- Violence / Caesar's death
- Dramatis personae

221. *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING:*  
PERFORMANCE HISTORY ONSTAGE AND IN FILM, 1980S–1990S

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*Much Ado* has become a sort of Shakespearean "play unpleasant." It will no longer do to try to conceal the all-encompassing and stifling corset of patriarchal social conventions, the uncomfortable family resemblance between the plotting

half-brothers, the misogynist cruelty displayed by Don Pedro and Claudio, and Hero's betrayal by her father and the bleak prospect of her marriage to such a man as Claudio, so easily swayed by prejudice. Major productions in the United Kingdom during the 1980s and 1990s show a variety of ways in which these political challenges have been faced – or denied.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Two woman directors
- Playing it safe onstage and in film
- Gimmicks as distractions
- The Messina boys' club
- How old is Beatrice?

222. *MACBETH*, THREE INFLUENTIAL LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY PRODUCTIONS:  
KUROSAWA, POLANSKI, NINAGAWA

*A. R. Braunmuller, University of California Los Angeles, United States*

The history of *Macbeth* performed shows that there are only a few main production decisions. The answers make a performance taxonomy that persists through changes in costume and cast, changes in political and social emphases, and changes in ideas of heroism, the supernatural, and the relation between women and men, parents and children, humankind and time. Equally, the history of *Macbeth* onstage shows how difficult theatrical interpretation, like dramatic criticism, has found those decisions. Three late twentieth-century versions of the play – Kurosawa's film *Throne of Blood*, Polanski's film *Macbeth*, and Ninagawa's stage production – display particularly intriguing instances of how these production decisions have been made.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*
- Roman Polanski's *Macbeth*
- Yukio Ninagawa's *Macbeth*

223. *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*: STAGE, FILM, AND TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS  
AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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*Measure for Measure* seems to offer a director plenty of opportunities to convince modern audiences that Shakespeare directly addresses their concerns, but these opportunities sometimes turn out to be traps. We tend to think that for once we know more than Shakespeare about the world he portrays in his play. But once the video projector, the surveillance cameras, and the computer screens have been installed; mobile phones, lifestyle drugs, handcuffs, and condoms have been distributed; and the actors have rehearsed scenes of physical and/or sexual violence that one has come to expect in Edward Bond or Sarah Kane, what – after all – has been elucidated about the play? This survey of productions from the turn of the twenty-first century investigates how bright or dim those elucidations can be.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Sigmund Freud meets Jack the Ripper
- Vice squad
- From 1604 to 2004 in a ten-minute walk
- Vienna videos