

# PART XXI

## AUDIENCES

*Lori Humphrey Newcomb, University of Illinois, United States*

No component of a theatrical performance is more integral, or more elusive, than its audience, those witnesses who gather for just a few hours and then disperse, leaving little record of their individual or shared experiences. Although analyses of any audience will be speculative and partial, those of Shakespearean audiences can draw on the extraordinary length, breadth, vigor, and (in later days) self-consciousness of performance traditions more or less linked under a single playwright's name: "Shakespeare." Of course, all this Shakespearean witnessing is not a continuous or universal experience, but it does enable certain connections among past and present audiences, around the globe and over the *longue durée*, for better or worse. The archive concerning Shakespeare's audiences is thus a unique treasure for theater studies, and a reminder that audiences for Shakespeare have been and should remain a crucial and renewable resource for theater innovation.

This chapter begins by confronting certain unanswerable questions and unproductive myths in order to consider what we *can* know about the mass of Shakespeare audiences. Subsequent sections then consider whether Shakespearean audiences comprise a distinctive subset of all theater audiences. What do audiences bring, physically and mentally, to and from performances of Shakespearean drama? More specifically, given Shakespeare's overwhelming historicity, how do audiences carry "Shakespeare," as a cultural category, to and from such performances?

### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- How do audiences count?
- What do audiences bring to performances?
- Bodies in socialized space
- Audiences' capabilities
- How do audiences bring "Shakespeare" with them into theaters?

## 204. ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUDIENCES: SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

*Richard Preiss, University of Utah, United States*

Plays are our primary evidence for reconstructing early modern audiences, yet also our primary obstacle. A play is a book, a fixed, static, purely verbal artifact, and audiences are inherently multiple, random, fluid entities; the precondition of a playbook's existence is the omission of that play's audiences. Evidence considered in this chapter suggests that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century audiences were particularly insistent, volatile presences. If the audience's participation was a claim of collaboration, their disruptions, invasions, and destructions of the stage imprinting on each performance their own authorial stamp, then the publication of a playbook – any playbook – becomes an extraordinary statement. A playbook is not a performance but rather the idealization of one, a dialogue flattened into a monologue.

### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Events versus texts
- Evidence and interpretation
- The projectile audience
- Audiences onstage
- Clowning
- Books in the playhouse
- Participation and the problem of playbooks

## 205. ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUDIENCES: RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

*Emily Hodgson Anderson, University of Southern California, United States*

Eighteenth-century audiences were characterized as the judges, juries, and legislators of the stage. Audience judgments – sometimes universal, sometimes divisive – were passed down in the moment, via demonstrative clapping, hissing, even full-scale riots. No one, not even Shakespeare, could leave this courtroom unscathed. Charles Macklin’s risk in portraying Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* as a threatening villain rather than the comic character audiences were used to seeing stands as a case in point. The popular explanation for Macklin’s success was that Macklin’s Shylock had recaptured Shakespeare’s original intention for the role. Audiences gathered to pass judgment – on Shylock, on Macklin, and on the Shakespeare they thought they knew.

### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Who they were
- Audiences onstage
- Why they came
- Why they came to see Shakespeare
- A case study: *The Merchant of Venice*
- Judging Shylock

## 206. ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUDIENCES: NINETEENTH CENTURY

*Robert Sawyer, East Tennessee State University, United States*

According to a writer for Charles Dickens’ journal *All the Year Round* in 1877, “judicial analysis” of the theater needs to include “a critic for the public, as well as for the players.” In providing just such an analysis of audiences of the nineteenth century, this chapter uses a series of maps to navigate through the various theaters in Great Britain and the United States. One map charts the geographical and social locations of London’s theaters. Another follows the expansion of theaters in the United States from the eastern seaboard to points south and west. A third maps the terrain in front of the proscenium arch and focuses on those nineteenth-century audience members who occupied the boxes, the gallery, the pit, and other theatrical spaces to view Shakespeare.

### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Theatrical London
- The West End
- The East End
- South of the Thames River
- North Side
- American theater audiences of the nineteenth century
- Eastern seaboard
- The South
- The West

## 207. ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUDIENCES: TWENTIETH CENTURY

*Martin Buzacott, independent scholar, Australia*

As the English-speaking world endured two world wars, nuclear threats, and economic rationalism, Shakespeare remained an icon, taught everywhere, held up as a model of Britishness, his image gracing banknotes, and his reputation as the greatest of writers being ingrained within the culture in such a way that it didn’t matter that comparatively few adults attended as enthusiastic and willing participants in the theatrical experience of his plays. This iconic status meant that, like it or not, *everyone* became an audience for Shakespeare, knowing *about* him even if they didn’t know the theatrical incarnations of his work. For the most part, Shakespearean audiences in the twentieth century were overserved with theatrical product. The undersupply of attendees meant that Shakespearean service providers were often embarrassed by the actual audience numbers and the enthusiasm, or lack thereof, of their responses.

#### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Everybody's Shakespeare
- The demoralization of theater audiences
- Engaging the masses
- Cultural tourists
- Poel's pilgrimage
- Where the audience is king

### 208. SHAKESPEARE FOR SOLDIERS AND SENIORS

*Amy Scott-Douglass, Marymount University, United States*

Shakespeare performances at any institution – whether that institution be the military, school, prison, or nursing home – share similar characteristics across the board. By and large, institutional Shakespeare performances can be divided into two types: (1) amateur performances put on by the members of the institutions and (2) professional performances put on by visiting Shakespeare companies for the members of the institutions. In spite of the commonalities, however, the objectives of Shakespeare programs vary significantly depending on the institution's population. In schools and in prisons, Shakespeare is represented as having the ability to improve, correct, and rehabilitate. But when it comes to military personnel and nursing home residents, Shakespeare tends to be represented as both an escape from the trials of life and a reward for a life well lived.

#### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Military Shakespeare
- Elder and convalescent Shakespeare
- A better existence

### 209. SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYERS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

*Pavel Drábek, University of Hull, United Kingdom, and M. A. Katritzky, Open University, United Kingdom*

English comedians who toured Northern and Central Europe from the 1580s into the seventeenth century played to audiences who did not speak English. The comedians won fame nonetheless by featuring not only scripted drama but also dancing, singing, acrobatics, and other less easily categorizable forms of spectacle. Their performances operated within the traditions of court and popular culture, puppet plays, the theatrical promotion of medical goods, Jesuit, Piarist, and Lutheran school theater, hagiography, Easter plays and other religious ceremonies, and performance. These elements were adapted to reflect contemporary performance pressures such as court- and civic-dictated didactic content and commercially successful audience-pleasing stage routines. As a brand name, "the English Comedy" seems to have referred to an idiosyncratic acting style rather than to a complete theater culture exported in full.

#### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- "How chances it they travel [...] What players are they?"
- Traveling, diplomacy, religious strife, and the Thirty Years War
- "Peeeces and patches of English plays"

### 210. DIVERSELY ABLED AUDIENCES

*Maura Michelle Tarnoff, St. Louis University, United States, in Spain*

This chapter will address some of the ways in which deaf and disability perspectives have reshaped the possibilities for how, as well as for whom, Shakespeare's plays are performed. Increasingly, the Web sites, brochures, and other marketing media used to publicize Shakespeare productions seek to represent performance events as inclusive environments with multiple and sometimes intersecting pathways for access, interpretation, and communication. To what extent have deaf and disability perspectives informed not only these strategies of access but also the spectrum of aesthetic choices through which theater companies communicate their creative visions? How do sign-language performances of Shakespeare's plays

aimed at both deaf and hearing audiences contest dominant ideologies of the sensible body and its relation to language, as a source of both pleasure and meaning, and provide models for cross-cultural exchange among diverse and diversely abled audiences?

#### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Touch tours
- Audio description
- Captioning and sign-language performance
- The ASL Shakespeare Project's *Twelfth Night* (2000)
- Language communities

## 211. AUDIENCES AT THE OLD GLOBE AND THE NEW

*Penelope Woods, University of Western Australia, Australia*

This chapter, focusing on the interaction of material space and audience, arises out of audience research carried out at the reconstructed Globe in London in 2009. Rejecting the assumption of straightforward continuity between past and present, or emphatic discontinuity, the wider project proposed putting together “now” and “then” to explore commonalities and disjunctures. Academics, critics, and artists working at or on this reconstruction project have all found themselves in a position consciously, as well as inadvertently, of drawing comparisons between the original and reconstructed sites. Attending to the audiences at the reconstruction generates new insights for the critical study of audiences both then and now.

#### TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Reconstruction and the craft aesthetic
- Material conditions at the Globe
- Responsiveness and vocality
- Dissension and antagonism
- Tourists at the Globe
- Fainting and swooning
- Outdoor performance and the aleatoric effect