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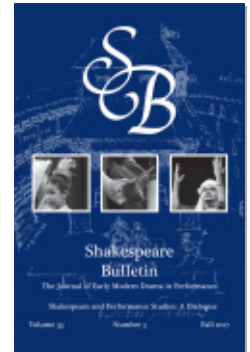
## Shakespeare and Performance Studies: A Dialogue

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## Guest Editors' Introduction Shakespeare and Performance Studies: A Dialogue

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The collaboration that led to this special issue began in 2013, when we happened to meet up at the PSi (Performance Studies International) conference at Stanford University and were struck by the realization that we were among the very few attendees who were also members of the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA). Why was there so little crossover between these organizations? One reason is that SAA and PSi, and the disciplines they represent, have little overlap in terms of historical focus: Shakespeare Studies is primarily focused on the early modern period, while Performance Studies is largely uninterested in much before 1968. The disjunction between the two fields stems also from their histories of development. As W. B. Worthen points out, Shakespeare Studies was “constructed through centuries of textual scholarship and interpretation” whereas Performance Studies has been “engrained with a disciplinary suspicion of the regulatory work attributed to writing, textuality, and the archive in performance, and so perhaps constitutively dismissive of dramatic theatre” (2). To be sure, there have been exceptions to these rules in both the SAA and PSi conference programs, but we found it odd, given our shared interests in Shakespeare and in Performance Studies theory, that these worlds seemed to be missing opportunities for exchange and engagement. That conversation led to our decision to co-lead a seminar at the SAA conference in 2016 that would bring the two fields into a more sustained and focused dialogue. As it turned out, Shakespeareans were

even more eager than we had suspected to bring theories of performance into their research on Shakespeare: there was so much demand for the seminar that we ran double sessions. The presentations and conversations in those two conference sessions form the origin and inspiration for this special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin*.

We were encouraged not just by the large number of proposals that the topic of “Shakespeare and Performance Studies: A Dialogue” received, but just as much by the enthusiasm of auditors, many of whom were quick to join in our debate. Clearly, then, there was (and is) a need and readiness in Shakespeare Studies for a deeper engagement with theories of performance. This derives, at least in part, from the sometimes slow, but certainly steady, growth in interest in performance matters within the field of Shakespeare Studies. Over the last twenty to thirty years, performance has moved, definitively, from a marginal subfield to a robust and diverse set of interests and approaches that impacts many critical nodes from the production of texts to the material conditions of early modern theaters. Moves that considered the text as the blueprint for performance and, even, tested editing practices through performance significantly changed the ways that editions of Shakespeare’s plays are made and used. For instance, the New Cambridge Shakespeare series advertises its distinctive emphasis on performance, noting that “precise details of staging and performance help students visualise the plays in action” (“About NCS”). As well, a recent issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* (34.1, Spring 2016), guest edited by C. K. Ash, José A. Pérez Díez, and Emma Smith, looked to invigorate conversation about “the relationship between page and stage from the position of the text-producer” (Introduction 2).

Parallel to developments that opened up textual study to a variety of issues concerned with performance, other scholarly work has been attentive to the period’s theater history as well as concerns of theater archaeology—the latter stimulated, on the one hand, by the threat to the remains of the Rose Theatre in 1989 when a new building was planned for its site and, on the other, in the project for a replica Globe Theatre, initiated by Sam Wanamaker and eventually opened on London’s Southbank in 1997. Other emergent strands of performance criticism within Shakespeare Studies have looked to imagine the production and reception of early modern performances, merging aspects of theater history (for example, knowledge of particular actors and their signature skills) with close readings that focused on releasing the text’s performance potentials. Moreover, interest in performance across Shakespeare studies has extended beyond a focus on early modern theater to consider the recent

and the contemporary: productions in theaters globally, Shakespeare on film, and adaptations across genres and media. As well, performance criticism has often been driven by individual experience: a performance seen or, in some cases, a performance directed, often in the context of student-led creation.

As is perhaps evinced by our experience at SAA, Shakespeareans no longer have to make the case for their focus on performance; performance is a welcome and widely respected research area today. Now that the field of research on Shakespeare and performance has developed across these different perspectives, it has reached a tipping point. If the study of Shakespeare and performance is to avoid stagnation, Shakespeareans need to move beyond simply using performance as lens or tool and to theorize more explicitly *how* they are using performance. Worthen's recent *Shakespeare Performance Studies* is an important opening salvo for this effort, coming from one of the few scholars who is as well known among Shakespeareans as he is among Performance Studies theorists. Worthen calls for the development of a Shakespeare Performance Studies whose goal is "an inquiry, not into Shakespeare but through Shakespeare into the medium of performance" (24). Our SAA seminar and this special issue were an answer to that call. In doing this kind of work, Shakespeare scholars need not reinvent the wheel, for at our disposal is a tremendously rich and sophisticated body of scholarship whose explicit aim is to theorize the medium of performance. And although Performance Studies theory has historically been antagonistic toward theater and drama, and particularly toward canonical texts such as those of Shakespeare, that resistance need not be two sided, nor should it be inevitable.

Recognizing that few scholars in Shakespeare Studies have, as yet, more than dipped a tentative toe into Performance Studies theories, our seminar for the SAA conference initiated its work through the provision of a shared reading list. The goal, then, was to ask our participants to refract their individual projects through a variety of key Performance Studies approaches, testing new pathways of investigation and exploring new questions for their own work. Among the half a dozen or so readings, selections from Alice Rayner's *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* (2006), Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011), and Daniel Sack's *After Live: Possibility, Potentiality, and the Future of Performance* (2015) proved useful to almost everyone, and the essays in this special issue further demonstrate, explicitly or implicitly, the impact of this Performance Studies thinking. We hoped that seminar participants would find themselves in dialogue

with ideas they had not yet engaged and, time and again, their papers revealed how the Performance Studies readings provoked different, and productive, directions for participants' ongoing research projects. The five essays collected in this special issue continue that dialogue, and each suggests not simply the value of that engagement, but a need to continue the exchange across our two disciplinary areas. We hope the readers of *Shakespeare Bulletin* will, too, find these essays open up new terms and conditions for the discussion of Shakespearean performance.

The first essay in this issue, by Alice Dailey, engages Performance Studies work on temporality to explore "the interdependence of archival remains and embodied representation" in Shakespeare's chronicle plays (374). Dailey draws attention to the discourse of loss that has dominated criticism on the history plays, which literary critics frequently read as exercises in "frustrated nostalgia": doomed attempts to restage a past that cannot be recuperated through theatrical performance (376). Focusing on particular scenes from *1 Henry VI*, Dailey maintains that the history plays actually complicate the "distinction between an authoritative, archived notion of the past and its performative reiteration via live bodies" (376). The essay draws on Rebecca Schneider's theorizations of historical reenactment to argue powerfully for performance as a site not of loss but of reanimation and, following Daniel Sack, forward-looking potentiality.

Geoffrey Way's essay also takes up the temporality of performance. Through case study examples of National Theatre Live and the Royal Shakespeare Company Schools' Broadcasts, Way looks at live-streamed productions via the long-argued obsession in Performance Studies with the notion of liveness, a concept he both engages and reframes. Way interrogates ideas about liveness for a medium that, in fact, draws a larger audience for "encore performances" than for the original live-streamed production. He persuasively argues that liveness should not be a definitive node of investigation for live-streamed production, but must be understood alongside other key terms from Performance Studies theory such as eventness, intermediality and immediacy. This more complex theoretical terrain suggests for Way how we might more carefully calibrate how live-streamed production addresses its audiences as well as how reception takes place.

Like Way, W. B. Worthen considers the impact of digital technologies on contemporary Shakespeare performance, but Worthen's essay locates this impact in the one place that others have argued to be free of digital technology, so-called "Original Practices" (OP) performances. Worthen argues that OP's presumably low-tech approach to performance is actu-

ally deeply indebted to and, in fact, emulates contemporary digital device culture, with its similar valuation of interactivity. Like contemporary “immersive theatre,” OP aims to “emancipate” the spectator from the passivity of the proscenium-arch auditorium. Worthen argues, however, that when digitally-derived “terms like *interactive* and *immersive* migrate to the theatre,” they remain moored to “the principles of licensed use” and the “vision of the user-as-commodified by interaction that structures the conceptual and financial economy of the digital medium” (414).

Stephen Purcell similarly situates OP in relation to contemporary performance practices. In an essay that follows from *Shakespeare Bulletin's* recent special issue on practice-as-research (PaR), Purcell reviews a range of the field's methodologies to draw discussions of OP performances into this genre of process-based analysis. Like other forms of PaR, OP is, in the end, about performance in the contemporary moment rather than instrumental to the revelation of an otherwise lost past. Indeed, Purcell argues, in an echo of Schneider's sense of re-enactment's syncopated time, “where *then* and *now* punctuate each other” (2), that it is the temporal strangeness created by OP productions that might prove their most compelling quality.

PaR is one among several practices informed by Performance Studies for which Katherine Steele Brokaw advocates in the final essay in this issue. In an effort to understand Shakespeare performance as a “community practice,” Brokaw proposes an “incorporative methodology” that combines PaR with the participant-observer techniques of ethnography and the interventionist aims of Applied Theater. Brokaw demonstrates the usefulness of these practices for analyzing two California community-based theater projects in which she has been involved, Merced Shakes and *Shakespeare in Yosemite*. She argues that insofar as each of these three practices “de-center[s] academic authority about Shakespeare,” they show how Shakespeare “transforms communities and is itself continually transformed by them” (447).

Taken together, the five essays illustrate how some of the key nodes of Performance Studies thinking might open up new perspectives for the study of Shakespearean performance. Tellingly, and in concert with a praxis-oriented commitment within Performance Studies research, this work often requires us to be more concerned with process than product, with risk rather than comfort, and with experiment rather than assurance of quality in our evaluation of performance. It asks us to go confidently beyond Shakespeare's place in the literary and theatrical canons to value other production paradigms and the audiences they attract.

Our intention in this issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* is to further the conversation between the two fields and to challenge scholars interested in the performance of Shakespeare's plays to continue to engage with a body of theory that, however much it has been historically disconnected from Shakespeare Studies, can yield new insights into the plays, theater history, and performance cultures that have been the primary preoccupation of Shakespeareans. Ideally, ongoing dialogue with the critical and theoretical trajectories of Performance Studies would build bridges in both directions. Why should there not be special issues on Shakespearean performance in *TDR* or *Performance Research*? Why not panels on early modern performance at P*S*i or at the American Society for Theatre Research or the International Federation for Theatre Research or TaPRA (Theatre and Performance Research Association)? The next step surely must be to move beyond dialogue and toward collaboration across fields. As we hope these essays demonstrate, it is up to Shakespeareans to perform ourselves as ambassadors for the rich and textured field of early modern performance so that we might better alert Performance Studies scholars to the impact Shakespeare Studies can have for the theorization of performance.

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