

A MAGAZINE  
FOR ALL  
SHAKESPEARE  
EDUCATORS

# teaching shakespeare

POLICY • PEDAGOGY • PRACTICE

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**PLAYING SHAKESPEARE**

On 26 February, Shakespeare's Globe is opening its doors to around 20,000 teenagers from London and Birmingham state schools, with free tickets to a special production of *Othello*: fast-paced, retaining Shakespeare's language, and designed especially for KS3, KS4 and A Level students. The production, running from 26 February to 21 March 2015, is part of *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank*, an annual project from Globe Education. Georghia Ellinas, Head of Learning at Globe Education, explains why it's much more than just a free ticket:



Photo © John Wildgoose

approaches to teaching Shakespeare, and help students 'tune in' to the play before they see it. Essays and 'teacher notes' in the programme and online facilitate deeper engagement with key themes and contextual issues.

A dedicated microsite, [playingshakespeare.org](http://playingshakespeare.org), consolidates the wide-reaching project and extends the free resource to those geographically too far from the Globe to attend a performance. Students can take learning into their own hands, exploring backstage interviews and insights, creative briefs, character profiles and 'scene machine' language tools."

Natalie Jim, Drama Curriculum Leader at Sarah Bonnell School, says: "It is one thing to get students to experience live performance, but to actually help shape the way Shakespeare is taught is amazing. The link between teacher CPD, student workshops and seeing the play live makes this project so successful: Globe Education is thinking almost 360 degrees. It is this that makes *Playing Shakespeare* one of the most important schemes out there."

The *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* production of *Othello* runs til 21 March. Free tickets for state secondary schools in London and Birmingham are available til 12 March. Other schools can attend at greatly reduced rates between 13–20 March. Saturday performances offer free tickets to encourage families to experience Shakespeare together. See [shakespearesglobe.com/playing-shakespeare](http://shakespearesglobe.com/playing-shakespeare)

**FREE MEMBERSHIP**

Speaking of freebies, if you are not already a member of the British Shakespeare Association, now is the time to join! We are celebrating Shakespeare's 450th anniversary with **FREE membership** for school teachers from Septembers 2014–15. Take advantage of the offer at [www.britishshakespeare.ws/education/education-members/](http://www.britishshakespeare.ws/education/education-members/)

"Shakespeare remains a vital part of the nation's schooling, but many teachers confess that engaging students with Shakespeare's plays is one of the toughest challenges they face. As a stimulus, there is no substitute for live performance when Shakespeare's language, often seen as a major barrier to access, comes alive.

With many pressures on teachers and students, it can be hard to commit to time out of school. *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* was designed to address these concerns. Free tickets, multiple performance dates timed to accommodate the school day, supporting resources and a dedicated team maximise the school-friendly nature of the visit. For many students, it is their first experience of live theatre, for most, the first time they've seen a Shakespeare play. Some have never seen the Thames before. The trip itself has huge cultural influence.

Over the last eight years we have learned from our audiences, and seen how the project is a vehicle to change the conceptions of teaching Shakespeare. The modern approaches allow fresh insights and prompt students to think in-depth about the issues presented. Feedback each year confirms that students return to school continuing animated discussions about what they have just seen.

2015's production of *Othello* raises many themes to which young people will relate: friendship, racism, envy and reputation. The play and supporting resources provide a safe framework for classroom discussions about these and other potentially difficult subjects like domestic violence, honour killings, and bullying.

"Preparatory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers at the Globe and in-school workshops for students support this. Delivered by Globe Education Practitioners, activities developed from the Globe stages and rehearsal rooms are tailored for classroom use. They encourage active

**SHAKESPEARE AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN JAPAN**

Last issue's focus on teaching Shakespeare in Japan drew the attention of a research collaboration between the universities of Hiroshima, Nihon, Oxford and York. The project is looking at drama and citizenship education in Japan and the UK. Its members Professor Ian Davies, Dr Velda Elliott, Professor Hiroaki Fukazawa, Professor Norio Ikeno, Catherine Shawyer and Professor Jun Watanabe, share their discussion of *Teaching Shakespeare 6*, ensuing from a presentation that I gave at a recent project symposium.

Our discussion focussed on the questions: 'Does the content of Shakespeare teaching in Japan raise public issues?' and 'Do the processes of Shakespeare teaching mirror and illuminate forms of social and political engagement?' Both were answered with a resounding 'yes', although the absence of material suggesting an association between teaching Shakespeare and advocacy and rights was noted. We used definitions of citizenship education and its objectives by Davies, Elliott, and Ikeno. These included citizenship as a subject (or content) and process, with its objectives including to foster political literacy, social and moral responsibility, social engagement, community involvement, democracy and justice, awareness of citizens' rights and duties, identities and diversity.

Issue 6 (available online at [www.britishshakespeare.ws](http://www.britishshakespeare.ws)) contained nine articles, six written by Japanese nationals, the rest supplied by UK or US foreign nationals working in Japan. Eight were written in response to a call for papers distributed via international Shakespeare associations, with only one of the articles commissioned by the editor. Eight of the authors teach in higher education (private universities are well-represented), one in lifelong learning, one at a private boys school, and two are additionally currently-enrolled graduate students. They predominantly work in English departments (language and literature), but two work in law and global studies.

With regards to students' **political literacy**, articles by Ken Chan and James Tink foregrounded the use of plays to boost students' knowledge of world history generally (p.4) and to introduce students to Medieval British politics (including early modern representations of statehood) and rulers specifically (p. 12–13). Tink emphasises that juxtaposing historical sources with Shakespeare's fictional representations could be used to explore bias and the political purpose of drama, rather than (mis)reading it as a primary source.

Studying Shakespeare was implicitly figured as helping students to fulfil their **social responsibility** in respect of being global citizens by having an awareness of other nation's histories, culture and nationally significant writers. In the vox pop, some students recalled visits to Stratford upon Avon as part of study abroad programmes (see pps. 11 and 15) and made connections between Shakespeare and Japanese writers, such as Soseki Natsume and Ryunosuke Akutagawa (p. 11), and genres such as manga and anime (p. 4, 7). Apart from acquiring **identities** as global citizens, students and teachers foregrounded their Japanese identities across the articles. These were constructed not just through a clear affection for local writers, but also for the productions of the world-renowned director Ninagawa (p. 14). Moreover, Shakespeare was consistently cast as helping students to become global citizens by developing their knowledge of the English language, considered desirable by the Ministry of Education in order to increase Japanese citizens' ability to interact professionally and socially with non-Japanese speakers (pps. 4, 10, 14–15). Watching productions on DVD and hosting visiting Shakespeareans from Anglophone countries is portrayed throughout the issue as satisfying students' need to listen to native speakers.

"studying shakespeare was implicitly figured as helping students to fulfil their social responsibility in respect of being a global citizen by having an awareness of other nation's histories, culture and nationally significant writers."

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Reference was made to the universality of Shakespeare's themes, including love, violence, friendship, betrayal, loyalty, forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion in relation to helping students to understand their **moral responsibility** (pps. 1, 5 and 7). However, the plays' ability to achieve this by modelling a positive morality was seen by some lecturers and students in Japan to be in tension with a *teinei* (polite) style of teaching, given their sexual and scatological humour, or *shimo-neta*, widely considered more appropriate to bars than classrooms and sometimes been censored in Japanese editions (pps. 9, 11, 18–19 and this issue pps. 12–13).

Sometimes themes 'inherent' in the plays were cast, not as universal, but as representing a historical affinity between early modern England and old Japan. For example, **duties** such as honour and allegiance are held up as historically, typically Japanese *and* as mirrored in early modern English politics and society. This was illustrated with reference to the turn-coat actions of Japan's Date Masamune and Shakespeare's Duke of York as well as *bushido* and the chivalric code (p. 12–13).

Content aside, teaching Shakespeare is described in ways that resonate with processes at the heart of citizenship education. Almost all contributors talked about developing students' skills in **critical thinking and enquiry**. These students are unanimously encouraged to see, discuss and perform a range of interpretations of the plays – invoking their own response as readers or viewers and those of literary critics, sometimes in comparison with historical documents (pps.

12, 14, 16–18). Yu Umemiya describes students responding to each other's evidence (p. 19). Both he and Daniel Gallimore allude to the potential when studying Shakespeare to have students momentarily set aside their own beliefs, behaviours and experiences to 'inhabit' characters' perspectives (pps. 16, 17) e.g. shifting perspective from that of a twenty-first-century, female, Japanese student to that of a medieval, British ruler or courtier. However, both Japanese and foreign nationals raise fostering critical discussion and enquiry with their Japanese students as a challenge. They cited the dearth of student questions during sessions (p.19) and the relative scarceness (or novelty) of interactive small group teaching in Japanese colleges (p. 8) as particularly problematic for and typical of Japanese pedagogy.

Studying Shakespeare is frequently described in terms of **community involvement**. The notion of a learning collective is evident in places (p. 15); so too is the idea that, by teaching Shakespeare, educators can alert their students to differences between the performer-audience relationship in Japan and the UK. The former, as cast by the contributors, is typified by distance and passivity, the latter by intimacy and activity (pp. 14–16). The implication is of a wish to foster a Western model of audience involvement in more Japanese theatre.

**“SOMETIMES THEMES ‘INHERENT’ IN THE PLAYS WERE CAST, NOT AS UNIVERSAL, BUT AS REPRESENTING A HISTORICAL AFFINITY BETWEEN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND AND OLD JAPAN.”**

**“STUDENTS ARE UNANIMOUSLY ENCOURAGED TO SEE, DISCUSS AND PERFORM A RANGE OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PLAYS – INVOKING THEIR OWN RESPONSE AS READERS OR VIEWERS AND THOSE OF LITERARY CRITICS, SOMETIMES IN COMPARISON WITH HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS.”**

The Shakespeare teaching featured here mirrors and illuminates forms of **social and political engagement**: firstly, in terms of embracing the trading of products with the West (economic and cultural) from the late 19th century onwards (p. 4). Secondly, Ken Chan's work in Shakespeare-inspired singing with students resonates with Japanese social activities, such as karaoke, and global, peaceful forms of protest (witness Hong Kong in autumn 2014) (p.5). Thirdly, although specifically orchestrated for this issue, teachers surveyed their students on their knowledge of and experience with Shakespeare – echoing political polls and the solicitation of consumer feedback common in democratic, capitalist societies (pps. 5, 7, 11). These processes model an ideal of society and politics along the lines of Antonio's description of the world, in the *Merchant of Venice*, as 'a stage where every man must play a part' (p 15).

Students throughout the magazine are shown considering **informed and responsible action** in relation to the content of the history plays, the switching of allegiances, as well as characters' weighing up the merits of accepting and resisting injustice in *The Merchant of Venice* and contemporary films (pps. 12–13, 15). Moreover, they are asked to take informed and responsible action while studying Shakespeare. In these articles, students suggest plays they wish to study (p.5, p. 14); actively participate in theatre games (some informed by Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed, intended to empower Brazilian citizens to achieve social and political transformations in the 1960s p. 14); direct scenes, leading a team of actors and making decisions about how to present a scene (p. 16) and take the initiative in small group discussion rather than relying on cues from the teacher/authority figure (with mixed success, p. 11).

While the content of Shakespeare demonstrably raises Japanese and global public issues and the processes of teaching the plays evidently mirror and illuminate forms of social and political engagement, the small sample of contributors – usually considering themselves, in some respect, innovators with regards to Shakespeare and or

**“THE CONTENT OF SHAKESPEARE DEMONSTRABLY RAISES JAPANESE AND GLOBAL PUBLIC ISSUES AND THE PROCESSES OF TEACHING THE PLAYS EVIDENTLY MIRROR AND ILLUMINATE FORMS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT.”**



Photo © Helen Warner

pedagogy as well as self-motivated enough to write about their experiences – must be considered a limitation on the generalizability of these conclusions. Our project hopes to expand in size and scope on this consideration of drama and citizenship in Japan and the UK. This analysis of teachers' self-reported practice has already raised avenues for further exploration, not least of which is whether or not the absence of linking Shakespeare to the understanding and practice of advocacy, representation and rights in these articles is representative of experiences of drama and/or citizenship education in Japan and the UK.

Citizenship and/or drama teachers wanting to know more and/or who wish to become involved in future project activities should contact the authors of this article by writing to Ian Davies (ian.davies@york.ac.uk).

Shakespeare's role in contributing to the aims and features of, but not exclusive to, citizenship education beyond Japan is evident in the articles by this issue's contributors who teach Shakespeare in Germany, the UK and USA. Playing Shakespeare for social, political and moral engagement is also apparent in the Globe's description of its annual production for young, often under-privileged, students. Valerie Pye elucidates the mechanisms of Early Modern theatre in creating a sense of community among audience members.

Another coincidental but uniting cross-article thread in this issue is making more use of our senses to explore Shakespeare: smell, sight, sound and touch – so far, no taste, but we would love to hear from those who recreate Elizabethan banquets with their students. Send your contributions for issue 8, on any topic, to [teachingshakespeare@gmail.com](mailto:teachingshakespeare@gmail.com).

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## TEACHING SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYHOUSES AND DOCUMENTS TO GERMAN STUDENTS

**F**ull appreciation of Shakespeare's plays requires not only close reading, but also experiencing them live in a performance. Recent increased emphasis on "the active role [of] the spectator to make the theatrical experience happen" and on Theatre Studies signals that performance analysis and text analysis are equally important (Balme 2). In addition to putting more emphasis on performance analysis, we should encourage students to gain a comprehensive understanding of Early Modern theatre at its source. Learning becomes most effective when authentic materials are used – play texts as well as contextualising documents. This teaching concept is the foundation of my yearly Shakespeare Excursion to London (SEL) that I conduct for German university students.

The SEL takes a three-step approach: Step one comprises classroom activities in which students present their reflections on the plays and study the historical context, stage and film adaptations. Step two includes activities in London at the theatre and in the archives. Step three engages students in personal reflection on the seminar and excursion.

### THE CLASSROOM

Over the course of one semester, the classroom discussion focuses on four to five plays, theatre history, text and performance. Teams are formed to present topics about the plays we will attend. Each student will be on a presenter team and on a responder team. The seminar itself and the teams include students from years one to four so that the experienced students gain leadership experience and the newer students learn from the experienced students.

The classroom part of the excursion is also part of the holistic learning in that we prepare the students to examine the environment for which Shakespeare wrote his plays. Rather than reading secondary sources about the theatre landscape of Shakespeare's London alone, I prepare students to find and transcribe original documents about Shakespeare, the man, and the world for which he wrote his plays. This allows students not only to access historic

information, but also to own it; they experience Early Modern theatre from the same perspective and using the same sources that the most sophisticated researcher would use. Students learn to draw evidence from the original sources and use it to prove what they assert. Evidence is drawn from the plays themselves, contemporary literary texts and Early Modern pieces: legal documents, maps, drawings and paintings and archaeological excavations.

**"STUDENTS LEARN TO DRAW EVIDENCE FROM THE ORIGINAL SOURCES AND USE IT TO PROVE WHAT THEY ASSERT."**

A one-day workshop on topography and palaeography equips students with the skills to locate and utilise this evidence in London. Students learn to read maps, as well as handwriting: they compare sixteenth century maps and twenty-first century maps to locate playhouse sites and try their hand at using a topographical glass to draw a building – their institute – just as the cartographers Hollar, Vischer and Norden used to in London 400 years ago. These tasks encourage students to employ social skills, problem solving and critical thinking – but most of all, to actively engage with theatre history at its source.

### ACTIVITIES IN LONDON

A theatre's social and spatial dynamics – the effects of the theatre building and the stage on a production as well as the effects of experiencing a play as part of a collective audience – cannot be reproduced by watching a recording in the classroom. While in London:

- we watch several plays performed by various theatre companies
- we engage in acting and directing workshops
- we attend talkbacks with actors and directors
- we visit the British Library's MSS Department and the National Archives
- we find the footprints of Early Modern playhouses.

The acting and directing workshops are hosted by the same theatre companies whose productions we will see, and use actors from the production to coach students in enacting

**"these tasks encourage students to employ social skills, problem solving and critical thinking – but most of all, to actively engage with theatre history at its source."**

scenes from the play. This enhances not only the textual analysis of the play but also the understanding of how the text 'directs' the production – the hidden clues within the play that are otherwise missed, or the endless possibilities for staging a scene. We attend at least five Shakespeare productions at various London theatres, fringe and mainstream. In this way students experience a variety of staging techniques and interpretations and actively employ the analytical instruments that they were taught in the seminar when viewing stage and film productions of the plays.

The talkbacks prove that students have learned to critically assess productions and that they can engage in an informed discussion about the plays and their metamorphosis on stage. They address specific aesthetic aspects such as genre, period, stage, theatre building and acting types. The aim is to have talkbacks immediately after every production with the actors and directors and another one the next day, without actors and directors. In the first talkback students gain immediate feedback from cast and director, in the second they reflect further on the production and on the artistic perspective of the play and its production as expressed by cast and director.

Beyond the playhouse, the cartography of the theatre also becomes a significant factor in experiencing and understanding theatre history. There are precious few traces of Shakespeare or traces of the playhouses from the Early Modern time in London. In the spirit of learning-by-doing, students use sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents to locate the sites of Early Modern playhouses. Teams of two to three students each receive a packet with an assignment and evidence with hints to find the site of an Early Modern playhouse: the Theatre, the Rose, the Fortune, the Swan and Black Friars. What makes these particular sites attractive is that we can find them by using sixteenth century documents and we can access many of the unique, original documents at the National Archives. Students do not use Wikipedia; no, they handle and decipher the original manuscripts for which they have been coached at the seminar's workshop. To animate students in such a treasure hunt, the information offered in the packets must just be enough to make the

**"this enhances not only the textual analysis of the play but also the understanding of how the text 'directs' the production – the hidden clues within the play that are otherwise missed, or the endless possibilities for staging a scene."**



puzzles entertaining, but challenging enough to activate students' problem solving skills, motivate them intrinsically and create a lasting learning effect.

At the National Archives students are issued a reader's card and check out documents into the reading room. This is not a passing-by-a-document-in-a-glass-case. Each team of two to three students is assigned a document, which comes in a box full of parchment leaves with handwritten court records on them. They must check out the right document and locate and decipher specific information in it. These documents include wills, court cases, payment orders or the Master of the Revels book.

In addition to the National Archives, we have an appointment with the Manuscript Department of the British Library where Arnold Hunt, Head Curator of the Manuscript Department, introduces the students to textual and editorial processes and the book market in the Early Modern time. Here, students are also able to view precious Early Modern books such as Quarto editions of the plays we are about to see at the excursion.

To complement an understanding of the historical dimension of Early Modern theatre, we visit the Rose excavation site and see a Shakespeare production there. The playhouse called The Theatre in Shoreditch was excavated only briefly, but in the few short months of its excavation, we got a tour of the site from Julian Bowsher, the head of Museum of London. A visit to exhibitions is also worthwhile – such as the Early Modern exhibition at the Museum of London and the Globe exhibition that displays sixteenth-century maps and views of London.

### THE POST-ACTIVITY

After the week-long excursion, students return home not only with a unique experience of Early Modern theatre, but also with an understanding of the social, political and religious context of Early Modern theatre and culture. With this new insight, they are ready to engage in their personal reflection on the seminar and excursion by writing



a term paper that dwells on a critical analysis of the play's text as well as a performance related reflection.

In summary the goals for the SEL are that students:

- critically assess Shakespeare's texts and Shakespeare productions
- use original documents and maps to locate archaeological sites and therefore increase social skills and skills such as problem solving and critical thinking
- experience the history of Early Modern theatre at its source
- experience bringing Shakespeare's work to the stage.

The preparation for such a holistic approach to Shakespeare is time-consuming. Yet, the reward for all involved is immense. The SEL not only takes students back to Early Modern times, but entertains students who, intrinsically motivated, develop a lasting interest in Shakespeare.

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## teaching theatre through texts

**V**ALERIE CLAYMAN PYE is a professional actor, director, scholar, and educator who specialises in Shakespeare in performance. Valerie holds a PhD in Performance Practice in Drama as well as an MFA in Staging Shakespeare from the University of Exeter, and an MFA in Acting from Brooklyn College. She is currently an Assistant Professor at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York.

**I**f we asked students today to imagine what a theatre looks like, we would not be surprised to find that the image in their mind's eyes bears little resemblance to the architecture for which Shakespeare wrote. Most likely, we would see a variety of images where the audience sits in an organized fashion in a fixed configuration that recedes from the stage space, which offers the audience one vantage point. We would probably find an image where there are two distinct spaces: one inhabited by the fiction, and another by the spectator. The dynamics of this configuration – where the audience peers in through the invisible "fourth wall" – has become such a staple of our theatre paradigm in the Western world that it may very well be what our students first imagine when put to the task. This "two-room space" resembles the auditoria that they encounter in school, it echoes their familiarity with the cinema, and it resembles the proscenium arch spaces you will find in the West End and on Broadway. What it does not resemble, however, is Shakespeare's theatre.

When we examine the earliest image we have of an Elizabethan playhouse – the De Witt / van Buchell 1888 drawing of *The Swan* (opposite) we find a performance space where the audience and the fiction occupy one room, not two. There is indeed a designated stage space, and space assigned to audience, yet there is a permeable nature to this division; it is a space in which the division is not quite as fixed as it is when an invisible "wall" is placed between the participants. Two things support this greater fluidity: the environment's shared daylight and the way in which the audience wraps around the thrust stage.

In both of these instances, the audience's presence is heightened both for the player and the spectator. Shared lighting enhances the sense that all inhabit one space because everyone present can see one another. As a result, communal lighting promotes community. This sense of community is reinforced simultaneously by the audience's configuration: as they focus primarily on the action that takes place on stage (if we assume that to be their primary focus), they also hold their fellow audience members in their secondary focus as they remain visible beyond the action onstage.

"SHARED LIGHTING ENHANCES THE SENSE THAT ALL INHABIT ONE SPACE BECAUSE EVERYONE PRESENT CAN SEE ONE ANOTHER. AS A RESULT, COMMUNAL LIGHTING PROMOTES COMMUNITY."

We have no way to know with any certainty what performance was like during the time that Shakespeare wrote, but we can assume that he wrote with the dynamics of this kind of theatre in mind. If we look closely at Shakespeare's text, what might we learn about performance in the Elizabethan playhouse? How can a close reading of Shakespeare's text within the context of his playhouse provide a greater understanding of both the text as well as Shakespeare's theatre?

We can use Shakespeare's text to illustrate points about the Elizabethan playhouse, and we can use points about the conditions of that playhouse to help our students understand Shakespeare's texts. Let's look at Act II, scene 2 of



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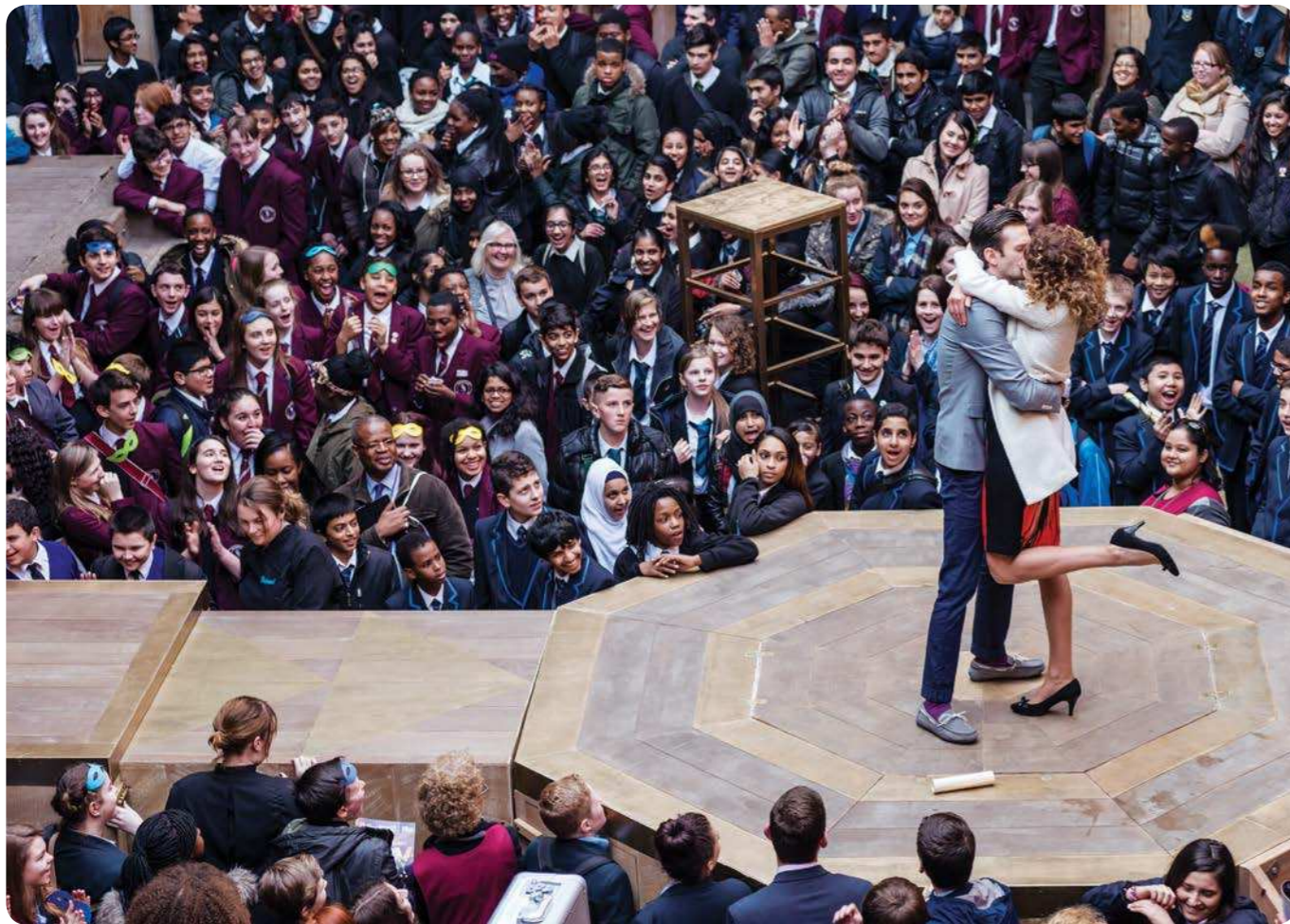
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*Romeo and Juliet*, which begins with Romeo's soliloquy. The scene begins with the line, 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound'. To whom does Romeo speak as he addresses Mercutio's behaviour in the previous scene? In hiding, Romeo has been audience to that scene, just as the audience proper has been. (Of course, it is important to point out that the very term "audience" – that today we use so interchangeably with the term "spectator" – actually comes from the Latin word "audentia", which means literally "hearing".) In commenting on Mercutio's actions, Romeo gives voice to the audience's thoughts as well as to his own. This illustrates the porousness between the world of the play and that of the spectator. Romeo can take action and confront Mercutio (if only Shakespeare had written it that way) or he can discuss his choice *not* to take action by confiding in the audience. Romeo essentially says that Mercutio doesn't understand, he doesn't "get it"; he's never been in love, never been scarred by Cupid's arrow nor felt love's pangs. We can reduce this line to our two-room performance paradigm and imagine that Romeo comments to himself, "he just doesn't get it" or we can locate this moment within the shared light of the outdoor play-

house where the actor, "the player", can speak to those who bear him witness. I would suggest that the latter provides us with a greater understanding of both the line as well as the possible material conditions of performance.

In this one line, we also discover the opportunity to introduce students to another aspect of what would have been included in the performance dynamics in Shakespeare's theatre: the actor's liminal state. The Elizabethan actor was not bound to a state of mimesis governed by realism and naturalism, two movements that hadn't yet been established. Instead, their work would have been located within an extensive repertory system. Elizabethan performances would have taken place in the representative playhouse without the implementation of design elements that were crafted deliberately for a given play (as they are today). Elizabethan actors wore contemporary clothing that could be suited equally to the world onstage as well as to the playhouse (with the exception of characters of royal lineage). If we point out these differences, we can introduce one of the ways in which the Elizabethans would have seen the "player" as one who "plays": one who is both agent and product of the fiction.

Romeo continues, 'But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?' Once we know that everyone in the play-

house shared the same space, what can "But soft" mean? Going to the theatre in Shakespeare's day was a social event, more akin to a sporting event today than our contemporary theatre. When we attend a sporting event, we're watching the game, but we're also socializing with those around us: we're eating, we're talking, and we're moving around. We are not sitting quietly with our attention rapt for the duration of the event. That's not to say that we are not invested in the outcome; but our investment is located within that social context. In today's theatre, the context is most often shaped by quiet, invisible behaviour. Shakespeare's theatre took place in the middle of day, six days a week, and it brought people together regularly. It would not have been surprising that people conducted business, ate, visited with friends, and also engaged with the plays.

What if "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?" was Burbage's way of saying, "Ssh! Be quiet! Pay attention now, this is going to be important, do you see what I see?" Burbage would have been aware of his audience, and they would have been embroiled in the play. In the latter half of that line, he could be asking, "What is happening here?" Yes, he is asking himself, but he is also not alone on that platform stage in the shared light of day; he has confidantes. He continues and answers, 'It is the East and Juliet is the Sun'. He is reorienting himself; realigning his world. The day begins with the sun rising in the East; his new day is beginning. He sees Juliet and he needs to capture his audience's attention – his world is shifting, and so is the play.

The next few lines are a wonderful way to illustrate metaphor and antithesis – not specific to the architecture of Shakespeare's theatre, but these texts engage simultaneously numerous teachable moments. It's worth pointing out the ways in which he renames Juliet: "Sun" and "Maid" (and we can continue to add to this list as we proceed through the speech).

*It is my Lady, O it is my Love,  
O that she knew she were,  
She speaks, yet she says nothing what of that?*

The first two lines are declarative: if Shakespeare's audience hasn't been paying enough attention – if they are slow to catch up with the instructions from the second line – they can join the world of the play rather quickly. The player speaks directly to the audience, and they engage and calculate: he loves her and something complicates this truth. The final line of the trio allows us once again to remind our students of the fluidity in Shakespeare's playhouse; the observation and question exists within and beyond the fiction. Romeo (and the player himself) is in the fiction and also in the world of the playhouse. This is so unlike the paradigm in our contemporary

theatre that we cannot discount how eye opening this detail can be, how influential this is in fostering a deep understanding of Shakespeare's plays and his playhouse.

Next, we can illustrate some inherent stage directions. Romeo says, 'Her eye discourses, I will answer it / I am too bold 'tis not to me she speaks'.

Of course we have the play between the words "eye" and "I", and the thematic journey of "discourses", "answer", and "speaks", but something else happens in these two lines. There is a bit of business that comes between the decision to respond to Juliet, and thinking better of that choice. Both of these lines address the audience, yet between them there is full engagement within the world of the play. It's as if the actor/character provides a commentary, takes stage action, and then responds to the action taken.

Finally, the next eight lines wax poetically about the luminosity of Juliet's eyes. Here, we can seize the opportunity to illustrate how the Elizabethan player would have been standing beneath the painted "Heavens"; Romeo would have a concrete example from which to make his comparison. He would have stood both beneath the open sky in the Elizabethan playhouse as well as beneath the painted celestial roof that covered the stage. If you are able to share with your students an image of the "Heavens" from the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe, this is a perfect way to tie in the theatre to your examination of the text. I also like to point out that the Elizabethans would have imagined the playhouse as a representation of the world, literally, the Globe – Shakespeare's world in Shakespeare's playhouse. We have the Heavens above, the stage represents the world itself, and a trap door in the stage floor would lead to Hell below.

There are many opportunities to connect the dynamics of Shakespeare's theatre to the plays he wrote. In fact, Shakespeare wrote quite a bit about theatre – the Prologue to *Henry V*, Hamlet's advice to the players, the Rude Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Eve*, to name a few. I have chosen deliberately to look at a speech that is seemingly not about theatre in order to point out how we can make such connections in even the most unlikely of places. I urge you to find new ones for yourself.

**"I HAVE CHOSEN DELIBERATELY TO LOOK AT A SPEECH THAT IS SEEMINGLY NOT ABOUT THEATRE IN ORDER TO POINT OUT HOW WE CAN MAKE SUCH CONNECTIONS IN EVEN THE MOST UNLIKELY OF PLACES. I URGE YOU TO FIND NEW ONES FOR YOURSELF."**



## BEYOND THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

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### PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE AT A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY

**I**n May 2014, the Department of English Language and Literature at Japan Women's University had the honor of watching a performance of *Romeo & Juliet* by the International Theatre Company London (ITCL, also known as TNT Theatre Britain). This was an unprecedented opportunity for our students but we were concerned about how they would respond to a 150-minute live performance in a language they were still learning. At the same time, the performance provided a valuable intercultural encounter between Japanese students and British history and culture, as well as a great opportunity for the students to have their ideas about Shakespeare challenged.

In the English-speaking world, Shakespeare is undoubtedly one of the most renowned authors. His works have become part of English culture itself, phrases from his plays literally changing the English language, and his wisdom still referred to and influencing people's lives to this day. On the contrary, the Japanese are unfamiliar with Shakespeare. In spite of Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa's famous adaptations, the average Japanese person is unlikely to have had much contact with Shakespeare's work. People might have heard of a more famous play such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, or *Hamlet*, but the Japanese public in general does not have many opportunities to see actual plays either in the original language or in Japanese translation. Moreover, those who take an interest in reading his plays because they are famous foreign classics can find Shakespeare's archaic language a hurdle to understanding. Indeed, Shakespeare is not a compulsory subject at university, even for English majors. Despite this, the production of *Romeo & Juliet* at Japan Women's University was highly popular, both with students and the general public, suggesting a higher level of Japanese interest in Shakespeare than expected.

On the day of the performance, there was great excitement in the air as the university theater filled up. For most of the students, it was the first time they had seen an authentic Shakespeare play. To my great surprise, some of them did

not even know the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, including the famous tragic ending. In a sense, this was advantageous, however, because it enabled them to watch the play with fresh eyes. Along with the excitement, I could also sense that many students were worried about whether they could understand the play performed in old English. They were also expecting the story to be complicated and serious. Contrary to their concern, however, once the play started, the audience became absorbed in the story without difficulty. Interestingly, in their later feedback, many students claimed that they were shocked by Shakespeare's bawdiness; as one student commented, "Some scenes were much more rude than I had imagined!" Overall, the audience genuinely enjoyed the show, and were charmed by the passionate couple and the elegant language spoken by the actors.

**"THE JAPANESE PUBLIC IN GENERAL DOES NOT HAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE ACTUAL PLAYS EITHER IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OR IN JAPANESE TRANSLATION."**

What was striking about ITCL's production of *Romeo & Juliet* was that even though the play is originally known as a romantic tragedy, there were many comic scenes that made the audience laugh. Not only did the performance incorporate singing and dancing, but the actors involved the audience by talking to them, waving and winking at them, sitting down on them, and even throwing water over their heads. Whereas this may be normal in English performances of Shakespeare, and direct interaction with the audience was certainly so in Shakespeare's day, it challenged many students' ideas about



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what a Shakespeare play should be – and many of them wrote in their reports that, consequently they found the play's style accessible and entertaining. Another aspect of the production that surprised them was the fact that Romeo was played by a black actor, Natey Jones. In Jones' view, the universality of Shakespeare's tragedy transcends racial boundaries: "There could be no denying that there was a level of fascination of Romeo looking different to what many students expected," he said, "but (...) it is a story about love and I guess once that is believable nothing else matters." The students said that seeing Jones playing Romeo felt a little different at first. As they became engaged in the story, nevertheless, they admired the actors regardless of their skin colors.

Reading the students' reports, I became certain that seeing an actual Shakespeare play in the original language brought many benefits to the students. Even though most students found the language difficult to understand (they are not used to hearing "Thou art" instead of "You are," or sonnets instead of prose), the play was still accessible to them because of the actors' facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. With the help of these visual and tonal elements, alongside subtitles in modern Japanese projected onto screens at the side of the stage, the students could understand the play fairly easily. As one student wrote, "The performance was beyond the language barrier." Even though the language itself was complicated, the students were still moved to hear famous lines such as "What's in a name?" and "Parting is such sweet sorrow" beautifully spoken by the actors. They were also impressed by the metaphors in individual lines in the play, commenting "How they used love as a metaphor was so unique and amazing!" Hearing the beautiful lines and metaphors, many students were strongly motivated to study the English language harder.

In addition to the linguistic aspect, there were also historical and cultural benefits. The students could learn how British people in the Elizabethan Era dressed and behaved through the actors' costumes, stage props, and movement, and thereby better understand cultural differences. Likewise,

seeing how people danced, kissed and partied exposed the students to a different set of cultural norms. Interestingly, many students shyly admitted that they blushed when they saw Romeo and Juliet kiss, since kissing in public is taboo in Japan. The performance also provided the opportunity for the students to interact directly with the actors, at a tea party afterwards. One group asked Darius McStay, the actor playing Lord Capulet, why he carried a cane on stage, since in Japan we do not see such canes except as walking sticks for elderly people. He responded that it was a sign of the character's wealth and status, which was a revelation to the students.

Not only the students but also the actors found the performance an educational intercultural exchange. McStay, who also played Benvolio, reported that although he was delighted by the warmth and attentiveness of Japanese audiences, he was surprised that they expected Shakespeare to be something very stiff and formal: "Shakespeare isn't formal or serious," he said. "In fact, *Romeo & Juliet* is one of his rudest plays – especially around sex. Nor are actors well behaved." The actors were even asked to tone down the overt sexuality of Shakespeare's bawdiness for the Japanese audience, even though they were often able to connect with the audience and break the ice by the very fact that they were being rude on stage. McStay commented that one of the most satisfying aspects of his experience was challenging Japanese audiences' expectations about the Bard: "I feel we broke expectations of what Shakespeare is," he said, "specifically what the story of *Romeo & Juliet* is as told by Shakespeare." The show certainly worked that way since many students found the play accessible and entertaining, and even fresh. The actors succeeded in breaking the image of Shakespeare as "difficult" and telling us it is all right to enjoy his plays in a more relaxed way.

**"ONE OF THE MOST SATISFYING ASPECTS OF HIS EXPERIENCE WAS CHALLENGING JAPANESE AUDIENCES' EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE BARD."**

In Japan, Shakespeare is still considered formal and difficult, something only educated, "smart" people enjoy. People are also intimidated by the unfamiliar language and assume they will not understand the stories. What needs to be done to change this image is to create more opportunities for students and the general public to see Shakespeare's plays actually performed, preferably by British actors. Once they know how to enjoy Shakespeare's plots and language, more doors will be open for them. ITCL's *Romeo & Juliet* not only fascinated our students but also inspired them to learn more about the English language and British history and culture. I hope more Japanese people will have such inspiring, intercultural opportunities in the future.

## Hey! WHO BARDED IN HERE?!

**S**TEPHANIE ANN FOSTER completed an M.A. in Shakespeare and Education at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham. She spent four years touring theatre-in-education programs internationally, and another four teaching literature in Seoul. She has acted as Dramaturge for the Seoul Shakespeare Company and directed for the youth summer camp of the American Shakespeare Center. Currently a Teaching Artist with the California Shakespeare Theatre and a guest lecturer at San Francisco State University, her passion is for making Shakespeare tangible. Here she shares her experiences of increasing Shakespeare accessibility and relevance through scent.



Photo © Stephanie Foster

**I**t was in the midst of an inspiring Miles Tandy workshop that I first considered the application of smell in the Shakespeare classroom. Our week long intensive unit with the education branch of the RSC had already supplied numerous creative classroom approaches and activities. At one point I was led, eyes closed, through a narrated word-carpet tour of Prospero's island. The exercise was enchanting, and I felt myself caught up in the imaginative play of childhood. *I can really see it! I thought. I can feel it. I can hear it! I can smell—*

But I couldn't. I couldn't smell anything. I stopped in my tracks (startling my very patient tour guide) and scrambled for my journal. In it I wrote:

*Why do we invest so much time equipping students to understand Shakespeare's literary palette (this is a metaphor, this is an oxymoron, this is enjambment) and so little time equipping them to understand his sensory palette (this is a rose, this is sulphur, this is rosemary)?*

It is a palette from which most students are now very much removed. Though an obvious shift away from agrarian subsistence has occurred between Shakespeare's time and our own, some might still expect students to have a basic familiarity with the smells of the world around them. Most do not. They do not even have the words to describe new smells when they encounter them. I know; I've checked.

I recently toured the *Hey! Who Barded in Here?! workshop* to fourteen California middle and high school classrooms and was disturbed to discover that while the majority of students were familiar with the scent of both bleach and gasoline (petrol), almost none could identify the scent of rosemary. The curriculum of their particular districts makes it likely that they will all study *Hamlet* before graduation, but when they read, "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance" they won't be imagining any plant or smell in particular. That doesn't sound very memorable to me.

*Scent Circles* were envisioned as a means to combat such sensory illiteracy. One part lecture, two parts performance, and three parts "show and smell", this portion of the workshops introduced students to scents they rarely encounter – except perhaps when reading Shakespeare.

Obtaining the materials for the project was sometimes more challenging than envisioned. For example, I phoned several florists only to experience variations of this same exchange:

*"I need the strongest smelling violet variety you offer."  
"Ours are unscented."  
"What?"  
"The violets we carry don't smell."  
"But . . . isn't smell sort of the point with violets?"*

Not anymore, apparently. In order to cater to increased reports of allergies and sensitivities, many of the flowers we obtain from florists (at least here in California) are now being specifically bred or treated to have only a subtle olfactory presence or none at all. The same is true for roses. At one point in the workshop I shared with the students two scents at once: the crimson red and nearly odorless rose petals I purchased from a florist and the somewhat pale but sweetly-scented ones I obtained from a San Francisco apothecary. The difference between the two rose samples was striking. I had asked students in their pre-workshop survey, "Are women like flowers?" and, "What is more important in a rose, appearance, or scent?" After experiencing the scent of real roses many asked if they could change their responses.

In the end I settled upon purchasing a vial of African Violet extract to use in the first workshops. Though somewhat anachronistic, this violet variety was a potent sensory

*"some might still expect students to have a basic familiarity with the smells of the world around them. most do not. they do not even have the words to describe new smells when they encounter them."*



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experience that was new to most students. We discussed violet's unique ability to numb scent receptors so that its fragrance seems to linger and depart, and what it might mean when Shakespeare's Laertes compares a lover like Hamlet to violets. Students shared experiences from their own social lives to exemplify similarly fickle love. One wrote:

*"A person I care about very much has a boyfriend whose love is like violet."*

Perhaps the most memorable scent agent I shared was sulphur (brimstone). I warned the students that they were about to endure the extremities of Renaissance Hell, and described Lear's haunting sulphurous pit. Reactions to the sulphur were delightfully histrionic as small groups of students gathered around to sniff at a tiny bottle and then mimed retching as they retreated to their respective rows. Now they know what every citizen of sixteenth and seventeenth century England likely knew: sulphur *stinks*.

I believe that revelations of this sort (violets are fleeting, roses are heavenly, sulphur is putrid), though seemingly obvious, can have a profound impact on the way that students understand and relate to Shakespeare's descriptive language. His sensory world was in some ways much richer than our own, or at the very least it was *different*. For example, only one student in fourteen workshops (an Armenian) could correctly identify Frankincense tears. How many church-attending teens in early modern England would likely have struggled to do so? Shakespeare wrote with a sensory range

that our students simply haven't experienced. I'd argue that without a full sensory palette of this kind, there is little hope of fully enjoying the plays, let alone understanding them.

*"I'd argue that without a full sensory palette of this kind, there is little hope of fully enjoying the plays, let alone understanding them."*

Students seemed to agree with me. After the workshops several wrote about their new understanding of lines from *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Many shared personal stories relating to the scents we studied, demonstrating the sort of emotional connection-building that suggests they might now have a deeper connection with Renaissance poetry when they encounter it. One wrote:

*"I think it was cool that we got to smell the Renaissance."*

Very cool. Also stinky, sweet, odorous, reeking, aromatic, fetid, musky, perfumed, rank, redolent, malodorous, and fragrant. But very, very cool.

I am still exploring the *Hey! Who Barded in Here!?* workshop and welcome insight from other educators. For more information, please email: [stephanieannfoster@gmail.com](mailto:stephanieannfoster@gmail.com) or visit [www.stephanieannfoster.com](http://www.stephanieannfoster.com).



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