What has directors' theatre done to Shakespeare on the 21st century stage? An examination of the effect on the text and performance of Shakespeare in three contemporary productions

by

Jennifer Claire Webber

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Shakespeare Institute
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways twenty-first century theatre directors reshape Shakespeare's texts for performance, and the reasons why. After a discussion about the role of the modern day director and the term 'directors' theatre', three contemporary productions are considered: Polly Findlay's *As You Like It* at the National Theatre, Gregory Doran's *The Tempest* at the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Emma Rice's *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe. These three productions were all considered to be controversial and radical by critics, the directors staging 'high concept' performances and utilising set, staging, lighting and sound, digital technology, and altering the text in order to convey their ideas to audiences. The thesis looks at how 'directors' theatre' can enhance Shakespeare as well as having drawbacks, exploring the extent to which directors are asserting their own influence over plays, and whether the director is now more important than Shakespeare.

Dedication

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Tiffany Stern for her guidance and support during this project. Her advice and kindness have been invaluable.

My parents John and Christine have been fully supportive over the two years of this project, making finishing it a possibility.

Finally, thank you to Marcus and Elodie, my husband and daughter. Marcus has been endlessly patient and supportive, and Elodie has made this one of the most challenging, yet worthwhile things I have ever done. Thank you.

Contents

Introduction

Performances of Shakespeare on stage in the twenty-first century take a broad range of forms, and are understandably markedly different to productions of Shakespeare's plays over the past four centuries. The texts are frequently cut and rewritten, reshaped and adapted, as directors and companies seek new ways of performing Shakespeare's works, finding new meanings, experimenting with technology, and aiming to attract audiences in a world where theatre is competing with film, television and the internet.

This thesis will investigate whether we are still in an age of 'directors' theatre' – a term itself so nebulous that much of Chapter 1 will be concerned with defining it – where the modern theatre director focuses on technological innovation and spectacle with high concept productions rather than the text itself.

Looking at three contemporary productions of Shakespeare's plays it will explore the impact the directors' dominance has on plays onstage today, asking whether Shakespeare *needs* to be updated and adapted for audiences and why productions cannot simply 'be' of Shakespeare. Although much literature exists on Shakespeare and contemporary 'original practice' productions, and adaptations, there is little current literature on very recent productions that do not attempt either but instead have innovative and potentially overpowering concepts. Works such as Peter Holland's *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s* (1997) and John Russell Brown's edited collection *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare* (2008), provide interesting and detailed accounts of productions and the work of practitioners in the last few decades, often focusing on radical performances

and interpretations, but they supply reviews and biographies respectively, not questioning the fact that 'directors' theatre' exists or what its definition is, but focusing on the use of it. Other texts, such as Andrew James Hartley's *The Shakespearean Dramaturg: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* (2005) and Duska Radosavljevic's *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (2013) explore the link between 'page' and 'stage' and the role of the modern dramaturg and director in interpreting text for performance, but again, 'directors' theatre' as a concept is not discussed.

It is, indeed, seemingly taken for granted that all theatre of today is 'directors' theatre'. Directors' choices are criticised or praised in modern day reviews, but little academic literature discusses what effect the rise and development of the role of the director is having on Shakespeare. What 'directors' theatre' is adding to Shakespeare, and what it is taking away will be the major theme of this thesis.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 will be concerned with the analysis and exploration of three recent productions of Shakespearean plays: *As You Like It*, directed by Polly Findlay on the Olivier stage at the National Theatre, during the winter season of 2015-16; *The Tempest* at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford upon Avon, directed by the RSC's artistic director, Gregory Doran for the 2016-17 winter season; *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe, directed by the Globe's artistic director at the time, Emma Rice, in the summer of 2017. The directors, varied in age and gender, are each at different stages of their careers, and these contextual factors, as well as the performance space for each play, will be considered when exploring the productions.

The method used will be to discuss each production in the light of original research undertaken for this thesis at the archives of each theatre respectively: rehearsal notes and promptbooks have been examined as a way of uncovering the directors' developing aims as the performances came into being. Each chapter begins with a brief discussion of the background of the director and his/her perceived attitudes towards Shakespeare, followed by analysis of the productions' set and staging, key characters, and use of technology and textual alterations in order to supply what the director has added to the text, and explore how deferential – or not – they have been to the words of Shakespeare. I will also assess the critical response each play received, before providing a conclusion as to how the productions were interpreted and hence the director's impact on the text.

Each of the three case studies has been chosen as it has a 'high concept' idea at its core. This makes each particularly telling. *As You Like It* had an elaborate abstract scene change as its focal point, and this use of set dominated the criticism from reviewers. When discussing this production the set will be an important element, and I will consider how Findlay aimed to use ambitious scenery and a large ensemble cast to update the play and make it relevant to her modern day audience. *The Tempest* made the most use of digital technology in a ground-breaking collaboration with Intel and the Imaginarium Studios, potentially providing an example of where theatre might be moving in the future. *Twelfth Night* was a controversial production, staged after Emma Rice had announced she would be resigning as the Globe's artistic director after just her second season and a much publicised fall out with the theatre's board. The play was seen by many reviewers as a rebellious farewell, making use of amplified sound and stage lighting, both out of keeping with the Globe's traditional practices. A

comparison of the key issues will help to determine the impact ‘directors’ theatre’ more broadly is having on different varieties of Shakespeare on stage today.

The conclusion will attempt to provide a new, tighter definition of what ‘directors’ theatre’ is today, and what it is doing to our understanding of Shakespeare.

Chapter 1: Directors' Theatre

This chapter will outline the rise of the director's role in modern theatre, and explore how the term 'directors' theatre' has been defined by academics and critics. The chapter will also engage with debate about the positive and negative impact 'directors' theatre' has regarding the relationship between text and performance, particularly relating to how Shakespeare is interpreted and staged in contemporary productions.

The role of the theatre director as we know it today only came into existence in the late nineteenth century. From the mid eighteenth-century English theatre productions had been overseen by actor-managers, such as David Garrick. Actor-managers focused on themselves as the centre of the performance, taking the main roles and relying on their own 'star' status to draw in audiences. As great importance was placed on the spectacle they produced, David Bradby and David Williams state that '[t]he most successful theatres were those whose managers were able to introduce spectacular innovations'.[1] The prominence given to design, aided by developments in stage technology such as gas and then electric lighting, along with more elaborate scenery, careful rehearsal and a unified style for costumes and settings, required someone to oversee these different elements and bring the whole production together.[2] Bradby and Williams use the terms 'stage manager', and later 'producer' for the leading actors and managers of companies who took overall responsibility for performances.[3] These terms – 'stage manager' and 'producer' – give focus to the practical acts of managing the theatrical action and putting the play on stage,

[1] Bradby, D. and Williams, D. *Directors' Theatre* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1988), p. 3.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

necessitated by the increased design and technological requirements of the time period. Bradby and Williams describe the transformation of European theatre at this time as going from 'a restricted medium catering for the needs of the court to a mass medium appealing to a variety of social groups'.[4] They suggest the desires of audiences for more complex and dramatic stage action and special effects, coupled with theatres becoming more commercialised and audiences being made up from a larger cross-section of society led to the appearance of the early 'director'.[5]

This idea that the director arose between the end of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century is supported by W.B. Worthen, who states '[t]he director is a distinctly modern figure, arising in the late nineteenth century to impose a newly desired representational unity on stage plays'.[6] Worthen argues that there was a need for 'someone to manage the dense scenic detail of naturalistic representation and to calibrate text, acting and design elements in a consistent, lifelike whole'.[7] He maintains the result was directors such as Konstantin Stanislavski and André Antoine, in combination with someone who created the detailed stage settings of productions that recreated the past, such as 'medieval Scotland for Charles Kean's *Macbeth*, republican Rome for the Saxe-Meiningen *Julius Caesar*, Saxon England for Irving's *King Lear'.*[8] His notion is that the work from this period, by a range of practitioners as diverse as Vsevelod Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht and William Poel, shows that the need for a director was not solely functional, but that 'produc[ing] a play in the modern period involves the open assertion of the play as a consistent conceptual, thematic, scenic

[4] Ibid., p. 2.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Worthen, W.B. *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997), pp 45-46.
[7] Ibid., p.46.
[8] Ibid.

whole, the assertion of an *interpretation* of the text'.[9] His suggestion is that the director manages the relationship between the dramatic text and performance – 'the "director" summons the "author" into the discourse of modern performance'.[10] This point then leads him to debate exactly *how* the director goes about turning a text into performance. Worthen makes a deliberate and clear distinction between the roles of 'director' and 'author' in this statement, but for other critics, these roles are not as clear cut, particularly when writing about directors staging performances of Shakespeare. An issue with this theory is that, when considering the development of the modern director, Worthen focuses on forms of theatre which required an overall stylistic vision to stage a play, particularly productions set in specific time periods and naturalistic productions requiring detail and precision, but practitioners such as Stanislavski, Brecht and Meyerhold are studied in schools, universities and drama schools as the fathers of modern *acting* styles. It is certainly of importance that styles of theatre required an overall interpretation of a text, but many of these practitioners were not working from the 'outside – in' with an overall concept, but from the 'inside – out', starting with acting and characterisation, particularly Stanislavski. The development of naturalism and realism as theatrical movements in the nineteenth century was indeed of great importance, with psychological character work at the centre of Stanislavski's methods. In Stanislavski's System, focus is placed on the actor rather than the director to do this work. However, the importance of the director's role then becomes apparent, as more extensive rehearsals – in order to work on realistic, polished performances, and on those with reliance on technical elements – were needed.

[9] Ibid., p. 47.
[10] Ibid., pp 47-48.

Whilst European theatre was beginning to undergo radical change at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, two notable early directors were staging Shakespeare's works: William Poel (1852-1934) and Harley Granville Barker (1877-1946). According to Christopher McCullough, whilst William Poel was aiming to recreate the performance conditions of Elizabethan times with his productions and 'impose the past on the present, Granville Barker aspired to bring the past up to the moment'[11] in an attempt to reframe sixteenth-century performance within the culture and ideas of the twentieth-century. What has been seen in recent years as pioneering work since the building of Shakespeare's Globe on London's Southbank was already foreshadowed in one way by Poel and in another by Granville Barker, who worked in different ways to turn Shakespeare's text into performance. William Poel's work focused on changing ways of delivering Shakespearean dialogue and experimenting with performing on a purpose-built version of an Elizabethan stage, in a bid 'to rediscover the naturalness of Elizabethan acting'.[12] Poel maintained that transitions from scene to scene and location to location had to take place without interruption, and was extremely critical of actor-managers who made dramatic changes to the structure of Shakespeare plays in order to suit their design ideas and modern audiences, despite often making heavy cuts within scenes himself. Granville Barker, who was greatly influenced by Poel, staged productions on a thrust stage in order to create an intimate actor-audience relationship. He wanted to form an ensemble of actors, and was aware of the need for fluency of set and speech, unbroken by lengthy intervals required for complex set changes. This marked a radical change from the Victorian theatre, with its pictorial sets and scenography, and elaborate changes to the

[11] McCullough, C. 'Harley Granville Barker' in Russell Brown, J. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 106.
[12] Thomson, P. 'William Poel' in Russell Brown, J. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare*, p. 361.

play texts. Both Poel and Granville Barker paved the way for many who came after them, and similarities can be seen between their ways of working and the three twenty-first century productions I will be analysing. Both worked in highly unusual ways for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Poel moving away from the Victorian 'star system', arguing that the focus on performers and the creation of the exact location for each setting was causing too many cuts and edits to play texts, distorting Shakespeare's plot and structure[13] and Granville Barker giving great importance to the rehearsal process when directing *Twelfth Night* in 1912, treating it as 'a journey of discovery for actors and director'.[14]

Productions staged by Poel and Granville Barker might be seen as early examples of the 'directors' theatre' defined by Robert Smallwood when writing about the RSC's and National Theatre's artistic directors: 'director's Shakespeare has brought us a very long way from the massively cut texts, generously interrupted with intervals, and from the Shakespeare of the scene painters, with which the century began'.[15] Writing in 2002, Smallwood defines the productions at the RSC and National Theatre from the 1950s and 1960s onwards as 'directors' theatre', where the director more-or-less has full control over the choice of the creative team, budget and casting. Elsewhere, he has described 'directors' Shakespeare' as productions which do not simply present Shakespeare's plays, but 'also offer something of an interpretative essay upon it … [productions that are] not direct, unhampered encounters between actors and texts'.[16]

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[13] Hildy, F.J. 'The Search for Shakespeare's Stagecraft' in Carson, C. and Karim-Cooper, F. (eds.) *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.15.
[14] McCullough, C. 'Harley Granville Barker' in Russell Brown, J. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare*, p. 114.
[15] Smallwood, R. 'Twentieth-century performance: the Stratford and London companies' in Wells, S. and Stanton, S. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 109.
[16] Smallwood, R. 'Directors' Shakespeare' in Bate, J. and Jackson, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 177.

Smallwood also refers to Stanley Wells' definitions of 'open' and 'interpretative' productions, the former 'concentrat[ing] on serving the play, allowing it to make its impact without nudging us to see significances beneath the surface', and the latter being 'challenging, unorthodox, disturbing'.[17] The language used by both Smallwood and Wells to describe more 'open' and 'unhampered' productions of Shakespeare has positive connotations, describing the work of directors which presumably allows the play to be more 'free', compared to what they call more 'interpretative' Shakespeare, where it is implied the director imposes something upon it.

The prevalence in the twentieth century of productions where a director interprets a play, imposing an idea or attempting to communicate an overall 'concept' has led to the term 'directors' theatre' frequently being used. In the late 1980s, Bradby and Williams use the term 'directors' theatre' as the title of their book, asserting that '[t]he dominant creative force in today's theatre is the director',[18] who is considered to be an artist in his/her own right rather than simply an organiser of stage matter as the actor managers of the eighteenth century were. For Bradby and Williams, the role of the director – at least in the 1980s – is clear: the director takes the role of the author. They sustain that even in productions not as extreme as those which completely dispense with the text, the director takes on the role of 'scenic writer' who rearranges, cuts and rewrites the play. The contribution of the director is equal, in Bradby and Williams' opinion, to that of the writer, perhaps even superseding it. Whether or not the director is always the 'dominant creative force' is debatable, particularly considering contemporary companies who create devised work, but this idea is a compelling one.

[17] Ibid.
[18] Bradby, D. and Williams, D. *Directors' Theatre*, p.1.

In contrast, Jon Whitmore, in his more recent book *Directing Postmodern Theatre*, argues that no director can govern every aspect of a production, even though the best directors have complex minds and highly tuned sensory systems, allowing them to orchestrate infinitely complex, multi-faceted performances.[19] A definition such as this presents theatre as a product of collaboration, an idea supported by Christopher McCullough: '[t]heatre is not the product of an individual reading of the play, but the result of a collaborative effort in a continuous state of remaking'.[20] I agree that theatre is a collaborative art, but the larger the amount of theatre-makers involved in a production, the more important a director's overall vision is in order to unify the interpretation. These varying definitions from the late 1980s and early 2000s of the director's role reveal that it was not something concrete and simple to define then, and with theatre developing rapidly alongside technology in the last twenty years, whether a director is a dominant author, an orchestrator, or something else altogether, is not something simple to delineate today either.

If the director's function is not an absolute, then what exactly 'directors' theatre' constitutes is, as a result, also nebulous and subjective. Exactly how much input a director has had in interpreting a play or how successfully their ideas are communicated will be received differently by spectators. One critic may watch a production and conclude a director has created a sensitive interpretation of a playwright's work, revering the text and staying true to the author's meanings. Another critic may be of the opinion that the same production completely goes against the playwright's desires with the choices the director has made, obscuring the play's meanings, or changing them. Arguably, unless detailed notes have been provided for

[19] Whitmore, J. *Directing Postmodern Theatre* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 206.
[20] Smallwood, R. 'Directors' Shakespeare' in Bate, J. and Jackson, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage*, p. 178.

the entire play by the playwright, explaining exactly how everything should be interpreted, there is no way of fully understanding and bringing a playwright's ideas to life. A dramatic production on stage is not the same as a text on the page: a theatrical production will constantly be creating new versions of the play on the page.

Bert Cardullo argues that the job of a dramaturg – different to that of a director but useful to consider in a Shakespearean context as both are working with and 'interpreting' a play text – is that of the 'guardian of the text (presuming there is a text worthy of guarding) as opposed to its "author" – a stand in for the playwright'.[21] According to Cardullo, it is the job of the dramaturg 'to ensure the theatrical transmission of the playwright's vision'.[22] Cardullo's argument however can be seen as very simplistic: he presumes a playwright has one fixed idea that can be communicated, and he does not take into consideration differences between the contexts of production (of the play text) and of modern day reception. A. J. Hartley argues that a performance of a play is different to the words on the page: '[t]heatrical practice must construct a new artistic product'.[23] The genres of 'play' and 'performance' are two different things and there are an immeasurable number of decisions that could be made by directors, designers and actors in the process of rehearsing and staging a performance. Hartley argues that too much of the final performance is non-textual in origin to move simply from 'page to stage'.[24] This idea is supported by Greg Taylor who makes the case that 'we mislead ourselves if we imagine a play moving from text to stage, as though textuality and theatricality were

[21] Cardullo, B. *What is Dramaturgy?* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), p. 10.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Hartley, A.J. *The Shakespearean Dramaturg* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 7.
[24] Ibid., p. 40.

separate entities'.[25] For Taylor, Shakespeare's plays were born *on* the stage, not designed to be treated as separate texts, but the difficulty here is that there is little definitive understanding of how Shakespeare's plays were staged, and it is not known how individual actors in the Renaissance would have interpreted roles or what direction, if any, they might have been given by prompters or other actors during the minimal rehearsal time they had. Hartley supports this, stating that '[e]ven if we had an authorial manuscript [from Shakespeare] we wouldn't be able to read it as the original actor did'.[26] His notion is that audiences are products of their own time: a modern day audience's reading of a play is influenced by what its members have experienced and the world they live in. The same case applies to Elizabethan audiences, and its actors. An actor given a part would be reading the play with different frames of reference to us, so there is no one definitive way the text can be staged. Tiffany Stern documents how a playwright would give a reading of their play to the cast, then individual cast members would 'study' their parts, committing their lines to memory along with brief cues.[27] Stern refers to examples of Renaissance plays where the actors might undertake an entire read through as a company, but it is noted that they were not always obliged to know the full plot and there was little in the way of formal rehearsal as we know it today.

Modern audiences today are also reading and watching Shakespeare's plays after centuries of different analysis and theories. Various layers of readings from different historical periods are placed upon the play, alongside the director's interpretation, meaning modern audiences are viewing something inherently different to what was

[25] Taylor, G. 'Shakespeare Plays on the Renaissance Stage' in Wells, S. and Stanton, S. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, p. 1.
[26] Hartley, A. J. *The Shakespearean Dramaturg: a theoretical and practical guide* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 41.
[27] Stern, T. *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp 60-62.

written 400 years ago. Work by critics such as A. C. Bradley in the early twentieth century, applying more recent psychological thinking and theory to Shakespearean characters has influenced contemporary reception, but even with literary and critical analysis aside, Hartley argues that '[t]he lines on the page are open to an almost infinite set of possible deliveries'.[28] Theatrical production must, out of necessity, make a series of single choices and these choices are as likely to come from outside the text as within it – an actor will be influenced by who they are as a person as well as cultural contextual factors. Developing this idea, Hartley argues that Shakespeare was not in fact the author of the *production* in the way he was the author of the *text* because theatre is collaborative. Shakespeare, as the author, did not and does not have complete control and authority over a performance, because so many other factors and people contribute to a performance. This could be seen as opening up the role of 'stage author' for the modern day director to possess, or as supporting the idea that there is no one author of a play on stage. A production belongs to the whole team of creative practitioners who are responsible for bringing it to life, as well as the audience who receive and interpret it.

One might argue that modern day Shakespeare on stage is a more democratic Shakespeare, as it belongs to so many, but I reiterate that with developing technology and so many people involved with staging a play, the role of the director becomes ever more important in ensuring the play and its ideas (whether they are ideas inherent to the text that 'belonged' to Shakespeare) and meanings are communicated clearly. In this modern day theatre, the director must have a strong 'authorial' concept for two reasons – to make their production understandable to the audience, and relatable to our modern day culture, which also frequently means some sort of contemporary or

[28] Hartley, A. J. *The Shakespearean Dramaturg: a theoretical and practical guide*, p. 41.

historical analogue has been put on the play; and to give their production an innovative concept that makes it stand out against the wide number of productions and Shakespearean plays staged each year. That the director today must have such an influence over a staging of Shakespeare, or of any text, is perhaps why the term 'directors' theatre' is not as widely used in the twenty-first century; is it simply taken for granted that all theatre today is 'directors' theatre'? Few recent books or journal articles discuss the term, supporting this notion. When it has been used more recently, it is to discuss directors described by Michael Billington as 'aspir[ing] to the condition of auteurs',[29] practitioners 'who see themselves as innovators as well as interpreters'.[30] In this sense, 'directors' theatre' has a dictatorial, controlling feel to it, although as Billington points out, '"[d]irector's theatre" is neither good or bad in itself: everything depends on the quality of the result.'[31] The seemingly negative elements of 'directors' theatre' are also, contradictorily, its strengths; Smallwood puts forward the idea that the 'most valuable feature of director's Shakespeare [is that it is] a stimulus to think afresh about the play'.[32] However, the problematic element arising from a director trying to find a new way of presenting a play and offering audiences the chance to 'think afresh' is that there will always be criticism that the director is not being true to Shakespeare's ideas and the 'essence' of the play, or that theatrical innovation and the director's concept are being prioritised.

What 'directors' theatre' is doing to Shakespeare on stage today is not a question with a clear-cut answer. There are critics with positive outlooks, such as the German

[29] Billington, M. 'D is for director's theatre', *The Guardian* (3 January, 2012), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jan/03/d-director-s-theatre-modern-drama> [Accessed 5 March 2019].
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Smallwood, R. 'Directors' Shakespeare' in Bate, J. and Jackson, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage*, p. 196.

scholar Hans-Thies Lehman who argues that 'directors' theatre' rescues texts, saving them through radical productions from conventionalised and museum-like approaches,[33] and others with more negative viewpoints, such as Michael Bristol and Kathleen McLuskie who are of the opinion that '[t]here's a whole lot of Shakespeare going on and modern performances often take outlandish liberties with these valued works'.[34] The three productions I will be discussing in the following chapters are certainly examples of theatre that takes 'outlandish liberties' – another question to ask is whether these liberties pay off, bringing something new to Shakespeare's texts, keeping them alive and relevant, or if the imposition of a director's ideas, amplified by the developments of modern technology, means the text becomes secondary to the production.

[33] Lehmann, H. *Postdramatic Theatre* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 52.
[34] Bristol and McLuskie *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 2.

Chapter 2: *As You Like It* at the National Theatre

The first production of the three case studies to be explored in this thesis is *As You Like It*, staged during the 2015-16 winter season at the National Theatre and directed by Polly Findlay. I have chosen this production as it was extremely controversial, dividing critics and audiences, and it is a useful, yet problematic example of modern-day directors' theatre: a staging of a Shakespeare play where the concept, staging and textual alterations were more central than the text.

I will begin with an overview of Findlay's professional background, directorial style and attitudes towards staging productions of Shakespearean plays, in order to put the production into context. This section of the chapter will be followed by a description – and interpretation – of elements of the production: the use of set and staging, the play's key characters, technology in the production, and Findlay's textual alterations. I will explore other interpretations of the production throughout the chapter by discussing critical responses from reviewers, before forming a conclusion as to what 'directors' theatre' brought to this production, and what it may have taken away. Original research will form the basis of my interpretations, consisting of a detailed examination of the promptbook and rehearsal notes from the National Theatre's archive, as well as attending an educational talk prior to the production with academic Abigail Rokison-Woodall and *As You Like It*'s associate director Laura Keefe.

Polly Findlay

The production of *As You Like It* took place in the Olivier Theatre, utilising the theatre's vast array of technology as well as its large performance space. Although Polly Findlay

had already directed the Shakespeare plays *Romeo and Juliet* at Battersea Arts Centre (2007) and *The Merchant of Venice* at the RSC (2015), along with several shows at the National including *Antigone* (2012) and *Treasure Island* (2014), this was her first main-house Shakespeare play at the National.

Findlay had a fairly traditional route into directing, training as an assistant director at the Almeida and then the National Theatre. Her experience at the National, as well as the accolades she received – the JMK Award for Young Directors in 2007 and an Olivier award for Best Entertainment for *Derren Brown: Svengali* in 2012 – may explain why she, as a relatively young director, was entrusted with a main house National Theatre Shakespeare production by Rufus Norris, who had taken over as artistic director in March 2015.

The two National Theatre productions that Findlay had previously directed were staged in the Olivier theatre, so she was familiar with its large auditorium, drum revolve, flying rig and dynamics. She describes the theatre as '[being] in so many ways similar to the Globe',[35] perhaps alluding to the fact that the Olivier, although large, and able to accommodate 1,150 audience members, is also intimate, its steeply raked seating meaning no audience member is situated too far from the stage action. However, the Olivier is more often described as being similar in style to a Greek amphitheatre,[36] rather than to the Elizabethan theatre, which is perhaps an example of Findlay making links between the play's original performance conditions and her own staging that are not in fact there.

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[35] Findlay, P. quoted in Tripney, N. 'Polly Findlay: "It's a privilege to work in the Olivier"', *The Stage* (6 Nov, 2015), <https://www.thestage.co.uk/features /interviews/2015/polly-findlay-its-a-privilege-to-work-in-the-olivier/> [Accessed 13 April 2019].
[36] Lloyd, M. *The National Theatre, South Bank, London* (n.d.) http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/NationalTheatre.htm [Accessed 4 August 2019].

According to Findlay, the play of *As You Like It* itself is 'really … all about being on stage',[37] most likely referring to Jaques' infamous 'All the world's a stage' speech, Rosalind's creation of the role of Ganymede – who then pretends to be Rosalind – and 'her' address to the audience as both man and woman in the Epilogue, which are all self-referential: this is a play that knows it is a play. By staging her version of the play in what she describes as the 'Globe-like' Olivier (it is thought *As You Like It* was first performed in the Globe in 1599),[38] Findlay was able to focus on characters' interactions with the audience and one another, using the thrust downstage space for intimate moments such as Orlando's opening monologue (I.i), in a play which Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen describe as essentially 'a series of debates on the nature of love played out against a romantic woodland backdrop'.[39] The original Globe had very little in the way of scenery, so a realistic 'woodland backdrop' would not have been created in Elizabethan times, but the forest is constantly referred to: 'Are not these woods/More free from peril than the envious court?' (Duke Senior);[40] 'this uncouth forest' (Orlando);[41] 'I met a fool i'th' forest' (Jaques);[42] 'There's no clock 'i'th forest' (Orlando).[43] The Olivier provided an excellent opportunity for character interactions, or 'debates', whilst also allowing Findlay room to be creative when depicting the 'backdrop'. However, for Findlay, this woodland was metaphorical and her scenery was positioned both behind and above her actors, dominating the stage.

[37] Findlay, P. in Tripney, N. 'Polly Findlay: "It's a privilege to work in the Olivier"', *The Stage*.
[38] Royal Shakespeare Company, *As You Like It: Dates and Sources* (n.d.), https://www.rsc.org.uk/as-you-like-it/dates-and-sources [Accessed 15 April 2019].
[39] Bate, J. and Rasmussen, E. [eds.] *The RSC Shakespeare Complete Works* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), p. 472.
[40] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, ed. by Brissenden, A. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), II.i: 3-4.
[41] Ibid., II.vi: 6.
[42] Ibid., II.vii: 12.
[43] Ibid., III.ii: 291-2.

Staging a Shakespearean play in the Olivier might be seen as daunting, but having already directed two main house productions for the National, Findlay had made a name for herself as a capable and imaginative director in spaces of great scale, allowing her to make radical and assertive decisions in terms of staging. Findlay was also familiar with the play itself, having directed it at Exeter College, Oxford, in 2003. Dealing with the multiple episodic storylines and range of romantic relationships and complications in the text, as well as producing a main stage National Theatre spectacle certainly provided Findlay with a challenge. Her contemporary office setting with the move of location to the Forest of Arden was intended to provide what she called 'a real wow factor'[44] and was key to her production. The 'forest' was made up of suspended office furniture created by the flying up on wires of the tables and chairs of Duke Ferdinand's court, a grand spectacle of a moment which to my mind was the most effective of the production, but not one that occurs in Shakespeare's text.

The production took place on the largest of the National's three stages and was the first staging of *As You Like It* at the National for over thirty years. It is therefore understandable why this was a large-scale, impressive performance. Although one of Shakespeare's most loved comedies, it is not a play that can be simply transposed to a particular time period or setting. The location of the play's Arden has confused critics, popular suggestions for the setting being the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire and Ardennes mountains in France, but Alan Brissenden makes the point that its exact location does not matter, stating that the ambiguity surrounding Arden's setting as well as the mix of English and French names in the play 'contributes to the informing idea of doubleness in the play, exciting and freeing our imaginations'.[45] For contemporary

[44]Findlay, P. in Tripney, N. 'Polly Findlay: "It's a privilege to work in the Olivier"', *The Stage*.
[45] Brissenden, A. 'Introduction' in Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, ed. by Brissenden, A. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 41.

directors this allows for creativity when developing a concept and realising the play on stage, but also creates problems: the play says many things without needing set and technology, and a complicated and specific directorial concept can stifle the text.

Although not an 'auteur' – the French word used for directors who deconstruct texts and reimagine plays anew – Findlay's directorial style has often been described in reviews as 'bold', 'urgent' and 'powerful'. Her production of *Antigone* was praised for having a 'concept brilliantly realised',[46] though her *The Merchant of Venice* was criticised for having a 'thinly conceived' concept where 'nothing much adds up'.[47] Findlay's directorial ideas, that is to say, divide critics. The contrasting critical opinions from reviewers place Findlay perfectly under the title of those making 'directors' theatre'. Her style is, however, difficult to categorise neatly; Findlay has worked for the RSC and the National Theatre, staged large-scale productions with strong directorial concepts, and classic texts with modern settings. She herself does not think she fits into a single theatrical niche.[48] She credits directing *Derren Brown's Svengali* with giving her the most useful lesson in practical dramaturgy, and enjoys 'the cross fertilisation between different things',[49] although she has also stated that she is interested in the visceral aspects of theatre.[50] This desire to create theatre that has a powerful impact on an audience, visually and emotionally can be seen as a key feature of her productions, along with her idea of 'cross-fertilization'. The ways in which

[46] Spencer, C. 'Antigone, National Theatre, review', *The Telegraph* (31 May, 2012), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/9303336/Antigone-National-Theatre-review.html>. [Accessed 17 April 2019].
[47] Billington, M. 'The Merchant of Venice review: poorly conceived and drably spoken', *The Guardian* (22 May, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/may/22/the-merchant-of-venice-review-royal-shakespeare-company>. [Accessed 17 April 2019].
[48] Shenton, M. *Polly Findlay interview: 'Beginning portrays an experience everyone has in their bones'* (24 Jan, 2018), <https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/theatre-news/interviews/polly-findlay-interview-beginning-portrays-an-experience-everyone-has-in>. [Accessed 17 April 2019].
[49] Ibid.
[50] Findlay, P. quoted in *Evening Standard* interview (author unknown) *Interview: Polly Findlay,* (26 Feb, 2013), <https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/film/interview-polly-findlay-8511007.html>. [Accessed 16 April 2019].

Findlay's bold concept and interpretation of the play were applied and their results will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Set and Staging

Findlay's concept for *As You Like It* centred on her choice of set and use of the stage space. Every critic commented on the impressive and dramatic scenery change which was the production's focal point, and its most memorable and striking element. *As You Like It* is a play where not everything is as it seems; girls can seemingly become boys, love can become delightful or painful, a Duke can become an exile and a usurper a hermit. Characters are transformed by the forest and the play revels in contrasts, between city and countryside, love and violence, men and women. These central ideas – disguise, transformation and contrast – were important to Findlay's set design, which consisted of a bright, modern, corporate office setting (for Duke Ferdinand's court), and a sparse, imposing and unwelcoming setting (for the Forest of Arden). In a theatre space as large as the Olivier, an impressive set might be seen by some directors as what is needed to 'do the theatre justice' so the performance does not get lost in the space; Findlay allowed the set to dominate her production.

The audience entered the auditorium to what was described in the rehearsal notes as the 'Pre-Show'[51] – a busy, bustling work environment designed to resemble a 1980s trading-floor-inspired office, with an ensemble of workers in brightly coloured suits, a gaudy multi-coloured floor made up of mats pieced together, computer screens, and harsh artificial lighting created by a low-hung rig of strip lights. The office workers wore

[51] Promptbook for *As You Like It* (National Theatre: November 2015-February 2016), National Theatre archives, Reference Code RNT/SM/1/760a.

bright block colour suits in purple, yellow, pink and orange. Everything was bright, but clearly artificial, with all natural elements miniaturised or computerised and controlled, in a closed down compressed space created by the lowered ceiling, alongside screensavers of forests on the computer screens and miniature bonsai trees on desks. Findlay and set designer Lizzy Clachan were making reference to the 'painted pomp'[52] of the Court through the use of bright, colourful corporate set and costumes, making the environment feel false ('painted') rather than natural. In the '*As You Like It:* In Context' talk which took place in February 2016 as part of the National Theatre's educational programme, staff director Laura Keefe explained how black is often used in productions of the play to present the court's formality, but in Findlay's version the bright colours were employed to convey its corporate, gaudy world.[53]

This colourful yet controlled gaudiness was intended to provide a clear contrast with the Forest of Arden after the transformation scene (which in Findlay's production took place after Adam and Orlando left Oliver's house at the end of II.iii). The lighting in the forest had a more natural feel, giving a sense of equality compared to the dictatorship in the court. The extremely bright artificial lighting in the court/office meant all the workers were constantly on show, visible to Duke Ferdinand and his management team, with nowhere to hide. Ferdinand and his team were dressed austerely in black, able to stalk between work areas observing the staff, whose bright costumes meant they were constantly visible and aware of being watched, with no opportunity to lose focus on their work or relax. In contrast, the softer light of the forest and the open stage space with no tables, chairs and marked out work areas provided the characters with

[52] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, II.i: 3.
[53] Keefe, L. in Rokison, A. (2016) *In Context: As You Like It talk*, National Theatre Learning, delivered 8th February 2016.

space to move freely with no sense of constantly being monitored by characters of a higher status.

Even entertainment and lunchtimes in the office/court were shown as being tightly controlled, the 'Pre-Show' taking the actors through a complicated series of actions individual to each person, described by Findlay in the production's promptbook:[54] filing, shredding, typing and phone calls were all underscored by a recorded soundtrack of tapping, phones ringing and low-level chatter. An alarm sounded and relaxing instrumental music was played for a short while, during which all workers swung away from their desks on swivel chairs and ate their sandwiches, before another alarm sounded and they turned back and carried on working. To my mind this was an instantly interesting and immersive world for the audience to enter into: aesthetically stylised but realistic in terms of actions. However, this initial setting was decided upon in order to make the modernised concept clear instantly and to allow for a dramatic scene-change into the forest, with the idea settled upon by Findlay early on in the creative process that a 'forest' of chairs and tables was going to be used, the court idea then having to fit around this. Keefe explained that the court's setting was influenced by North Korean offices and the 1980s trading floor in a *Wolf of Wall Street* style, referencing the 2013 film directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, based on Jordan Belfort's memoirs of working on Wall Street as a stock broker.[55] The office setting also provided lots of chairs and tables for the transformation scene, which was probably the main reason for selecting this setting, and an example of putting visual decisions before the text. Although the cut-throat, impersonal, corporate world did provide an appropriate analogue for Shakespeare's

[54] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.
[55] Keefe, L. in Rokison, A. *In Context: As You Like It talk*.

court of the play, and was a visually exciting opening for the performance, Findlay's focus on the dramatic scene change was the decisive factor for this initial setting and proved problematic for some of the play's later features. The links to the *Wolf of Wall Street*, which documented the corruption and fraud of Wall Street stockbrokers, and outrageous true occurrences of the work environment including drugs, alcohol, a dwarf-throwing contest and a roller-skating chimpanzee, presumably explain why a wrestling match would take place in the middle of a work day in an office. However, the rigidity and formal world of the rest of the scenes do not match up to the wild events depicted in the Hollywood film and the book, meaning the action of I.ii in which Charles the wrestler was kitted out in full Mexican wrestling regalia, was amusing but odd. It was also incongruous for Rosalind and Celia to be wandering around in their pyjamas in the office in I.iii when discussing Rosalind's exile. The detailed and realistic set made it difficult for other scenes to take place there and make sense. The magical and transformative elements of the play perhaps allowed Findlay some license, but the overarching creative decision of using a modern office setting to create the metal, non-naturalistic forest certainly provided some problems. In her book *Shakespeare for Young People*, Abigail Rokison praises the Pocket productions of all-male theatre company Propeller, which are created for schools and draw 'on the original practices of the Renaissance stage […] emphasis[ing] the fictive nature of the production, encouraging, in both actor and audience, an imaginative engagement and willing suspension of disbelief'.[56] Rokison points to the all-male casting, the simple staging with a lighting wash over both the auditorium and the actors, and the actors onstage greeting the audience as they enter as elements which drew on Renaissance staging

[56] Rokison, A. *Shakespeare for Young People: Productions, Versions and Adaptations* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013) p.116.

to create a ‘fictive’ world where the young audience could be imaginative in their engagement and understanding. This particular example promotes the idea that audiences do not need everything explained to them, every gap or question in a play filled or answered. The more tight, detailed and believable a production concept is, particularly concerning a setting in a certain place or time period, the more likely it is that parts of the play will have to be forced into said concept, and this is unlikely always to make complete sense, leading to larger gaps and questions. For Rokison, versions and adaptations of Shakespeare are often more successful when things are left open for audiences to use their imagination, but with the design concept for the play’s opening, Findlay had a different aim: for all her claims of ‘Globe-ness’, there was nothing ‘early modern’ about her mis-en-scene.

The Forest of Arden, the setting for the majority of the play after the action had left Duke Ferdinand’s office court, won much praise from critics. Susannah Clapp, writing for *The Guardian*, described the set transition as a ‘dramatic explosion … [and] more than an ingenious visual coup’.[57] The forest was an angular canopy of trees, achieved by suspending the office chairs and tables which had been used in the opening scenes in the court. The jumbled mess of chairs, which hung from wires throughout the rest of the performance, provided an abstract and metaphorical forest, made from the underside of the corporate brightly coloured world which the audience had seen in the opening. It allowed lighting to be streamed through in beams like light coming through a canopy of trees, starting stark and bright with whites and blues, then gradually becoming warmer as the play moved towards its conclusion and the forest became a more welcoming and less confusing place. Rather than providing the usual direct

[57] Clapp, S. ‘As You Like It review – Out with merriment, in with humour’ *The Guardian* (8 Nov, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/nov/08/as-you-like-it-polly-findlay-review-national-theatre> [Accessed 12th July 2018].

contrast between court and country, Findlay's forest, created from the very office environment the characters had just escaped, was a reminder that the two are not that different after all; look underneath the corporate city and the wild joyous forest is there, waiting to be revealed. By leaving the office furniture suspended throughout, it was a reminder that the characters had never quite left that world behind; it must be returned to and the grind of normality must be resumed, perhaps a clever reference to the pace and pressure of our modern capitalist society. Critics such as Clapp appreciated the visuals of the set, but others such as Michael Billington found it detracted from the play, 'the cast [being] almost upstaged by the chairs'[58] in an evening that he described as belonging to the director and designer. This is a condemning comment and gives the impression the text was the secondary focus, situated behind the set. It also highlights the problematic element of directors' theatre; although clever and striking, as well as making comments relevant to the modern audience, set and other innovative theatrical elements often become the most talked-about aspects of productions. I agree with Billington – there were many impressive performances, but they were not what the audience and critics remembered – the visuals were.

As well as creating a memorable transition to the forest, the set allowed Findlay to situate her choir members up in the 'trees', perched on chairs and blending in with the set, providing soundscapes and music throughout the play. This 'forest choir' was a key element of her concept, and the promptbook rehearsal notes show much time was given over in rehearsals for choir calls.[59] This presents another key problem with directors' theatre – the additional elements belonging to the director rather than the

[58] Billington, M. 'As You Like It review – love gets lost in a forest of chairs at the National' *The Guardian* (4 Nov, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/nov/04/as-you-like-it-review-love-gets-lost-in-a-forest-of-chairs-at-the-national>. [Accessed 12th July 2018].
[59] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.

playwright begin to dominate rehearsals and the performance. If more time is spent on choir calls than character work and textual analysis then the director and composer's additions are being treated as more important than Shakespeare's words.

The music, composed by Orlando Gough, was designed to work with the set in terms of building atmosphere and indicating location. However, rehearsal notes reveal that the set was still in development as late as 17th October (previews took place at the start of November), and many decisions regarding it, costume and props were made late in the process.[60] The set in particular seemed to impact greatly upon other elements of the performance, such as which members of the choir would be in the suspended seating for certain scenes, which was not decided until 13th October.[61] These decisions came out of rehearsals rather than being decided before work with the cast started. This may have been an outcome of exploring music and getting to know the actors and choir, or a result of technical aspects of the set becoming concrete; decisions regarding actors seem to have taken place afterwards in view of the set. The complicated set could have provided extra opportunities and creative choices, or been a difficulty in the rehearsal process, as the director, actors and musicians would have had to wait until firm design decisions were made in order to rehearse fully. The flying set, required for the forest scene change and present throughout the rest of the play, was evidently an element decided upon very early in the process, being installed on 15th September,[62] but the month between this installation and the decision as to who the climbing choir members should be, indicates

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

a rehearsal period of much experimentation and change, and supports the argument that the set was central to Findlay's production concept, to the detriment of the text.

Critics were again divided as to the success of the 'bird' choir; Clapp describing it as being one of the best uses of sound in theatre she had experienced: '[The choir] whir, whistle, flap and chudder. Orlando Gough's music is a melancholy swell … [n]ot merely atmospheric but informative. Underneath the grey, in the midst of the spikes, hope is stirring'.[63] By contrast, Dominic Cavendish, writing for *The Telegraph*, acknowledged the set's vastness, describing it as 'quite a coup de theatre … [and] accomplished'[64] but criticised its scale and 'look at me' feel, asking the question of how the production overall could afford to have an ensemble of 36 actors, many of whom, after the office scene, 'while away the time watching the action near at hand or up in the make-shift "boughs", contributing DIY pastoral sound effects and choral murmurs'.[65] The fact that two reviewers can have such differing opinions – one giving the production five stars and the other just two – points to what I believe is a key feature of modern-day directors' theatre: it divides audiences and critics, depending on whether they view the director or playwright's intentions as more important.

Findlay's dominating idea of the scene change and the suspended office furniture meant that other ideas and requirements of the play had to fit in with this overall design concept. Peter Holland, writing about English Shakespeare on stage in the 1990s, explored 'set-dominated productions', where choices around set design have an enormous impact on all other elements of the play.[66] Holland points towards the

[63] Ibid.
[64] Cavendish, D. 'As You Like It, National Theatre, review: "I felt I'd aged fourscore years by the end"', *The Telegraph* (4 Nov, 2015), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/as-you-like-it-national-theatre-review/> [Accessed 12th July 2018].
[65] Ibid.
[66] Holland, P. *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English stage in the 1990s*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p146

common way of working (in the 1990s) where design concepts had been decided upon before rehearsals began. The late decision-making regarding the choir in the flying set supports the idea that Findlay was doing the same. Holland asks whether designers of the late 1980s and 1990s were controlling directors, but for Findlay the two are intertwined; it is impossible to separate Findlay's directorial concept from the design of the production. For her, rather than designers and directors being seen as separate, set is as much a part of her concept as text and actors.

In any case, Findlay's production was 'set-dominated', which may have limited the ways audience members interpreted the play for themselves. The forest was – initially – unquestionably dark, bewildering and intimidating, but the hanging chairs and tables, although striking, were distractingly still office furniture. The setting became more 'forest-like' and warmer after the interval, stage hands having plastered green post-it notes on the set so recalling the office setting. The occasional fluttering of these to the floor as they lost their stick was a reminder that they were pieces of paper and this was an office forest. There were, of course, meanings that could be read into this staging: that the modern industrial corporate world echoes the business of our lives today and that the 'falseness' of the court is still pervading and ever present, but this contradicted what the Forest of Arden represents in Shakespeare's play – it is a joyous place of escape and transformation, a green world that is markedly different from the city and the court where the play begins. By making such clear decisions, and not allowing the audience to develop their own idea of the court or the countryside, Findlay was, to my mind, undoubtably putting her mark as a director on the production, and changing the play's meanings.

Although not the first to use the idea of 'office Shakespeare', and not a ground-breaking production of *As You Like It* in terms of overall interpretation (the RSC's 1996 production directed by Steven Pimlott also had non-naturalistic minimalist set, and Maria Aberg's 2013 version, also at the RSC, was set in the modern day, with similar costumes for the forest characters as Findlay's), it is an example of modern day 'directors' theatre', where the overall concept takes precedence over the play.

Key Characters

Findlay frequently stated in interviews that love and relationships in the play were as important to her as the visual focus of the set: 'the play is a series of studies of different ways in which people love each other'.[67] She describes Rosalind and Orlando as being the 'central stone that goes into the pond', and the ripples that come out of it as '[being] as much part of the play' as Rosalind and Orlando's relationship'.[68] For Findlay, the other relationships – Celia and Oliver, Silvius and Phoebe, Touchstone and Audrey – are these 'ripples', and are just as important and interesting. The play itself does have many different examples of relationships – fathers and daughters, fathers and sons, romantic love, friendship, unrequited love, and a number of marriages. However, the controversy in this production arose from the fact that the characters and relationships were often not allowed to speak for themselves, hindered by the production's design and the textual alterations. The numerous characters, relationship complications and the play's episodic structure meant Findlay felt a need to make the production feel as

[67] Dickson, E. 'As You Like It: "This was Shakespeare trying to write The Fast Show"' *The Guardian* (2 Nov, 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/nov/02/as-you-like-it-shakespeare-national-theatre-london-rosalie-craig-polly-findlay-interview> [Accessed 15 April 2019].
[68] Ibid.

if ‘Shakespeare was trying to write the 1599 version of The Fast Show’.[69] This statement gives insight to Findlay’s intentions: focusing on the comedy of the relationships and situations, modernising characters and to fit her updated setting, moving quickly between scenarios and creating comic stereotypes, creating the feel of a modern day comedy sketch show. Did Findlay let the actors and the text do the work, or did her reading of the play overpower what was already in the text?

One character notably used to showcase the production’s modern setting and add excitement to the action was Charles the wrestler, played by Leon Annor. Charles is not a fully developed character in the play, appearing only in the play’s first two scenes, firstly approaching Oliver, asking not to allow Orlando to fight him as he fears he will hurt him, and secondly in the wrestling scene. Charles was presented very differently through costume in these two scenes: he had modern-day office wear and a long overcoat for the scene with Oliver, and a blue spandex wrestling leotard, a gold cape and a Mexican-style wrestling mask for the fight. The Charles of the second scene was a different man to the softly spoken character of the first; he entered to pounding rock music from the steps which descended underneath the stage, haze coming up the stairwell and the stage flooded with flashing lights. The ensemble of office workers had rearranged the flooring, bringing in a fold-out, Velcro series of mats. A microphone was thrust before Charles by one of the workers, who by now had turned into a mob of yobbish baying onlookers. Charles walked around the wrestling area in a swaggering manner with arms wide, lapping up attention from the crow, posing for selfies during the dialogue between Orlando (Joe Bannister), Rosalind (Rosalie Craig) and Celia (Patsy Ferran). This could have been an early indication from Findlay of

[69] Findlay, P. quoted in Dickson, E. ‘As You Like It: “This was Shakespeare trying to write The Fast Show”’, *The Guardian*.

characters ‘putting on a mask’, playing at being someone else, as Charles put on the character of ‘the wrestler’ for his day job, entertaining the office workers. However, the extent to which the scene was directed and choreographed, focusing on the modern elements, humour and the noise, meant that Charles existed as part of the overall spectacle rather than a character, and this was a more enduring image than the Charles of I.i. Michael Billington’s review made the valid point that the wrestling scene in the office made little sense:[70] it is an example of how a character was used to support the overall staging and director’s ideas, creating a powerful and memorable scene, but not aiding the meanings of the play.

In the play as written, Charles seems to exist to allow Orlando to defeat him against the odds, and so become the hero at the play’s opening. Findlay played upon this idea, dressing Joe Bannister’s Orlando in a baggy vest and shorts, highlighting his much smaller frame and providing a comical contrast between him and the much larger Charles. Headlocks, body slams, face licking and fingers up noses created an amusing and action-packed fight but made very little sense in the middle of an office in the working day. As explained by Keefe in the ‘In Context’ talk, the *Wolf of Wall Street* links do make some sense, but the restrained workers of Duke Ferdinand’s court had few similarities with the work-hard, play-hard corrupt *Wall Street* workers of Jordan Belfort’s book, making the change in their behaviour odd and the link tenuous, and one of which most audience members would be unlikely to be aware.

As You Like It contains the longest part Shakespeare wrote for a female character – Rosalind, who also has the most lines, scenes on stage and speeches in the play.[71]

[70] Billington, M. ‘As You Like It review – love gets lost in a forest of chairs at the National’, *The Guardian.*
[71] Bate, J. and Rasmussen, E. [eds.] ‘Introduction to *As You Like It*’, p. 475.

Like Leon Annor's Charles, Findlay's audience was shown a Rosalind who has a corporate, professional persona, a part to play when at work, but her character is made a lot more complicated when she takes on the male guise of Ganymede and goes into exile, and then plays the role of a female as she teaches Orlando to woo. In Shakespeare's time of course, yet another layer of metadrama was in place as all female characters were played by men. Although played by a woman, Findlay gave Rosalie Craig's Rosalind depth by showing the audience Rosalind at work, in a fitted green dress, high heels and dark red lipstick, but also standing on a table, roaring and whistling in support of Orlando in the wrestling scene, which belied her professional, feminine appearance. Findlay frequently used costume to help depict the different sides of Rosalind's character, putting her and Celia in pyjamas in I.iii., which presented her as vulnerable and childlike when exiled by the Duke. This scene was moving and memorable, and Craig had tears in her eyes and a trembling voice as she was banished, conveying her fragility, in contrast to her strength and status in I.i.

The escape to the Forest of Arden marks a transformation for many characters in the play, and for Rosalind, in this production, the change in her character began at this point, as the world she knew was taken away from her. Findlay's costume choices helped to show 'Ganymede' as a completely different character to the Rosalind the audience had been presented with hitherto: no make-up, a realistic short wig, body warmer, checked shirt, rucksack and boots made Craig look like a young male camper or festival-goer (Keefe described Arden in Findlay's concept as being 'like Glastonbury').[72] Craig's body language, voice and facial expressions became believably more masculine and relaxed, and this was sustained throughout the rest of her Ganymede scenes, leading to a marked change when she turned back into

[72] Keefe, L. in Rokison, A., *In Context: As You Like It talk*.

Rosalind in Act V for the wedding scene, with her loose hair, fitted 1950s style dress, red lipstick and heels.

The wedding celebration of V.iv was one of the scenes which relied least on the set and other technical elements, instead utilising the actors, and Craig in particular, in order to convey the joyous, romantic and upbeat atmosphere of the play's climax, where the confusions and quarrels of the previous scenes are forgotten. As Rosalind implored Duke Senior, Orlando, Silvius and Phoebe to keep their promises regarding marriage with repetition of the line, 'Keep you your word',[73] then exited for her quick costume change, the chorus began a gentle hum, which underscored the marriage vows spoken by Corin (Alan Williams), who spoke Hymen's lines. After the revelation of Rosalind's real self, the humming built to a churchlike choir sound, complementing Corin's priestlike delivery, and Orlando and Rosalind came together, touching foreheads and kissing after he handed her back her necklace. The chorus onstage broke into a round of applause, which some audience members echoed. After the dialogue, the whole cast began singing an old-fashioned folk-style song, with lots of harmonies. No instruments were used, but Gough's music was divided into male and female parts, with a broad spectrum in pitch and tone, providing depth and a clear distinction between the voices of the different sexes. A rehearsed but informal dance took place with lots of clapping and cheering, and the song ended with Craig singing alone, Bannister's Orlando holding her from behind. She had a smile on her face, eyes closed and was singing up and out to the audience, contentedly. They then danced again, just the two of them, with Rosalind spinning Orlando like the female partner. To my mind, this was an effective combination of acting and sound, where simplicity conveyed what is in Shakespeare's text – a joyous marriage celebration and climax of

[73] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, V.iv: 18-22.

the play's confusions – rather than trying to use set or other elements to add to what is already there.

This scene communicated the ideas in the play's text regarding the challenging of gender conventions, conveying the idea that not everyone is what they seem and that people play many different parts in their lives, as is explained in the 'Seven Ages of Man' speech by Jaques in II.vii.[74] When Findlay allowed the text to speak for itself, modern parallels were made without complicated effort or technological intervention. Rosalind, returning in a dress, showed she was still the woman we had seen in the play's opening, although now one who was in love and had learned a lot about herself. Although the costume change (which is not described in Shakespeare's play) and high sung notes emphasised her femininity, perhaps showing her as conforming to society's expectations rather than staying as a man, the fact that Rosalind orchestrates the scene and is the driving force behind the play cannot be ignored: both Shakespeare and Findlay are highlighting the notion that women can be in charge of their destinies and should not be underestimated. To my mind, Findlay was showing that Rosalind can be both strong and vulnerable, a lover and loved. By focusing attention on Rosalind at the end and making her the dominant dance partner, Findlay was saying something about gender today: men can rely on women; women can lead men. Men can be sensitive; women can be witty and tough. These are the ideas inherent in Shakespeare's text and I thought they were conveyed well by Findlay, with Rosalind's return to her female clothes perhaps an additional note to the effect that we cannot ever quite escape the world we are born into and the boxes we are put into. The original Rosalind never disappeared, and the corporate world of the office, although transformed, was always there, a reminder that the revelry must end and

[74] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, II.vii: 142-169.

everyday life must be resumed. This is an example of how directors' theatre can illuminate the text, not conceal its meanings.

Overall, the casting and direction of Craig as Rosalind were successful choices to my mind, Findlay frequently allowed the actor to do the work and clearly convey Shakespeare's ideas about love and gender, whilst gently adding modern touches to her scenes. The interactions between Rosalind and Orlando were, as I viewed them, believable and entertaining, and simple staging focusing on the actors and their relationships brought warmth and life to the scenes between these lovers, as well as those with Celia and Oliver. Casting actors such as Craig, Bannister and Patsy Ferran as Celia – who she had directed in *Treasure Island* (2014) and *The Merchant of Venice* (2015) – with great comic timing and likeability meant the audience could invest in the characters, and the swift transitions between scenes, actors entering for one scene as the others from the previous scene exited, meant the pace was fast and interest maintained. Again, these are examples of Findlay working with the text rather than overpowering it. Many critics agreed, Clapp praising the acting of Ferran and Craig and being of the opinion that the 'sisterly affection' between the two of them is one of the loves the play celebrates, and that this was both a key and an enjoyable element of the production.[75] Ann Treneman from *The Times* also found Ferran and Craig's performances to be real highlights: 'Craig has real star appeal and when she competes with the set, she tends to win. Ferran is wide-eyed and hilariously disjointed. They make a great double act.'[76] The depiction of the Rosalind/Celia relationship was widely received positively, but there was criticism for Craig's Rosalind seeming too controlled,

[75] Clapp, S. 'As You Like It review – Out with merriment, in with humour', *The Guardian.*
[76] Treneman, A. 'As You Like It, Olivier Theatre, SE1', *The Times* (4 Nov, 2015. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/as-you-like-it-olivier-theatre-se1-zvn2mhpd0sh> [Accessed 12th July 2018].

too in possession of her faculties, never completely consumed by her love for Orlando, perhaps appearing too 'modern' and independent, rather than being swept up in the play's romance.

Despite the general perceived success of many of the actors' performances, there were other scenes where Findlay's design concept dominated the dialogue and the play, where actors were used to further the directorial ideas rather than communicating characterisation and story. One such scene was the 'Office Ballet', to which much time was given in rehearsal. The description of this scene extended to two full pages of typed notes in the rehearsal script,[77] covering lighting, set, sound/music and movement, the word 'ballet' revealing the amount of choreography involved and the focus on the visual impact. This was a 1 minute 18 second sequence that took place after the 'Pre-Show', once the audience was seated, with an entire story that the audience would not know about, that was presumably designed to create an immersive world of the office, or perhaps to provide a function for the large ensemble who would later take their place in the trees as the twelve strong choir. The story behind the office ballet was that a worker, 'David Beckham', had defected to the 'Forest'. This news was told to a member of each department by a worker from the 'Legal' department, and this then filtered through to all the workers. Each department, defined by their different coloured suits, had specific roles, including 'Estate Management' (including Duke Ferdinand and initially Oliver), 'Legal and Punishment', 'Public Relations' (Charles and Le Beau), 'Security' (seen when Orlando and Adam escape), 'Brand Reps' (including Rosalind, Celia and Hisperia) and 'Cleaning and Environment' (Orlando and Adam). This complicated set up, which audience members cannot have been aware of, allowed for the movement scenes of the 'Pre-Show' and

[77] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.

the ‘Office Ballet’ to take place, establishing the world of the Duke’s court, but involved context and story not necessary to the overall plot. If ‘David Beckham’ was designed to represent Duke Senior having defected to the ‘Forest’ department as was possibly the case, then the audience would not have known this. These complicated opening sequences meant much rehearsal was given over to practising them, with problems noted in the script such as particular groups not having been taught sequences by the time they should have, and questions raised such as whether all the chorus actors should put headphones on at the end of the ‘Office Ballet’ to show the internal world was shut off once the acting began.[78] Rehearsal notes reveal the complications of this sequence, which all took place before Orlando’s opening lines, as exactly who was going to be in which department was not decided upon until 15th September, over a week into rehearsals, and Oliver’s role in the company was completely changed on the 26th September, when Findlay decided he should not work for the Duke’s company directly, but run a cleaning firm contracted by the Duke,[79] giving a reason for Orlando to be working under him as a cleaner, and for Orlando himself to be in the offices.

The ‘Pre-show’ and ‘Office Ballet’ certainly established the world of the court but it seems actors and decisions regarding characters had to fit in with the setting ideas, rather than the other way round. The problem with the inclusion of this scene, essentially a dumb show, is that it did not develop or enhance the meanings of the text. The purpose of the scene laid out in the rehearsal notes was not readable to an audience, revealing that Findlay’s attitudes towards Shakespeare are that his content needs additions in order to make entertaining theatre today, and that the priorities of the production were visual rather than on the text.

[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

Technology

The use of a flying set was a key technical aspect of the production, allowing for the spectacle of the transformation scene and the vast metal forest of chairs and tables. Keefe explained that Findlay wanted the Court to be a threatening place, like a police state, and that she was interested in finding the depth, darkness and tragedy in the play.[80] The beginning of the transition to the forest conveyed this idea, with a 'lockdown' scene, entitled 'Smash and Grab' in the promptbook[81] taking place after Adam and Orlando's escape. Security guards entered the stage, wearing black helmets and boiler suits, a loud alarm sounded, red lights flashed, and the word 'lockdown' appeared on every computer screen. The black flats upstage which formed the back of the office retracted, and were trucked further upstage and out of sight, the office strip lights were flown up and the set's office furniture was slowly dragged up in the air by wires to create the hanging forest of chairs and tables. Some chairs were also flown down to hang above the stage with actors sitting on them, the first sight of the 'choir' perching in the trees.

This extra scene, containing no dialogue, added little to the plot as it is already clear through dialogue that Orlando and Adam are escaping to the forest (Orlando declares 'We'll go along together'),[82] again showing reliance on visual rather than textual communication, but it did allow Findlay and Clachan to convey the idea that the court was an oppressive, restrictive environment, guards swarming the stage combining with the moving set, and bombardment of light and sound to create an atmosphere of panic and danger as the two characters left. More importantly, it allowed for complete

[80] Keefe, L. in Rokison, A., *In Context: As You Like It talk*.
[81] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.
[82] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, II.iv:67.

focus on the change of scene, the disappearance of the relatively small, confined office space and the smooth, surprising appearance of the vast forest set. The sense of danger, aggression, fear and urgency conveyed in the 'Smash and Grab' scene, although another addition to the play, did serve a pertinent purpose. Duke Ferdinand's court was left behind but actually still present for the rest of the play, hanging above the action; the 'bad' world did not completely disappear, but was inverted.

After the move to the forest, all sound was created live and vocally by actors rather than being pre-recorded. Rehearsal notes document the different animals and weather elements created by the actors as soundscapes in the forest, including hawks, wolves, crows, rain and wind (wind and rain varying in volume and intensity from low to mid to strong), intended to depict autumn in the forest, and buzzards, hawks, and transitions to strong wind as the season was supposed to turn into winter, creating the idea that it was about to snow. Other musical numbers, including 'Lovebirds' for a scene between Rosalind and Orlando, consisted of a 'birdscape' and whistles, and sound underscoring 'Oliver's Story' consisted of long breaths, hisses and hums.[83]

These soundscapes created another layer to the setting created by Findlay; it was not just a visual world, but one where setting, sound, lighting, and actors were designed to come together to create the world of the forest. They emphasised the change from the artificial to the natural and man-made, although this was contradicted by the fact that the forest was clearly metal furniture rather than natural materials. The leaves were post-it notes and flowers were made of paper, as a reminder that the court was always present, but seems to show a confusion of artistic ideas. Although the interesting idea of the underside of the court being the country was communicated, to

[83] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.

my mind this was not the director's main focus. As I see it, the 'natural' and man-made sounds of the forest created by the choir was a way of using the large ensemble required for the opening scene.

James Shapiro, writing in the *As You Like It* programme, maintains that the Arden settings in the play are intended to be markedly different, four taking place in 'a forbidding terrain where Orlando and Adam stumble upon the Duke and his men … [b]ut twelve other scenes set in the forest offer[ing] an alternative landscape, a world of enclosure, of sheep and shepherds…'[84] Findlay's setting for the forest was certainly 'an alternative landscape' and did become warmer and more welcoming as the play progressed. The second half of the production became full of colour due to the green post-it notes placed all over the set during the interval and the use of brighter lighting. The Forest of Arden is a place of change and transformation, but it is also a place which the characters must inevitably leave. However, the sheer size and scale of Findlay's set meant it was difficult to make many changes to it other than place the post-it notes around it. If the forest scenes are meant to take place in 'sharply different'[85] settings, then these differences were not created by set; once it was there, it was there. Instead the soundscapes by the choir and the use of lighting conveyed the changes, particularly in Act V where the wedding celebrations take place. The lighting warmed, making the scene feel spring-like, contrasting the autumnal and wintry feel of earlier forest scenes. The lighting intensified from upstage, as if the sun was shining with strength from behind the set, creating a soft, hazy effect on the actors. It felt like a bright early morning, a new day, a fresh start. The lighting and post-its were, to my mind, both effective choices in communicating what is in the play: that

[84] Shapiro, J. 'The Forest of Arden' in *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare (2015-16) directed by Polly Findlay. [Programme] Olivier Theatre, National Theatre, London.
[85] Ibid.

problems are resolved, characters change as they learn and love, and most find happy endings.

Despite the large directorial and design decision represented by the set and its transformation, Findlay made little use of complicated technology throughout the rest of the play. The focus was often on the actors rather than technology and set, in scenes such as III.ii where the entire cast played sheep, dressed in woolly white jumpers and cardigans with knee pads and woolly gloves which turned their hands into hooves. This was possibly another attempt to show how everything is 'natural' since moving to Arden, using actors here as she did with the flying choir, but may have been intended to show the same group of people who had been acting as a baying mob, blindly cheering the violence of the wrestling in the office, were now following one another around as sheep, with no minds of their own. They moved on hands and knees around the stage, seemingly completely unaware of the conversations taking place. Each sheep had a different character, with some eating the post-it note leaves, others just staring into the audience, and all bleating in different tones, pitches and volumes. This was so humorous that Findlay gave the 'sheep' their own bows in order to gain more laughs) and created a fantastical feel for the forest. In a play where Shakespeare includes outsiders and exiles, Findlay's use of sheep may have been a comment on the idea of following the crowd and fitting in, or pointing to a modern day audience, telling us that we are sheep in the same way we are part of the corporate machine of the world of work. Either way, to my mind these ideas were not conveyed clearly as the slapstick physical theatre of the sheep, although clever, was too distracting and humorous for obvious links to the wider themes of the play, and took away from the focus on the dialogue of the scene. As Touchstone and Corin compared the merits of the Elizabethan city and country, the focus of the audience was on the

sheep rather than the text, showing Findlay's lack of trust in the scene being enough to engage a modern audience. Some reviewers found the sheep an example of Findlay's concept being 'over the top, going for the easy laugh',[86] but Paul Taylor, writing for *The Independent*, saw the use of the ensemble as the choir and sheep as an example of the play's self-awareness, and Findlay's recognition that the natural world of romantic pastoral literature is 'an allegory that always reflects back human preoccupations'.[87] This interpretation, whilst valid, was not necessarily Findlay's aim. During the 'In Context' talk, associate director Keefe maintained that Findlay and the creative team were not really aware of the conventions of pastoral literature, Findlay unaware of how Phoebe and Silvius are created as parodies of pastoral characters and how an Elizabethan audience would have been confident they would end up happily together.[88] Findlay tried to create a more realistic and developed relationship for the two characters, probably in order to make their relationship more recognisable and relatable to a modern audience, but this also shows that her use of the cast as sheep was unlikely a nod to the 'human preoccupations' of the pastoral natural world, but another feature of her visual interpretation of the play.

Textual alterations

In an attempt to present *As You Like It* as a modern-day sketch show and to ensure the engagement of a contemporary audience, Findlay made multiple alterations to the structure of the play and its dialogue. An aim of hers, as explained by Keefe, was to

[86] Treneman, A. 'As You Like It, Olivier Theatre, SE1', *The Times.*
[87] Taylor, P. 'As You Like It, Olivier Theatre, review: Orlando Gough's music brings a wild celebration to a terrific evening', The Independent (4 Nov, 2015) <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/as-you-like-it-olivier-theatre-review-orlando-goughs-music-brings-a-wild-celebration-to-a-terrific-a6720921.html> [Accessed 16 July 2018].
[88] Rokison, A. *Shakespeare for Young People: Productions, Versions and Adaptations*, p. 116.

make it very clear that the second half of the play was a comedy, contrasting the dark, threatening feel of the office[89]. In order to achieve this, the court scenes were grouped together at the start of the play (including lines from II.ii, II.iii and III.i). The one large set change meant scenes had to be reordered, as Findlay wanted to remain in one place for as long as possible, to retain the pace. Although the practicalities of this decision are understandable, it again shows more importance placed on design than the text.

Some scenes from later on in the play were spliced, meaning the audience saw characters more frequently but for shorter periods of time. Sections of text were also moved and Findlay relabelled scenes to suit her new structure: Act 1 consisted of Scenes 1-12 and Act 2 contained Scenes 13-23.[90] Silvius and Phoebe appear (both separately and together) in II.iv, III.v, IV.iii, V.ii and V.iv, but rehearsal notes document the relocation of some lines belonging to these characters from 'Scene 6' to 'Scene 7' and others from 'the end of Scene 9' to 'the end of Scene 8'.[91] The scene between William and Audrey, which in the text does not take place until V.i, was partly moved to Findlay's Act 1. Lines from this scene ('Good ev'n Audrey' and 'God ye good ev'n William'),[92] depicting the awkward interaction between the comically naïve and uncomfortable William were presented in Findlay's Act 1, then again in their proper place in Findlay's Act 2. This initial short scene between the two characters was moved in Findlay's rehearsals, from the end of Scene 7 to the end of Scene 9,[93] Findlay perhaps wanting to wait a little later to introduce more new characters.

[89] Keefe, L. in Rokison, A. (2016) *In Context: As You Like It talk*.
[90] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, V.i: 9-10.
[93] Promptbook for *As You Like It*, National Theatre archives.

The impact of moving and splicing scenes was that characters such as Silvius, Phoebe, William and Audrey were presented to the audience in shorter chunks, and the chopping and changing of scenes and dialogue meant the pace of the second half of the play was faster. By introducing the audience to William much earlier than Shakespeare had, the scene with Touchstone wooing Audrey which follows (III.iii) takes on a different meaning as the audience is aware that another character is in love with her, and more sympathy is then built for William when the audience sees him later on. Perhaps a more rounded, sympathetic William is required in a modern, more realistic version of the play, than the simple country boy in the text. Showing Phoebe and Silvius in more frequent but shorter scenes created a modern-day soap opera feel, particularly as both characters were played by young actors in modern dress: branded bodywarmers and jeans, Phoebe then changing to tight top, heeled boots and hooped earrings when trying to impress Ganymede in later scenes. It felt as though Findlay's interpretation of the relationship between these two characters was a real attempt to appeal to a modern, young audience. Keefe shed further light on Findlay's interpretation of this relationship in the 'In Context' talk: the aim was to build up more of a relationship throughout the play, and as the ending needed to be more believable, Phoebe was more tentative in her delivery of 'Now thou art mine,/Thy faith my fancy to thee doth combine'[94] than the text might suggest, and was directed to still look uncomfortable and unsure at her union with Silvius. I found this to be a more realistic interpretation of the relationship, and a change, along with the shorter, more frequent Phoebe and Silvius scenes, that made more sense in a modern context, but is again, changing Shakespeare's intentions.

[94] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, V.iv: 144-145.

By presenting William and Audrey more frequently, it also drew attention to the similarities between the different relationships developing: Orlando and Rosalind, Celia and Oliver, Phoebe and Silvius, and Touchstone/William and Audrey. Findlay has stated in interviews that the various relationships are as much a part of the play as Orlando and Rosalind's, as discussed above,[95] and the more frequent appearances of characters certainly helped to communicate this, but by splicing the scenes, and making cuts throughout, the characters' scenes were cut short, and they were not allowed to fully develop in the way the text suggests. This might be seen as 'dumbing down' of the text, making it more digestible and comical, but also taking away from Shakespeare's words and characterisation. It also had a contradictory effect: Findlay tried to make characters more developed, such as Phoebe and Silvius, but in the way that she wanted to present them, rather than as the text demands. By trying to develop relationships that are intentionally simplified, Findlay was either deliberately playing against Shakespeare's own ideas for the play, or showing a lack of awareness or understanding. This raises the question of the role of the modern director: is it their job to edit, cut and cherry pick what the audience should see and hear, or should they present the work of the playwright as accurately as they can? Critics and scholars vary in opinion, depending on how reverentially they believe texts should be treated, and in the case of Shakespeare there are often damning reviews when too many changes take place. Many critics thought Findlay brought new life to the play but others agreed with Cavendish, that 'the production hits overkill mode before even a word has been uttered'[96], who also maintained that the play 'just about survived' the onslaught of overblown theatrical ideas and textual cuts. It is telling that a production with so many

[95] Findlay, P. quoted in Tripney, N. 'Polly Findlay: "It's a privilege to work in the Olivier"', *The Stage.*
[96] Cavendish, D. 'As You Like It, National Theatre, review: "I felt I'd aged fourscore years by the end"', *The Telegraph.*

cuts and alterations also had so many additional, non-textual scenes; these took the place of Shakespeare's work.

Some other changes, although small, were made by Findlay in order to make sense in a modern context. The epilogue, spoken by Rosalind in prose rather than verse, in Shakespeare's play marks the change where the actor, rather than the character speaks to the audience. It was delivered very naturally, as if Craig, rather than Rosalind, was speaking. The other actors all stood watching her, relaxed and still but seemingly no longer in role due to their posture and facial expressions becoming neutral. Craig added 'erms' to the speech and varied the pace, perhaps trying to make the speech seem more natural, or showing a little discomfort and to emphasise the fact that 'It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue'[97] or for an actor to break out of role and address the audience. In a modern context, the epilogue does not make sense when spoken by a woman, as Shakespeare wrote it for a male actor, but Findlay changed the line 'If I were a woman'[98] to 'As I am a woman', making the line belong to Craig as a woman, just as it would have done to the young man playing Rosalind in Elizabethan times.

A less necessary choice was to cut Touchstone's 'Seven Quarrels' speech[99] from Act V, which may once have served the purpose of providing time for the costume change while Celia and Rosalind return to their female clothes. Laura Keefe explained how Findlay cut this final speech as the creative team was of the opinion it was not funny today and the audience would not have understood the references or found the comedy in it.[100] The decision to cut one of the play's most famous speeches was a

[97] Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It,* V.iv: 173.
[98] Ibid. V.iv: 183.
[99] Ibid. V.iv: 66-98.
[100] Keefe, L. in Rokison, A. *In Context: As You Like It talk*.

surprising one, and one of the main pieces of evidence to support the argument that Findlay did not fully trust the text, or her audience to understand it. There is an issue with how to make Shakespearean comic characters funny today, when audiences have such different frames of references and experiences, but it is also an example of how directors do not completely trust Shakespeare's text, presuming the audience will not 'get' what language conveys. It is the job of the actor and director to work out how to deliver the speeches to convey what was intended – that is what rehearsals are for. Cutting speeches such as these meant the role was not as funny as originally intended. Henry Hitchings described Mark Benton's Touchstone as engaging but underused, a victim of Findlay's cuts.[101] Another example of changing Touchstone's original function as the play's clown was the cutting of the character of Oliver Martext and removing Jaques from Touchstone and Audrey's scene (III.iv), taking away some of the comical interactions and asides, focusing instead on the romance between Touchstone and Audrey, and aiding Findlay's overall streamlining of the play. Hymen's lines were given to Corin, possibly taking away from the necessity to explain the appearance of a god at the play's conclusion. Alterations such as these might go unnoticed by many audience members, but do support the idea that the textual alterations were a large part of this *As You Like It* belonging to Findlay rather than Shakespeare.

The reordering of the overall structure and the textual alterations by Findlay, focusing on building up to the scene change and then speeding through what is already a fast-paced play, and cutting any slightly problematic lines and speeches rather than finding an answer, are what Worthen might describe as a director 'managing' the relationship between text and performance, interpreting and editing for the audience of the time

[101] Hitchings, H. 'As You Like It Theatre Review: "Craig's heroine has real charm"', *The Telegraph* (4 Nov, 2015), < https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/theatre/as-you-like-it-theatre-review-rosalie-craig-s-heroine-has-real-charm-a3106406.html> [Accessed 23rd July 2019].

period.[102] This management is the director's job, although it may mean what is in the original text cannot always be 'protected' or fully communicated. Findlay, in this production, is what Bradby and Williams describe as the director taking the place of the playwright, being the 'dominant creative force' and the 'scenic writer'[103] who manipulates the blueprint of the play for her own means. There is no doubt this can create spectacular theatre, but is it Shakespeare?

Conclusion

Findlay partly achieved what she set out to do – to create the modern sketch show version of the play – and astounded the audience visually with the set. Whether or not the overall concept worked is debatable: some choices seemed forced and contrived, such as Orlando as a cleaner and a wrestling match in the office, but perhaps the play's own incongruous elements such as a forest with snakes, lions and sheep allows for a license to be imaginative. Problematically for a modern director, Shakespeare deliberately sets his play in a world where there are ambiguities and doublings: two characters each named Jaques and Oliver, an unspecified location of Arden, a Duke who does not recognise his daughter or his clown, the appearance of a god. There are clearly elements of the play that are magical and unexplained, but the conventions of a Shakespearean comedy mean this was not unusual in Elizabethan plays. However, in Findlay's modern-day office concept with its very specific details, holes in the concept were noticeable: who was Touchstone and why was he in the office? Why

[102] Worthen, W.B. *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, pp 45-46.
[103] Bradby, D. and Williams, D., *Directors' Theatre,* p. 1.

were Rosalind and Celia at work in their pyjamas at night? Was the audience supposed to be confused or ignore these problems?

The metaphorical forest with its bare branches and sparse appearance did allow the audience to use their imagination in far less problematic way – it didn't matter who the chorus were in Act V (who appeared from nowhere), or where the costume changes and paper flowers that were planted all over the stage came from. There was no attempt to explain, it simply happened, and in this scene the focus was on the joy and music of the marriage celebrations. However, the court as a corporation and the central conceit of the set transformation overwhelmed the production, and the rest of the play, and its text, although often enjoyable and illuminating, seemed to come second. The restructuring of the play, heightening the impact of the transition to the forest – Findlay not wanting to return to the court after the change has taken place – was an enormous liberty, and was only necessitated by the set demands.

The opening of this production could be seen as an example of what Peter Holland would term a 'materialist drama', a production where everything is explained and nothing is left enigmatic,[104] a theatre of designers where the play's ideas are 'doggedly rooted in the material reality of the design and the style'.[105] Holland's five new categories from the late 1990s of dark tragedies, unproblematic comedies, analogue plays, materialist dramas and triumphant histories were coined by him to define a group of Shakespeare plays produced at similar times, and the term 'materialist', where everything has to be explained by the director, is helpful for the first part of Findlay's production, but does not define the sections of the play set in the Forest of Arden, where the set was more metaphorical and the director's concept changed to

[104] Holland, P. *English Shakespeares,* p. 100.
[105] Ibid.

focus on making the action fast-paced and bite-sized. The production's inability to unite critics or conform to a particular 'type' of the theatre is an example of directors' theatre of recent years. The focus on design and the textual alterations did not 'serve' the text; the play was required to fit around the concept and director's ideas, rather than being central to decisions.

Regarding cutting and alterations, Robert Smallwood puts forward the view that we all take for granted 'a text subjected to modest pruning',[106] but this is not always the case. Several critics complained about Findlay's cutting of lines and moving of scenes, and the fact the set transformation had such an enormous impact surely points to the fact that the textual alterations or 'pruning' did not have the intended impact of conveying the importance of themes or relationships or making the story clearer: the set still dominated. By completely changing the structure of the text, partly in order to fit in with her design concept, Findlay made the play something different; rather than Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, it became Findlay's, and the concept, although innovative and entertaining, took precedence over the text.

[106] Smallwood, R. 'Twentieth-century performance: the Stratford and London companies' in Wells, S. and Stanton, S. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 109.

Chapter 3: *The Tempest* at the Royal Shakespeare Company

The second of the three productions to be discussed is *The Tempest*, directed by Gregory Doran, the Royal Shakespeare Company's artistic director. This production was staged during the winter season of 2016-17 at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre before transferring to the Barbican in London, and has been chosen due its extensive use of digital technology and performance-capture, the result of a two-year collaboration with technology company Intel and the Imaginarium Studios. It was a ground-breaking project which achieved mainly favourable reviews, Doran seemingly combining Shakespeare's text and modern technology with great success in the Stratford run, but staging issues occurring with the move to the Barbican the following summer. I will ask whether Doran used technology to convey different meanings (to that of the original play) for a modern day audience and if his use of innovative techniques actually went far enough in trying to engage a younger, 'video game', generation. I will initially outline Doran's directorial style, professional background and his approach to staging Shakespeare's plays in order to put this version of *The Tempest* into context. I will then describe and interpret key elements of the production – set and staging, key characters, Doran's approach to the text, and ground-breaking use of technology, discussing reviewers' interpretations throughout. My original research will consist of a detailed examination of the production's promptbook, including the director's notes and emails from the RSC's archive. I will use this to question once again what 'directors' theatre' brought to the production.

Gregory Doran

Doran became the RSC's artistic director in 2012, and is currently overseeing the company's project to stage all of the plays of Shakespeare's canon, intended for completion in 2023. After studying English and Drama at Bristol University, Doran set up his own Shakespearean theatre company whilst training as an actor at Bristol Old Vic, working with the RSC as an actor. His director training was also with the RSC, working as an assistant and then associate director, and he directed many Shakespearean plays before taking the reins as artistic director, notable productions including *Macbeth* starring Anthony Sher (1999) and *Hamlet* starring David Tennant (2009). Doran acknowledges that his area of specialism is classical theatre, which he maintains is 'one of [England's] great exports, and it's one of the things people come here to see', going on to say it is something that should not be 'eroded'.[107] In this way, he makes clear his priorities as a director: to retain what it is that makes theatrical texts 'classics' – which, we might assume, means not making too many alterations to the text. Doran has also directed plays by Shakespeare's Elizabethan and Jacobean contemporaries, showing that his interest in and knowledge of the period extends beyond Shakespeare. He has described himself as a 'Shakespeare nut', however, and explained that Shakespeare has always been at the very centre of his life.[108] These ideas categorize Doran as somewhat different to other directors who make 'directors' theatre': Shakespeare's work is, Doran claims, his main area of interest rather than his own theatrical aesthetic. This production of *The Tempest,* however, suggests the reverse. It made such extensive use of modern technology, designed specifically for

[107] *The Guardian*, *'Gregory Doran'* (2002), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2002/jul/06/rsc.whoswhoinbritishtheatre2> [Accessed 14 July 2019].
[108] RSC, *Extended interview with Gregory Doran, new RSC artistic director*, YouTube, 23 March 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ynVsMzGDZY> [Accessed 15 July 2019].

the initial performance space of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, that it shows, if anything, the text coming secondary to the spectacle.

Doran has claimed that he is 'not a director who wades in with a concept',[109] and has frequently been praised for clear storytelling. He has admitted that 'while he enjoys the output of companies like Filter and Propeller, their high-concept end of Shakespearean interpretation isn't his style'.[110] Renowned for starting work with the play's text, Doran is said to work with creative teams and actors to develop the production instead of focusing on the 'how'. His 2012 production of *Julius Caesar*, set in modern-day East Africa with the RSC's first all-black cast, reportedly made Doran slightly wary, as this was a production where he did, unusually, begin with the setting as a concept. It was deemed an extremely successful production by reviewers, that opened Shakespeare up to a wider audience; it was made into a BBC4 filmed version. The parallels between ancient Rome and the recent political landscape in Africa drew resonance from the Libyan conflict at the time, working in pertinently with the play's concerns. Tom Wicker's *Time Out* interview suggests that the production 'demonstrate[d] what can be achieved by developing ideas in collaboration rather than imposing them'.[111]

Doran has been described by the RSC's Chairman as having a 'deep understanding of Shakespeare',[112] surely to be expected from the RSC's artistic director. However, with a director so familiar with directing Shakespeare's work, productions do not always put text before the creative ideas; the more confident a director feels with a text, the more confident he/she may feel in using it to communicate other ideas,

[109] Wicker, Tom, 'Interview: Gregory Doran', *Timeout* (17 July 2012), <https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/interview-gregory-doran> [Accessed 1 March 2019].
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] BBC, *Gregory Doran named as RSC chief* (22 March 2012), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-17472325> [Accessed 21 August 2019].

interpreting and shaping it for a modern audience. Doran also made it clear on appointment that he would be continuing to build on 'the principles of ensemble and collaboration' instilled by his predecessors;[113] he would not be a director attempting simply to produce historically accurate Shakespeare, but would be putting theatre-making first.

Doran's production of *The Tempest* was staged in an important year for the RSC, the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. This is a significant contextual factor: the fact that the production closed the season and was the only one directed by the company's artistic director, explains why *The Tempest* was such a large scale and big-budget production. It was a showpiece for the season and for the RSC, staged on the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage, the RSC's main theatre with 1,018 seats. The production was described by Penny Baldwin, Vice President and General Manager of Intel's Global Brand Management, in the programme notes as a 'visionary performance: one that we hope will forever change the live theatre experience'.[114] The very fact that Doran worked so closely with a digital technology company suggests that this production was not just about Shakespeare's play, however: the collaboration allowed for the budget to experiment technically and theatrically, meaning the technology became a prominent feature.

The collaboration with Intel and the Imaginarium Studios was the most striking and distinctive element of the production, evident from the promotional material featuring the digitally altered face of Simon Russell Beale (Prospero), the Intel logo (on the posters and programme cover), and Doran and designer Stephen Brimson Lewis's

[113] Ibid.
[114] *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (2016-2017) directed by Gregory Doran. [Programme] The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

comments (programme notes), where they state their aims to make *The Tempest* 'a family production, inspired by the masques of King James' court and by the possibilities of today's technology … [to create] a magical and unforgettable experience'.[115] This was clearly a twenty-first century *The Tempest*, and the use of technology was its major selling point. The aim of making it a family production links to the company's mission statement: 'We believe Shakespeare is for everyone. We want to inspire and captivate audiences and transform lives through amazing experiences of Shakespeare's plays and live theatre'.[116] The use of modern technology, resembling that used in computer gaming and films, suggests that Doran was trying in particular to appeal to a younger audience.

Rather than beginning his planning with an idea regarding time period, setting or staging idea, Doran used the Jacobean court masque that takes place in IV.i as his way into the play, utilising modern technology in an attempt to make spectacular theatre appealing to a wide, and younger, audience. As he explains in the programme: 'Shakespeare included a masque. They were the multimedia events of their day, using innovative technology from the Continent to produce astonishing effects',[117] giving examples of moving lights and stage machinery that could be used to make actors 'fly'. This was both the springboard and justification for his directorial ideas concerning technology.

Sarah Ellis, Head of Digital Development at the RSC and co-producer on *The Tempest* explained in the programme notes how 'the notion of the 'masque' ha[d] always been [their] starting point, but during [their] first week with Intel [they] saw the character of

[115] Ibid.
[116] RSC, *Annual Review 2016-17* (2017), <https://annual-review.rsc.org.uk/> [Accessed 12 July 2018].
[117] Ibid.

Ariel becoming a more prominent part of the discussion'.[118] She describes how the creative team began to ask whether they could create a digital character on stage who could interact in real time with other characters. The Imaginarium Studios (a company renowned for ground-breaking work in performance-capture in film, television and gaming) then became involved, developing the character of Ariel, played by a real actor, Mark Quartley, as well as frequently presented as a digital avatar. The Ariel avatar appeared on various screens around the stage using live motion capture, a result of the fact that Quartley was wearing a suit covered with sensors. The amount of collaboration in this production, Doran working closely with both Intel and Imaginarium as well as his producers, production designer Brimson Lewis and video designer Finn Ross, and focusing explicitly on theatrical and technical magic and spectacle, marks *The Tempest* out as an example of modern day 'directors' theatre' where the director's vision is strengthened and amplified by the expertise of his collaborators.

Set and Staging

For Doran, the fact that Jacobean masques at King James I's court used new stage technology to create elaborate effects was the perfect connection to and reason for using cutting-edge modern technology in his own production. Of course, digital technology such as performance-capture and projection-mapping is far from the technology of playwright Ben Jonson, with whom the form of the masque is most famously associated. Masques, which consisted of dancing, singing, acting, costumes and set were performed as part of festivities and celebrations, and were designed to

[118] *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (2016-2017) directed by Gregory Doran. [Programme].

show off wealth and impress the court. According to Stephen Orgel, 'the masque is an assertion of princely power'[119] for Prospero in *The Tempest*. Masquing was also a way of King James I asserting his authority and power, displaying his wealth in the production of the performances. It can be seen that the central idea of the masque, as applied visually to *The Tempest*, was an assertion of Doran's power as a director. In the same way that Prospero is the orchestrator of events in the play, including the masque, Doran was the orchestrator and controlling force behind the RSC's production.

Although only one scene in *The Tempest* contains a masque, the play is full of magic and there is much potential in it for use of stage technology and creation of spectacle. The tempest occurs in I.i, water nymphs appear, Ariel is required to become a harpy after a banquet appears and disappears, and Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are chased by hounds. Reviewing the production after its move to the Barbican, James Woodall made the suggestion that, although the play 'is of course richly suggestive of spectacle […] [t]he words alone build marvels'[120] and that a true test of its success as 'great art' would be to let Shakespeare's words do the work. Rather than let the words alone 'do the work', it seems Doran's aim was to use the moments of magic and imagery in the language to set the tone for the entire visual world of his production, turning text into image.

Doran made use of almost the entire stage and multiple surfaces upon which to project and create setting for his audience throughout the entire play. Although Doran was the director, Stephen Brimson Lewis also had a lot of input and responsibility as creative

[119] Orgel, S. [ed.] 'Introduction to *The Tempest*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 43.
[120] Woodall, J. *The Tempest, Barbican theatre review – sound and fury at the expense of sense* (7 July 2017), <https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/tempest-barbican-theatre-review-sound-and-fury-expense-sense> [Accessed 12 July 2018].

director. The two men have worked together many times for the RSC over the past 20 years, suggesting a shared understanding of design ideas and how to achieve them. This could even be seen as a production which is not just defined as 'directors' theatre', or 'designers', but a new kind of theatre altogether: where design and direction go hand in hand, having equal importance. This might be an example of where 'directors' theatre' is heading, an exciting prospect in terms of the innovative results that can be created for an audience through collaboration. Whilst not a 'traditional' staging of the text, the collaboration and focus on set and technology as well as acting enabled Doran to tell Shakespeare's story whilst breaking theatrical boundaries for a modern audience.

The thrust stage of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre allowed Brimson Lewis to make use not just of the upstage back wall for set, but the thrust area itself. This included the floor of the stage which could be lit from underneath, trapdoors, entrances and exits into the auditorium, and the vast space above the stage, from which mesh cylinders named the 'vortex' in rehearsal notes[121] descended. Brimson Lewis' set design was of the hull of a wrecked ship, the imposing bare bones of the shipwreck's interior curving up high from either side of the stage. This provided different levels for the actors to perform on in scenes such as the opening tempest, and framed the action of the play, being a constant reminder of the shipwreck throughout and hence of Prospero's power. Rather than make scenery changes, locations for different scenes were created through projection mapping using multiple projectors, turning the entire set into surfaces for images to be projected onto. The use of this technology allowed Doran and Brimson Lewis to create a magical world which could easily be transformed

[121] Promptbook for *The Tempest* (Royal Shakespeare Company: November 2016-January 2017), Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Collections, Reference Code RSC/SM/1/2016/TEM1).

between settings, important in a play with a storm at sea, multiple storylines taking places in different parts of the island and many magical elements – such as the appearance of the three goddesses in the wedding masque. Even the wooden 'ribs' of the ship were projected on, as were the curved cyclorama at the back of the stage and a metal mesh cyclorama screen which descended and was used further downstage in scenes where Ariel's avatar was projected. The main backdrop cyclorama was projected on throughout, displaying stormy clouds in I.i and I.ii, a murky forest lit with blues and greens for the start of Prospero and Ariel's interaction in I.ii and a rich red and gold knotted wood as Prospero reminds Ariel of how he had been trapped by Sycorax in a 'cloven pine'.[122] The lighting and projections were positioned to cover the entire stage so the backdrop was not separate, and setting and atmosphere was created across the entire stage picture. The way the entire set was used as a backdrop in the wedding masque was particularly vivid – bright colours and images moved continuously in beams of light over the floor, goddesses' dresses and the set, creating rainbows, flowers and streams - a colourful, magical atmosphere for this otherworldly scene. Ian Shuttleworth, reviewing the play for the *Financial Times*, wrote that Doran and Brimson Lewis 'created a series of sumptuous background images – from naïve paintbox landscapes to slavering hounds of hell – that complement the action rather than distract from it'.[123] He found the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's deep thrust crucial in ensuring the set and the visual elements complemented rather than distracted from the action, allowing the audience to feel the actors were almost among them.[124] The problem, however, is that by creating these richly detailed worlds for almost every scene through projection and lighting, setting

[122] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, ed. by Orgel, S. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), I.ii: 277.
[123] Shuttleworth, I. 'The Tempest, Stratford-upon-Avon – "Magical"', *Financial Times* (18 Nov, 2016), <https://www.ft.com/content/a4762b1c-ad71-11e6-ba7d-76378e4fef24> [Accessed 5 August 2018].
[124] Ibid.

and atmosphere at times dominated the action, and did not require much in the way of audience imagination – the text had been interpreted and the picture had been painted.

The set of the ship's ribs was put to most use in the opening scene, the tempest itself. It was not often used throughout the rest of the play by 'human' characters, but Ariel perched on it watching and listening to scenes, and the ensemble of nymphs and spirits occupied it when they appeared. This suggested that the storm belonged to Prospero, and that the ship ceased to be accessible or even visible to anyone other than his magical creatures. It remained present, however, in all scenes, tall and ominous, reminding the audience of the opening events and Prospero's power and desire for revenge. This was an effective creative decision highlighting a key theme of the play and not inhibiting or overpowering the stage action.

The use of the thrust staging meant that acting took place in and amongst the audience. Additionally, the exits into the auditorium were sometimes used and Trinculo went into the audience and took a seat in II.ii. These staging decisions immersed the audience in the action, harping back to the original performance conditions of the Globe and Blackfriars theatre where audiences were close to the action, not positioned behind a fourth wall. However, in the move of the production from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre to the Barbican for its London run difficulties arose from the change in staging. Ian Shuttleworth from the *Financial Times* had pointed out after the Stratford performance that 'the shallower stage [at the Barbican] may lead to a disproportionate flattening-out, which may in turn encourage the background to swallow the performers',[125] and reviews suggested this was exactly the case, despite

[125] Shuttleworth, I. 'The Tempest, Stratford-upon-Avon – "Magical"', *Financial Times.*

changes Doran noted in the promptbook to prevent this – the lords appearing on the first gallery rather than the stage level at the play's opening, and a drop in sound level for the tempest to allow for audibility of dialogue, and an extended musical introduction to 'Come unto these yellow sands' in I.ii, intended to make the visual connection between Ariel and his water nymph avatar appearing on the screen clearer, as Doran had felt it was rushed before.[126] As there was no thrust, the action had to happen further upstage, leading to more focus on the set and visual effects. Woodall's review reported that the enormous set 'dangerously hollow[ed] out the Barbican's wide proscenium',[127] and was of the opinion that Russell Beale's performance as Prospero, highly praised in Stratford, suffered from the new staging: Beale's delivery, wrote Woodall, was 'diminished by the cavern created in the Barbican'.[128] Despite Doran's changes for the Barbican (of which there were not many considering it was a drastic change in performance space), it was felt that set still dominated, suggesting there was more focus on making the production work perfectly at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, than considering how it would work in a different space.

Having the lords appear on the first gallery of the ship rather than the stage level on which they appeared in Stratford, meaning they were on the same level as the sailors, may have caused difficulties for the audience working out which characters were which in the dim light, rather than being a change to aid storytelling. At the Barbican, the lords then descended to stage level at the end of the scene where the vortex descended and 'flooded' over them. The positioning of the vortex at the Royal Stratford Theatre, almost on the thrust, allowed it to be a real focus, but its position further

[126] Promptbook for *The Tempest*, RSC archives.
[127] Woodall, J. *The Tempest, Barbican Theatre review – sound and fury at the expense of sense* (7 July, 2017), <https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/tempest-barbican-theatre-review-sound-and-fury-expense-sense> [Accessed 16 June 2019].
[128] Ibid.

upstage at the Barbican may have lost it some of this impact. One advantage of the move to the proscenium arch stage, however, was that the large upstage cyclorama which, in Stratford, was difficult for audience members to see due to the depth of the stage and the size of the ship's sides, was more visible. The CGI drawings in the rehearsal scripts show in minute detail how this was used in every scene, often broken down into many difference changes within scenes, providing setting and atmospheric information,[129] but this effort and detail was missed by many audience members at Stratford, an example of how this design-heavy production was at times the victim of too much focus on visual aspects rather than practicality and execution.

Key Characters

As well as being ground-breaking in terms of the technology developed and used, Doran's *The Tempest* was promoted heavily through the announcement of the return, after twenty years away, of Simon Russell Beale to the RSC. He had last appeared in the play as Ariel in 1993, a production directed by Sam Mendes where Prospero (Alec McCowen) was described as 'gentle, school-teacherly',[130] contrasting Russell Beale's cool and distanced Ariel. Stephen Orgel lists some of the different versions of Prospero there have been in past productions: 'a noble ruler and mage, a tyrant and megalomaniac, a necromancer, a Neoplatonic scientist, a colonial imperialist, a civilizer'.[131] Whether or not any of these interpretations is 'correct' is not the point, maintains Orgel, it is the complexity of interpretations available and inconsistencies in

[129] Promptbook, RSC
[130] RSC website Royal Shakespeare Company, *Sam Mendes 1993 Production* (n.d.), <https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-tempest/past-productions/sam-mendes-1993-production> [Accessed 14 July 2019].
[131] Orgel, S. [ed.] 'Introduction to *The Tempest*', p. 11.

character that make Shakespeare great, and that we should value most.[132] Russell Beale's performance supports Orgel's view; his Prospero was a complicated character, believable, vengeful and troubled, and the actor brought to life the human aspect of the play and the complexity of the usurped Duke. So a common feature of the RSC's practice, casting a 'star name' actor to draw in audiences, was also a shrewd decision by Doran – having an actor in the central role who would, ideally, compete with the visual elements around him rather than be overwhelmed by them was vital. It could also be seen as a choice on Doran's part that makes him unusual as compared to other directors who create 'directors' theatre'. A production associated more with the lead actor's than the director's name might seem focused more on acting than the director's vision, but the extent to which digital technology was used counters this. The choice of Russell Beale perhaps even drew attention to Doran's attempt not to allow the play to be completely consumed by design. Russell Beale himself acknowledged in an interview that the production's promotional video makes it look as if it is the story of Ariel – a fairy whizzing about[133] – rather than Prospero's story as it is more traditionally seen. The casting of a star name then, seems somewhat undermined by the presentation of the play in the promotional video, where technology is made the focus. Although acting and text may have been of most importance to Doran, his collaboration with Intel and the funding put into the production by the company would make it likely the technology would feature heavily in the promotional material.

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Russell Beale, S. *Questions and answers with Simon Russell Beale* (interviewed by Abigail Rokison, Shakespeare Institute, 1st Feb 2018) University of Birmingham, Panopto < https://bham.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=95b3d62b-6381-4b5b-be19-a88100e526ca> [Accessed 5 Mar, 2018].

Russell Beale's performance received excellent reviews in the Stratford run, most critics being of the opinion that the technology did not upstage the action. Billington stated that these fears were 'firmly scotched by the presence of Beale as Prospero [who] has the capacity not only to act mind [sic]but to convey moral gravity [and is] exceptional in stressing Prospero's private guilt'.[134] Other reviewers focused on how the depiction of Prospero's relationships with Ariel and Caliban were the most affecting moments of the production, Paul Taylor from *The Independent* highlighting the moment in IV.i where Ariel asks, 'Do you love me master? No?'[135] Taylor notes that Ariel seems to have been trying to grasp the concept of love, watching the exchanges between Jenny Rainsford's Miranda and Daniel Easton's Ferdinand. The question was gently asked, and Taylor describes 'Prospero [as being] completely disarmed, as if no one has ever asked him this simple question before [and as if he were] forced to cover his tear-stained face with his hand'.[136] Doran's rehearsal notes explain that at this point in the play, in his interpretation, 'Ariel is exhilarated by playing the harpy, and possibly emboldened by his master's praise, so he dares to ask his master if he loves him, and immediately answers his own question, betraying his own fear (and anxiety) that he does not'.[137] The detail in Doran's notes clearly show careful consideration of a line which allows for a range of interpretations, choosing to use it to create a moment of emotion and connection between the two characters, using pause, low volume and slow pace. His text-based analysis continues: 'The loaded question comes at the end

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0[134] Billington, M. 'The Tempest review – Beale's superb Prospero haunts hi-tech spectacle', *The Guardian* (18 Nov, 2016), < https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/nov/18/the-tempest-review-simon-russell-beale-rsc> [Accessed 12 July 2018].
[135] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, IV.i: 48.
[136] Taylor, P. 'The Tempest, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, review: Simon Russell Beale in the most profoundly moving performance of his career', *The Independent* (18 Nov, 2016), < https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/the-tempest-royal-shakespeare-theatre-stratford-upon-avon-simon-russell-beale-gregory-doran-a7424881.html> [Accessed 9 July 2018].
[137] Promptbook for *The Tempest*, RSC archives.

of a deliberately banal little rhyme, as if suddenly slipped in',[138] and Taylor's review stated Ariel asked Prospero the question 'experimentally' suggesting Doran's direction was materialised on stage. Russell Beale explained how, as well as being very good at management of the stage picture, Doran takes his actors through a rigorous two weeks of textual work, as do some other directors of Shakespearean plays, Nicholas Hytner and Sam Mendes.[139] This initial table work shows how Doran prioritises the text, and requires his actors to have the same understanding of their parts as he does. Although clearly keeping Shakespeare at the heart of his interpretation, this method of working does enforce Doran's ideas and reading of the play, ensuring actors are conveying his concept, rather than being allowed to read and interpret characters in their own way, or make choices as a company, which would result from a more ensemble-based approach to rehearsal and textual exploration. Although Doran's use of technology is cutting-edge, his approach to the text is director-focused.

Along with his relationship with Ariel, Prospero's relationship with Caliban is crucial. In Doran's production, Prospero was presented, as a man struggling to come to terms with the ideas of freedom and revenge; he was never the all-dominating slave master, but a man finding it difficult to let go of the people who 'belong' to him. Joe Dixon's Caliban, presented in a full body suit with paunch, twisted spine and greenish brown clay-like skin, was a 'human' monster, who came across as sensitive and sympathetic, taunted by Prospero's spirits. Caliban has been interpreted in many different ways in *The Tempest*'s performance history: 'an ineducable brute, a sensitive savage, a European wild man, a New-World native, ugly, attractive, tragic, pathetic, comic,

[138] Taylor, P. 'The Tempest review', *The Independent*.
[139] Russell Beale, S. *Questions and answers with Simon Russell Beale* (interviewed by Abigail Rokison, Shakespeare Institute).

frightening, the rightful owner of the island, a natural slave'[140] according to Orgel. There are difficulties but also many possibilities created by his savage; his threatening lines contrast with the most beautiful and memorable poetry of the play. However, Doran's Caliban did not seem to represent a particular 'type' or group of people; he was described by Shuttleworth as 'strong and uncomplicated'.[141] Perhaps in the magical world of *The Tempest* there is less of a need to find an exact modern-day parallel for this character, or Doran felt a more specific character would complicate the production – the exact location or time-period was not made explicit, costumes suggesting the Regency or Georgian eras, but the set not used to define clearly the 'where' or 'when'. This aids Doran's purpose of trying to create a family-friendly production, not complicating the plot with his own sub-text or modern-day analogues, allowing audience-members to focus on characters and their language rather than what they might represent. However, some reviewers such as blogger Edward Lukes found the portrayal of Caliban a missed opportunity, and saw him as a character played for laughs rather than used to convey the emotional depth apparent in his language, summed up by his main prop of a fish.[142] Lukes thought that the digital technology should have been used for Caliban, the native of the island. While he acknowledged that it made sense for him to be different from Prospero and Ariel, he states that the result was to make Caliban seem 'out of place, with no link to his inheritance'.[143] From research into the rehearsal text, it is apparent this is what Doran intended – Caliban was to seem straightforward, earthy and base compared to the sprite-like Ariel, who, through Quartley's performance (more than the technology) gave

[140] Orgel, S. 'Introduction to *The Tempest'*, p. 11.
[141] Shuttleworth, I. 'The Tempest, Stratford-upon-Avon – "Magical"', *Financial Times*.
[142] Lukes, E. *'The Tempest' at the Barbican*, (12 July, 2017), <https://www.onceaweektheatre.com/tag/stephen-brimson-lewis/> [Accessed 14 July 2019].
[143] Ibid.

the impression that he might float off the stage and up into the air at any moment. Ariel did not seem real, but Caliban, who finds pleasure in companionship and purpose with Stephano and Trinculo, the promise of revenge on Prospero, and the simple vice of drinking, was, in this production, a much more human-like character. Allowing Dixon to play him as a lumbering comical and likeable monster, twisted up with ropes and distorted perhaps by Prospero's treatment of him as much as his own nature, provided a clear and sympathetic version of the character. Doran certainly could have used technology for Caliban, possibly even creating an avatar for him as he did for Ariel (although it is unlikely that costs, preparation and the rehearsals required would have extended to this), but any more extensive use would have meant technology overshadowed the characters and text. It was important that the performances centred on the characters, in line with Doran's focus on text.

The production's promptbook contains a family-tree of all the characters and their links to each other,[144] another method for Doran in his attempt to make the story of the play fully clear to himself and to his cast. He also renamed the play's scenes with titles that supported the structure of his production. These titles: '1.1 Shipwreck', '1.2 Storytelling', '2.1 The Lords', '2.2 Mooncalf', '3.1 Logs', '3.3 Antimasque', then after the interval 'Caliban's plot', '4.1 The Masque' and '5.1 The Final Scene' provided a clear focus for the main element of the story to be conveyed in each scene, and are also a reminder that *The Tempest* is a play that does not actually contain too much plot, consisting of a noun and no verbs. Shakespeare gives us a backstory to the play, but the actual action of each scene is simple. In many ways *The Tempest* is similar to a masque, focused on the key visual scenes (which the title draws attention to) of the shipwreck; the lords at the false banquet, Caliban's gang being attacked by Prospero's

[144] Promptbook for *The Tempest*, RSC archives.

hounds, and the wedding masque. Rather than layering the play with his own context and subtext, this method of naming scenes seems to show Doran simplifying the text, enabling his actors and creative team to focus on what is most important. This might be the reason why there were so many positive reviews – from the Stratford run at least – of the production's acting. Although design and technology were understandably the main topics of reviews, some of the subtler moments where technology was not used and acting was the main method of communication did also receive much praise.

Two such moments were Prospero's speeches towards the end of the play – the 'Ye elves of hills' speech and the epilogue, both from Act V. In both speeches, Prospero was standing downstage on the thrust, close to the audience, allowing the moments to feel intimate, while staging and acoustics allowed for every softly-spoken word to be heard. The first of the two speeches, where Prospero promises to give up his magic, 'break [his] staff' and 'drown [his] book',[145] used little in the way of technology. The upstage area was dimly lit with blue, there were projections of tree branches all over the back cyclorama and the sides of the ship embellished the sides of the stage. Prospero was in a slightly brighter light, allowing the focus to be on him. He had already used his staff to draw a magic circle, which appeared on the floor around him as he drew it, but the rest of the speech was staged simply, Prospero lowering himself to his knees as he created his last spell and then gave up his magic.

The epilogue speech was staged even more simply, the rest of the stage being in darkness while Prospero, in a pool of bright light, was starkly different to the coloured projections and sophisticated lighting of the rest of the play. He spoke to the audience,

[145] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, V.i: 54-57.

asking them to ‘release [him] from [his] bands’[146] through their applause; his delivery quieter and more thoughtful than it had been in previous scenes where he is caught up in his desire for revenge and anger at Antonio and Alonso. Billington describes him as ‘troubled, pensive’[147] in this final speech, evoking the audience’s sympathy and leaving the production on a human rather than technological note.

Russell Beale’s Prospero was presented throughout as a ‘realistic’ character, quick to anger, willing to assert his power, but also a man who makes mistakes, beating his head in annoyance at allowing himself to get carried away by creating the masque at the wedding and forgetting about the plot on his life, breaking down and losing his resolve for revenge when he sees his brother and the other lords in the flesh in Act V. These moments were simple yet moving, allowing the audience to engage with Prospero, watch him seemingly consider his treatment of Caliban and Ariel and his mixed feelings at leaving, and understand what he has been through

In Act V, the audience sees Prospero’s time with both characters end. Billington writes, ‘When Beale tells Ariel “I shall miss thee” it is with an aching sense of loss [and] his attitude towards Joe Dixon’s memorably sad Caliban is also less that of colonial tyrant than sorrowing mentor’.[148] The passage below shows Doran’s ordering of the text in this scene:

> Caliban: What a thrice double ass
>
> Was I to take this drunkard for a god,
>
> And worship this dull fool.
>
> I shall be pinched – to death!

[146] Ibid, V.i: 327.
[147] Billington, M. ‘The Tempest review – Beale's superb Prospero haunts hi-tech spectacle’, *The Guardian.*
[148] Ibid.

Prospero: No.

Here, sirrah, take this. Retire into the cell.

Caliban: Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,

And seek for grace.[149]

Expecting punishment, Caliban appears before Prospero after being brought in with Stephano and Trinculo and ends up in the middle of the circle of courtiers. Cowering before Prospero, he is surprised when Prospero offers a single word, 'No', and hands him the two segments of his broken staff. There is a long pause, then Caliban stands up straight, towering over Prospero, speaking in a much more controlled manner than he has done previously, and states that he 'will be wise hereafter'.[150] He then turns and throws the bits of staff onto the side stage, suggesting to audience that Caliban is breaking free finally from the control Prospero had had over him. Prospero had acted as though he was going to punish Caliban, moving close to him on the line 'mishapen knave', acknowledging Caliban as his. Doran rearranged text in this scene, moving the comical lines concerning Stephano and Trinculo to earlier on, followed by Prospero's insulting comments towards Caliban, including 'He is as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape',[151] leaving his final lines to Caliban an apology. Doran moved Caliban's 'I shall be pinched to death!'[152] from the middle of the interaction, originally positioned after Prospero calls him a 'thing of darkness'[153] to just before Prospero's 'No' – an addition to the text – allowing him to respond to Caliban's fear, making him seem more human and affected by the words.

[149] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, dir. by Gregory Doran (Stratford-Upon-Avon: Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 2017).
[150] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, V.i: 294.
[151] Ibid, V.i: 290-291.
[152] Ibid, V.i: 276.
[153] Ibid, V.i: 275.

There was no one clear moment where his anger turned to pity or regret, but throughout this section a subtle change appeared to take place. Perhaps Doran and Russell Beale wanted it to seem as though Prospero's awareness of the other characters around him, who he had already forgiven, made him realise his punishment of Caliban must end, or perhaps it was his lines about Sycorax and her power which enabled him to become aware of his own power and how and why he was relinquishing it. Either way, he became softer towards Caliban, causing Billington to point out that, 'As a result, we extend our own charity to this troubled, pensive Prospero when he begs release by prayer.'[154]

This was all conveyed through Shakespeare's text, Russell Beale's delivery, Doran's rearrangement of the text and his direction – technology was not needed, which raises the question: what is the point of a complicated technical concept if it is the acting in a production that is most effective? Perhaps this is an example of not being able to overshadow Shakespeare through a design concept, or it could be that Doran's skill as a director and Beale's as an actor allowed the balance to work, in Stratford at least, in these moments.

Textual alterations

Doran's concept centred on the masque rather than a dramatic reorganisation of the text, and most scenes had little in the way of cuts. He did make some additions in terms of stage action and 'pre-scenes', most notably he added a section before the dialogue in II.i where Caliban enters with a pile of wood. Doran's notes and emails to

[154] Billiington, M. 'The Tempest review – Beale's superb Prospero haunts hi-tech spectacle', *The Guardian.*

his collaborators, Paul Englishby (the play's composer) and Brimson Lewis are extremely useful for revealing how much he involved the other practitioners in his thinking process, allowing them to create work with his ideas in mind. The notes and emails also show how Shakespeare's text was used for justifying his creative ideas. For example, Doran took Caliban's line 'The isle is full of noises'[155] as the inspiration for his notion that Ariel and Prospero's other spirits should often be present on stage, unseen by other characters but accompanied by music and singing with Ariel, creating the island's 'noise'. The pre-scene that took place at the start of II.i showed Prospero's spirits taunting Caliban, moving sticks away from him as he tried to collect them, culminating in the squashing of a butterfly which had landed on Caliban's hand and which he was tenderly observing. This created comedy and built sympathy for Caliban, suggesting that the island itself and its inhabitants enjoy teasing him. The butterfly-crushing moment was added during rehearsals, one of the few changes to stage action to be noted.

The fact that few alterations were made during rehearsals suggests two things: first, that Doran was confident in his concept and found no need to make changes. The second is that there was no time to make changes because of the focus on technology – that decisions had already been made before rehearsals, and the stage action had to fit the plan, with little room for movement. The amount of planning that had gone into preparing the production specifically for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre meant that, according to critics, it was successful in the space, finding the balance between acting and design. However, the fact the production was so 'space-specific' meant the move to the Barbican was problematic. Doran's notes in the production's promptbook suggest he felt he had already found solutions to problems from close analysis of the

[155] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, III.ii: 133.

text and then application of his own ideas. Russell Beale has spoken about how Doran looks to find ways of making difficult elements of plays work, citing the example from the masque scene of reapers in straw hats appearing. Russell Beale explained how he would be saying 'cut the line' but Doran 'allows Shakespeare the benefit of the doubt', trusting there is a way of making the scene work on stage.[156] This 'way' of course, is not necessarily the 'answer', but Doran's way, his version of how the line should be staged.

Another staging moment stemming from the text was evident where Doran made note of Ariel's cruel 'joke', telling Ferdinand his father is dead when he is not. This moment led the director to develop the idea of Ariel showing Ferdinand Alonso's 'body' floating down as if sinking to the bottom of the sea, which he created through use of projection on the vortex during the song 'Full fathom five thy father lies'.[157] Doran's emails to composer Paul Englishby reveal that he felt the alliteration in the song suggested that the music should be soft and soothing. He also felt the reference to a 'sea change' could be shown through the moment where Alonso's projected body lands and turns to coral. Decisions such as these show how all the elements of the piece were tied together, ideas developing in tandem, and Doran considering sound and visual elements whilst preparing the text. Both of these visual examples – spirits teasing Caliban and the floating of Alonso's body – whilst not in the text, aided Doran in communicating what he felt were the play's ideas to the audience, and the collaboration that had happened beforehand meant large changes were not needed in rehearsals. The fact that some of the most striking images of the production were developed by Doran from his interpretation of the text rather than moments explicitly

[156] Russell Beale, S. *Questions and answers with Simon Russell Beale* (interviewed by Abigail Rokison, Shakespeare Institute).
[157] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, I.ii: 396.

in Shakespeare's work show the impact the director, as opposed to the playwright, has on modern theatre productions. Whilst to Doran's mind, he is interpreting the text and conveying what is in it, in reality, the visually striking moments, whilst impressive, were in fact from his mind rather than Shakespeare's.

Doran's production was relatively conservative in terms of textual alterations. Orgel has proposed that the play's text 'remains endlessly malleable: modern directors feel no less free than Kean and Beerbohm Tree to assign Miranda's attack on Caliban to Prospero, to cut the masque, or to replace Prospero's epilogue with "Our revels now are ended…"'.[158] However, just because these decisions *can* be made does not mean that they should, a text being viewed as 'malleable' perhaps taking away from what it inherently is – a text already written and structured by a playwright, intended to be performed in that way. The difficulty with this argument is that we do not have full knowledge of exactly how each of Shakespeare's plays was definitively written, multiple versions existing. Tiffany Stern notes the discrepancies between the instructions Prospero gives Ariel in the masque scene, and what actually happens, such as Ariel being asked to return, but Iris entering instead. Scholars such as Stern suggest the masque seen in today's text replaced an earlier version, as the play was revised for performance at court.[159] Orgel claims that it 'is a text that looks different in different contexts, and it has been used to support radically differing claims about Shakespeare's allegiances'.[160] Although Doran avoided making an explicit interpretation of what Shakespeare's messages may have been by not giving the play a specific setting or time period, he was still aiming to make the play modern and

[158] Orgel, S. 'Introduction to *The Tempest'*, p. 76.
[159] Stern, T. *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 152.
[160] Ibid.

accessible to a contemporary audience, through the use of digital technology, but also through the addition of comedy and the alterations of lines in scenes with Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban.

These changes did not attract too much attention from critics, perhaps because the technical wizardry was the main focus, but more likely because Doran, as the RSC's artistic director, is more immune from this sort of criticism from reviewers than more radical directors. The clown scenes did contain a range of alterations, moved some lines around and contained ad libs, most in modern speech rather than 'Shakespearean-sounding' text. These alterations took place in scenes where Doran added no special effects, such as II.i where Stephano (Tony Jayawardena) and Trinculo (Simon Trinder) find Caliban under his gaberdine. The staging of this scene, with its plethora of Elizabethan jokes, quick one-liners and banter, focused on the comedy and characters rather than technology. Language was updated when Trinculo asked an audience member, 'Is that you?' after getting a whiff of Caliban's fish-like smell, and almost swore but turned his 'Sh-' into 'Shakespeare!' after tripping over Caliban's prone body, apologising to the audience member with a 'Very sorry, it wasn't you'. These seemingly ad-libbed lines provoked much laughter from the audience and conveyed the light-hearted mood of the scene. Shuttleworth was of the opinion that the two actors (Jayawardena and Trinder) 'succeed[ed] deliciously in making the clowning roles actually funny',[161] an issue for modern audiences when hearing Elizabethan jokes. By adding his own lines and comical interactions to the text Doran was altering Shakespeare's work, making the play belong to him as much as Shakespeare, a perfect example of modern-day 'directors' theatre'. He did not cut the

[161] Shuttleworth, I. 'The Tempest, Stratford-upon-Avon – "Magical"', *Financial Times*.

jokes, but simplified the text for his audience by updating them. There were many of these additions in Stephano and Caliban's scenes, slapstick physical actions seen by some as shoehorned in, as Doran attempted to play up the comic aspects. Writing for *New Scientist* magazine, Simon Ings found the play overall to be 'played predominantly for comedy, manufactured stage business and some groan-inducing puns'.[162] And, by playing for laughs, and adding his own jokes, which he imagined would be more amusing than Shakespeare's (and were certainly found extremely comical by the audience), Doran was altering the text, perhaps not 'eroding' it, but certainly changing it.

Technology

The fact that the collaborative work with Intel had begun two years prior to the performances makes the importance of technology in this production apparent. The production opened in early November 2016 and rehearsals with the cast began on 12th September, Mark Quartley having already worked separately with Intel and the Imaginarium Studios for performance-capture work. Work had begun on building the floor and vortex at the start of September, and the rehearsal structure of the ship's ribs was started on 20th September, meaning that set and design elements were in place or underway prior to work on the general acting of the cast. The fit up in the theatre began on 12th October, the scenic fit up on 20th October; the focus moved to video and lighting issues at the end of October.[163] The detailed notes in the promptbook

[162] Ings, S. 'Projected sprite makes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* a messy triumph', *New Scientist* (21 Nov, 2016), https://www.newscientist.com/article/2113491-projected-sprite-makes-shakespeares-the-tempest-a-messy-triumph/ [Accessed 20 July 2018].
[163] Promptbook for The Tempest, RSC archives.

regarding the set and technical elements, including much detail on the use of the traps and harnesses, and the CGI storyboard drawings for the projections in every scene, show how much collaboration there was with designers and technicians – these were not simply notes for Doran's reference, but to be used by the whole creative team. Technical rehearsals took up twice as much time as those in the other two productions discussed in this essay, revealing the amount of work and rehearsal required, and the importance overall of technology to this production. This evidence from the promptbook suggests the production was more about the visual elements than the acting and the text, but is also indicative of the fact that Doran and the company were working with totally new technology – a production of this type had not been staged before, meaning the possibility of difficulties and setbacks was likely, so more technical rehearsal time would have been needed than usual.

The highlight of the digital technology used in this production was the use of an avatar to embody Ariel on various screens and surfaces as well as live onstage, although some reviewers were critical of the quality of the technology used. There were essentially two Ariels – the actor Quartley, who communicated through voice and body, and the motion capture version which showed Quartley's movements in real time, but took different forms depending on the play's requirements, and Doran's intentions. A memorable scene involving Ariel was during Act I Scene ii, when Prospero reminds Ariel of his time trapped by Sycorax in a 'cloven pine'.[164] During Prospero's speech, the mesh cylinder was slowly flown down from the rigging, and the projected Ariel avatar was shown through projection, much larger than in real life, inside the tree on the vortex. Ariel gradually became entwined in the roots, showing the ageing and length of time he had been in there, and the whole stage and back wall

[164] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, I.ii: 276.

also became covered in gnarled, whirling tree roots, while pre-recorded sounds of snapping twigs supported the visual design. As Prospero released him, the vortex ascended and Ariel fell to the floor. The creaking of trees died out and projections swirled, unravelling as the roots and branches unwound. The lighting changed suddenly to blue, with clouds projected on back screen, showing the disappearance of Prospero's anger. Russell Beale stood over Quartley, with his staff raised, intimidating and powerful. Julian Richards described this moment of release as '[bringing] genuine relief to [Ariel] and the audience', stating that it was visually a stunning moment and was vital for understanding the relationship which 'elevated this production far more than any technology could'.[165] Richards gives this moment as the one example from the production where the special effect truly served the story, admiring the efforts and splendour of the technology, but finding the more human moments of the production the most affective. Whilst clever use of the avatar and projection made this scene visually stand out, receiving much praise in Stratford, others were of the opinion that moments such as these took away from the text, particularly in the Barbican production where one reviewer wrote that 'the visual wonders invite the audience to ignore what's being said'.[166]

Other critics agreed with Richards, Dan Rubins writing that 'The show springs to life most richly in the moments free from technological intervention',[167] writing that Quartley's Ariel gave an enchanting performance when not in 'morph mode'. It was the skills of the actors in moments such as these that really conveyed the emotions and relationships of the characters, Prospero in II.i being portrayed by Beale as a

[165] Richards, J. 'The Tempest (review)' *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 35(2) (2017), 342-345, 344.
[166] Rubins, D. 'Review: The Tempest, Barbican Centre' *A Younger Theatre* (23 July, 2017) <https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/review-the-tempest-barbican-centre/> [Accessed 4 June 2019].
[167] Ibid.

complicated character, quick to anger and controlling, and Ariel, usually lithe, nimble, free and at ease, suddenly cowering and static on the floor. The final interaction between these two characters in Act V was also moving on account of the acting, Russell Beale taking a few steps after Ariel who had left the auditorium, having been freed, before he seemed to remember that the audience was there, and composed himself to ask them to 'draw near'.[168] This was one of the moments in which Doran and Russell Beale wanted to be clear that Prospero was seeing Ariel as a real being rather than an avatar, making their separation more emotional. Russell Beale's idea was that the avatar was 'the projection of himself as he wishes Prospero to see him',[169] a wonderful idea that perfectly ties together the design and interpretation of the characters, but it is not necessarily a reading of which all audience members would be aware.

However, the fact that there were so few moments between Prospero and Ariel where they really connected as humans rather than master and servant, or digital/magical being, drew attention to those highlighted above. Without the technology, and the fearsome and beautiful version of Ariel created visually, the contrasting moments involving the equally impressive real-life Ariel and his simple, understated human interactions with Prospero would not have been as emotional. The exit from the projected knotted pine tree did create a release of tension and build sympathy for Ariel, but this came from the atmosphere created by the avatar and projection. These moments, full of emotion easily emoted to the audience sat close to the action on the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's thrust stage, were evidently not as clearly communicated to the audience at the Barbican, separated from scenes by the

[168] Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*, V.i: 318.
[169] Promptbook for *The Tempest*, RSC archives.

proscenium arch, encouraged instead to focus on the spectacle of the set on the broad stage. The success of Ariel at Stratford was due to the combination of the technology and the actor's skills, but when the nuances of Quartley's performance could not be seen, the overall effect was diminished.

Regarding the digital version of Ariel, there were some negative comments, Richards criticising the time-lag that often occurred between the real-life Quartley's movements and the response of the digital version. This was indeed noticeable and at times distracting, hardly impressive compared to the special effects audiences can see today in films and computer games. Notes in the promptbook reveal discussion as to whether the avatar would be pre-programmed, or whether markers could be placed on Prospero, enabling the avatar to 'look' directly at him, the technology on the two characters connecting.[170] There were concerns from the production team as to whether it being pre-programmed would make the character look stale, and the risk of not matching something Quartley did differently from night to night. The difficulty with the live capture was the lag. Simon Ings, writing for *New Scientist*, describes the overall technical results as 'impressive but not seamless'. He also criticised the 'bad lip synching' of Ariel's avatar, but was forgiving: 'Never mind, there are 200,000 files running at once to bring this illusion to life, and anyone who knows anything about the technology will be rightly astounded that the sprite responds in real time at all'.[171] The difficulty here is that the majority of the audience would not be aware of the science – Ings described it as a 'tremendous, but hidden, achievement' – and a young audience, living in a world with screens in their pockets and film advancing at break-neck speed, might take for granted the possibilities of modern technology. On the one hand, the

[170] Ibid.
[171] Ings, S. 'Projected sprite makes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* a messy triumph', *New Scientist.*

use of technology can be seen as overwhelming the production; on the other, it can be criticised for not being able to compete with other digital media. Theatre is not film and is not computer gaming – was it wise to try to enter those fields?

Perhaps rather than trying to 'compete' with other forms of modern media, Doran was trying to make his play entertaining to a modern and younger audience by striking a balance between Shakespeare's text, the theatre, and the possibilities of modern technology. He is hardly the first to experiment with radical theatrical innovations – many companies create immersive theatre, using forms of technology such as virtual reality headsets in their productions – but the use of live motion capture and projection was a theatrical first. Critics felt Doran's *The Tempest* would not have an impact on future productions, Billington writing that he 'see[s] its use of advanced technology as a one-off experiment rather than a signpost to the future',[172] a theatrical 'gimmick' not a new type of theatre. Ings saw more promise, describing it as a new form of theatre which does not yet have its own grammar, so the audience do not know how to read it[173]. He saw the technology as finding its home in opera rather than theatre.

One spectacle required in *The Tempest* is 'spirits in shapes of dogs and hounds',[174] which Doran created by having the ensemble of spirits chasing Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo around the stage, holding tabors in a variety of positions, with images of slavering dogs' faces projected onto the material of the drums' surface from all around the auditorium. One large hound was projected upstage, the lighting was red and the flooring lit to resemble fire with orange and black coming up from underneath, creating a hell-like scene. There were also sound effects of dogs barking, and drums banging.

[172] Billington, M. 'The Tempest review – Beale's superb Prospero haunts hi-tech spectacle', *The Guardian.*
[173] Ings, S. 'Projected sprite makes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* a messy triumph', *New Scientist.*
[174] Shakesepare, W. *The Tempest*, IV.i.

It was a fast-paced scene, full of tension and showed Prospero's power, but this effect was created through a mix of complex, precise movements from the actors, catching the projections at exactly the right moment, and through sound and lighting as well as the projection. The technology combined with other theatrical elements, and perhaps this is where it was used most effectively in the production – not in scenes where it took precedence, but where Doran let it be used alongside performance.

To my mind, some scenes did not use technology as successfully, including the vital opening scene of *The Tempest*, where the audience is not given an enormous amount of exposition, but is introduced to Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, the other lords and sailors, and is led to believe all have been lost at sea. The stage was plunged into darkness after the lords entered onto the thrust and a loud crack of thunder was heard. Flashes of lightning crackled over the back cyclorama (although this was not visible to audience members seated at the sides of the stage), storm sound effects played, and moving lights from either side of the stage shone through the ship's 'ribs', creating the effect of a swaying vessel. Dialogue started immediately, but the problem was that it was drowned out by the storm and sea sound effects. The overall idea of the storm and the ship splitting was evident, and the difference in status between the lords and the ship's crew was made clear through costume differences, as well as staging – the crew up on the sides of the ship, working, contrasted with the lords who looked as though they were on the ship's deck. However, the darkness will have made this difficult to ascertain for some, and, with most of the dialogue lost, audience-members not already familiar with the play would have missed opening insights into Antonio and Sebastian's disdain towards the ship's men, Gonzalo's attempt to make peace, and the fact that there is a King on board. Overall, technology overwhelmed the story in this sequence, and reviewers agreed on finding it a

disappointing opening. Dominic Cavendish described it as 'a bit of a damp squib [with] a lot of time to soak up the imposing atmosphere of Stephen Brimson Lewis's towering set, … but basic audibility suffer[ing] amid the thunderous sound effects'.[175]

This review points to the main problem with this production – the balance between design and text. Bombarding the audience with visuals and sound effects in the opening was dramatic, but text was lost as a result. Although Doran did in general use the projections and avatar to highlight the story rather than take its place, there were scenes where it dominated, and as a result, some other scenes which made no use of technology, were seen to suffer a little. Cavendish – who acknowledged he found the production impressive overall – saw Caliban's 'faux belly and stuck-on spine … [as] rather old-school in comparison'.[176] In these sparer scenes, Doran was seemingly focussing on the text and comedy, using slapstick and audience interaction to engage the spectators, but for younger audience-members unfamiliar with the text and characters, added moments such as Trinculo's clown horn and the way he jumped into the audience may have been amusing, but were not Shakespeare's work; the dialogue without technology is in danger of having been less engaging than the more spectacular scenes.

Conclusion

Despite the critical comments of reviewers that have been discussed, the general sense was that this was a production like no other, impressive and awe-inspiring in its

[175] Cavendish, D. 'The RSC's Tempest: Lord of the Rings-style magic and the welcome return of Simon Russell Beale – review' *The Telegraph*, (18 Nov, 2016) < https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/the-rscs-incredible-tempest-brings-lord-of-the-rings-style-magic/>. [Accessed 6 July 2018].
[176] Ibid.

use of design, with much to praise in its performances. Ings described it as a 'messy triumph', saying that Brimson Lewis' 'throw-everything-at-it approach here is exactly the right one … it's a glorious mess and one from which future production can learn'.[177] This is an important point. The production was not perfect, but was designed almost as an experiment, trial, or showcase of what can be achieved when combining digital technology with modern day stagecraft. One must question whether this is what Shakespeare should be – a vehicle by which to try out new ideas, but if masques and some of Shakespeare's plays used the current technology of the period, then why should directors not do the same today? The fact the play revolves around key images and moments of spectacle, rather than relying on a complicated plot gave Doran his justification for applying the idea of a masque to the entire production. It is important to remember however that *The Tempest*, whilst containing a masque, is a play first and foremost.

Although Doran and the RSC took the nature of collaboration to extreme lengths, having a two year development period with Intel and other creative artists, Brimson Lewis is of the opinion that '[t]heatre is by nature a collaborative art', the director's role being 'to orchestrate and channel these talents towards a single goal and particular vision for the play'.[178] An argument for the validity of this point might be that theatre has always consisted of more than speech - song, dance, costume, mask – it is about more than text. This production, whilst impressive to theatre critics and making use of technology never seen before on stage, was criticised for time lags and out of sync dialogue. Whether the production did engage and impress a younger generation, more

[177] Ings, S. 'Projected sprite makes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* a messy triumph', *New Scientist.*
[178] *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (2016-2017) directed by Gregory Doran. [Programme].

familiar with video games and mobile phones than the typical theatre critic might be, is another question.

However, the negative comments in reviews of the production after it moved to the Barbican suggest that there the set was clearly prioritised over acting and that 'the play' suffered as a result. Russell Beale's performance, the highlight of the production for almost all critics in Stratford, apparently seemed diminished on the Barbican's stage, and the changes that could have been made to the play's opening were not, resulting in dialogue remaining inaudible. This suggests the focus was on the original performance space and the technical elements, and shows that even with its enormous budget, outstanding performances and design, Shakespeare-obsessed director, and excellent reviews overall, a production can still suffer at the hands of 'directors' theatre'. It seems that the collaborative aspects of the performance were the focus for the director – the creative team had committed to the use of the technology and had to see it through. It may be that this production was more 'space-specific' than Doran and his team had realised, and that the issue of where a play is put on is as important as how. Although it may not be something overtly considered by a director when interpreting and staging a play, certainly not as much as how the text will be altered or what the director will bring to the production, the impact of space on the two versions of *The Tempest* seen in Stratford and London was clearly profound.

Chapter 4: *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe

The third and final production to be discussed is *Twelfth Night*, directed by Emma Rice at Shakespeare's Globe and produced as part of the 'Summer of Love' season, running from 18th May until 5th August 2017. Emma Rice was, at the time, the Globe's artistic director, and *Twelfth Night* was her final main house production in what was to be her final season, after announcing in October 2016 that she would be leaving. Rice's time at the Globe was surrounded by controversy, mainly due to her use of modern-day technology: she installed lighting rigs and used amplified sound in a 'historical' space, and reworked Shakespeare's texts.

Shakespeare's Globe is a theatre renowned for its commitment to fresh approaches to Shakespeare's plays, but staged in a way sympathetic to the theatre's building, which attempts to replicate what is known of Shakespeare's original Globe and its practices. The Globe's CEO, Neil Constable, announced in a statement released alongside the news of Rice's departure that 'the theatre programming should be structured around "shared light" productions without designed sound and light rigging, which characterised a large body of The Globe's work prior to Emma's appointment'[179] and that predominantly using contemporary sound and lighting was not in line with the intentions of experimenting with Shakespeare's performance spaces and their playing conditions.

[179] Bowie-Sell, D. *Emma Rice to stand down as artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe* (2016) <https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/emma-rice-stand-down-shakespeares-globe_42096.html> [Accessed 28 August 2019].

The production polarised audiences and divided critics, outraging some and delighting others, and was seen as a rebellious and irreverent farewell by Rice. Mark Shenton from *The Stage* was of the opinion that 'it's hard not to think that Rice is sometimes intent on provoking the Globe board that rejected her'.[180] Rice made use of live music, microphones, special effects and many of her other trademark features – textual additions, song and dance numbers – which turned it into a disco extravaganza that included a drag artist, Le Gateau Chocolat, as Feste. *Twelfth Night*, one of Shakespeare's plays containing the most music, might be seen as the ideal vehicle for Rice's ideas, but the production became more about Rice and her style than the text. Critics in general enjoyed the production as a piece of theatre, but not as a performance of a Shakespearean play, a condemning view of a production by the Globe's artistic director.

These are the reasons *Twelfth Night* will be my final case study. I once again discuss and interpret the use of set and staging, key characters, textual alterations and technology, using critics' interpretations throughout my analysis. I will argue that Rice epitomises 'directors' theatre' of today, often producing theatre to much acclaim and to the great enjoyment of some audience-members, but also creating, in this instance, more of a modern day musical adaptation centred around her own ideas and preferences than a staging of the text. I will use original research from the Globe's archives to explore the rehearsal process and decision-making behind the production, asking whether Rice's interpretation brought anything valuable to the play, or whether

[180] Shenton, M. 'Twelfth Night review at Shakespeare's Globe – "Emma Rice bids farewell"', *The Stage* (24 May, 2017), <https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2017/twelfth-night-shakespeares-globe/> [Accessed 8 July 2018].

the director dominated, at the theatre where Shakespeare should be at the centre of the performance.

Emma Rice

Rice studied at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, starting her career as an actor before moving into directing. In 1994 she began working as an actor with Kneehigh Theatre, a touring ensemble theatre company that creates work with 'joyful anarchy'.[181] Rice began directing her own work with the company in 1999, eventually becoming Joint Artistic Director. Her style, developed through her work with Kneehigh, focuses on the actors and is inherently 'integrated with music',[182] rehearsals often beginning with skills-based work such as singing and dancing rather than text. The rehearsal notes for the Globe production of *Twelfth Night* recorded that Rice had asked the actors to bring any instruments they could play along to the first rehearsal,[183] revealing how material for the production would come from the actors, their skills, and work generated collaboratively, rather than solely directed by Rice.

The rehearsal process began in February, with a Research and Development week running from 27th February until 3rd March, then rehearsals proper began on 10th April. Unlike directors who spend weeks doing table-work before putting a play 'on its feet', Rice never carries out a read through, fully aware that some actors will have very little to say and will be redundant whilst those with lots of lines will be busy.[184] Her attempt

[181] Kneehigh, *About Kneehigh* (n.d.) <https://www.kneehigh.co.uk/about/> [Accessed 14/08/19].
[182] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe (2017) <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discovery-space/adopt-an-actor/archive/director-director-emma-rice> [Accessed 15/08/18].
[183] Promptbook for *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe: May-August 2017), Shakespeare's Globe archives, Reference Code GB 3316 SGT/THTR/SM/1/2017/TN).
[184] Ibid.

not to rank any parts or actors above others, creates an ensemble, democratic feel to a company, but simultaneously takes away from the focus on the text. This is perhaps an effective rehearsal method when devising new work (which Rice has admitted is the way of working she is most familiar with, rather than directing plays that are already written),[185] but when directing Shakespeare, it entails leaving the text until last in rehearsals. Might the text also be left until last in terms of the production as a whole? Creating work in rehearsals with the company rather than arriving with her pre-existing ideas for how scenes will play out also suggests Rice's lack of confidence in interpreting the text.

Rice's collaborative approach is extended through her frequent work with Carl Grose – who wrote additional text for *Twelfth Night* and is the current Joint Artistic Director of Kneehigh with Mike Shepherd – and composer Ian Ross, who was present in rehearsals from the start of the process, again highlighting the importance of music in Rice's concept and overall way of working. A traditional viewpoint might see this collaborative approach as inappropriate for directing a Shakespearean play, given that as much focus was placed on the music and additional text as the acting, but for Rice it is important to get her company working together as an ensemble from the start; she sees it as a democratic and equal process.[186] This way of working is not dissimilar to the way plays are likely to have been staged in Shakespeare's time: Tiffany Stern's rehearsal books show how the prompter organised any group work but otherwise actors practised alone with little group rehearsal, which was actually necessary only for parts of the play that could not be learnt alone.[187] In fact, the work of Kneehigh and other contemporary devised theatre companies has similarities to what scholar John

[185] Ibid.
[186] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe (2017).
[187] Stern, T. *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, p122.

Russell Brown advocated in the 1970s in order to 'free' Shakespeare in performance: allowing a company of actors to work together on the play, Elizabethan-style.[188] Rice's way of working might be seen as a modern version of the ensemble Russell Brown wished for, arguably, then, a suitable way of working at Shakespeare's Globe. However, with Rice's productions, she is still firmly at the helm, rather than letting decisions be made by the company. Her collaborative approach then, with practitioners such as Grose and Ross, could be seen as an extension of Rice's vision, with the focus on extra text and music taking precedence over acting and Shakespeare's plots.

Having only directed one Shakespeare play before coming to the Globe (again, a surprising fact about its artistic director), it is difficult to compare Rice's way of working on *Twelfth Night* to her approach to his other plays, but her process, as revealed in the production's promptbook and on the Globe's 'Adopt an Actor' behind the scenes podcast, draws strong similarities between this production and her way of creating devised work. Rice has said her style is inherently 'integrated with music';[189] she had her musicians present in rehearsals every day, and song and dance formed a vital part of the performance. Indeed, during the devising process, the amount of dance routines created was cut by a third. Considering that the production, even without these cuts, was still described as '*Twelfth Night*: the musical',[190] much of its focus was on extra material rather than the text, aiming to attract and please her young following, those familiar with her work but perhaps not so familiar with Shakespeare.

[188] Brown, J.R. *Free Shakespeare* (Cambridgeshire: A&C Black, 1974, 1997), p83.
[189] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.
[190] Shenton, M. 'Twelfth Night review', *The Stage*.

The production was set in the late 1970s. Rice explains in the programme how her aim was to 'take [the audience] to a remote Scottish island, quiet and unaware of how the world is about to tip'.[191] For some critics, the choice of setting seemed to be determined by the style of music and dance Rice had chosen: 1970s disco, including popular songs such as Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive* and Sister Sledge's *We Are Family*; the setting of Scotland was not really pertinent to the play's meanings, and 'never rigorously pursued'.[192] Rice explained how she chose the time period as it had great resonance for her – the play 'creaks with [Rice's] own sorrows, [her] own madness, [her] own confusion and [her] own memories'.[193] She set the play specifically in 1979, the year she lost her childhood best friend to leukaemia, a loss from which she says she has never recovered. This is itself telling – by making these choices Rice was putting herself as the director at the centre of her production. The setting, time period and the themes she wanted to draw upon were all extremely personal. This is the epitome of 'directors' theatre'.

Rice explains how '*Twelfth Night* charts the devastation of loss, but gives us all the ending that life often doesn't; the chance to return to the arms of those we have loved and lost. With such personal feelings running through the production, Brown's description of 'directors' theatre', where the director tries to 'satisfy their own creative impulse'[194] is fitting. However, when staging a play by Shakespeare at the Globe, it

[191] Rice, E. in Robins, N. '*Illyria is in Freefall*', *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare (2017) directed by Emma Rice. [Programme] Shakespeare's Globe, London.
[192] Billington, M. 'Twelfth Night review – Emma Rice's Highland fling brings that sinking feeling', *The Guardian* (2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/may/25/twelfth-night-review-emma-rice-disco-party-shakespeares-globe>. [Accessed 14 July 2018].
[193] Rice, E. in *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare (2017). [Programme].
[194] Brown. J.R. 'Introduction' in Brown, J.R. [ed.] *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), x.

could be suggested that some other aspects should also be considered: most importantly, the text and the performance space.

Set and Staging

Despite explorative acting work taking place at the start of rehearsals, Rice and her creative team had made their design decisions before the rehearsal process began, promptbook notes from the first production meeting on 5th April 2017 making it clear all major set ideas had already been decided upon.[195] The Globe's groundlings were described as being 'the sea', their role made evident early on in the play's opening sequence – an addition by Rice – where Viola and Sebastian fell from the stage into the yard after the shipwreck. The two were carried down by the ensemble onto the floor space at the front of the audience, then re-emerged, washed up and stripped of their 1970s disco finery, wearing simple white shorts and vests, looking very similar to one another and establishing, before any of Shakespeare's text had even been spoken, that the two were twins and had been separated. A boat then entered from the yard, carried aloft by actors, above the audience's heads. Antonio steered the boat to the stage, rescuing Sebastian, before leaving the theatre space. When Sebastian and Antonio parted ways in III.iii, Antonio left the stage in the same boat and the same manner. This very act of using exits down from the stage and into the auditorium – not a method unique to Rice at the Globe it must be noted – would be seen as unacceptable by some Shakespearean traditionalists. The new Globe theatre, a painstaking recreation as far as possible of the original Globe, was created to be used

[195] Promptbook for *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's Globe archives.

in the same way it was in Elizabethan times, meaning even the simple act of exiting into the audience should not be allowed. Whilst decisions such as these may be seen as small, having little impact on the building, Rice's other decisions, such as installing a lighting rig and drilling into the theatre's timber, completely violated the Globe's mission, aiming to 'harness the power of performance … [and] make Shakespeare accessible to all' whilst being 'inspired and informed by the unique historic playing conditions' of the theatre.[196] Whilst in most theatres there would be no issue around any technical decisions made, the Globe is a different entity. It was not built as a modern performance space, and the fact that it was used by Rice in such an inaccurate and what some would say unsympathetic way, was a problem.

Other key design elements included the upstage metal balcony structure with a ramp and handrail running up to it, designed to look like the railings at the side of a ship, decked with life rings labelled 'SS Unity' and 'In Love We Trust'. This was also where the live band were positioned throughout the play. For Rice, the play was about separation and unity, made clear in her programme notes,[197] and her set reflected this. One might say by involving the audience in her performance space, she aimed to bring them into the shared experience, using the thrust stage, extended either side with two small platforms – another change to the Globe's usual appearance, and the positioning of the audience, up high and almost in the round, close to the stage action. Mark Rylance, the theatre's first artistic director, points out that 'companies like Kneehigh and Punchdrunk really break the assumed boundaries between actor and audience',[198] comparing work of these companies to the way the audience is as much

[196] Shakespeare's Globe, *About Shakespeare's Globe* (n.d.), <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/about-us/ > [accessed 10/09/19].
[197] Rice, E. in *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare (2019) Directed by Emma Rice [Programme].
[198] Rylance, M. 'Research, materials, craft: principles of performance at Shakespeare's Globe' in Carson, C and Karim-Cooper, F. *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 109.

of the performance at the Globe as the actors are, discussing the 'group consciousness' that exists there, and how the 'imaginative energy' of the spectators impacts each performance.[199] This is where an issue with Shakespeare's Globe arises: it is a performance space which seems to lend itself to modern styles of participatory theatre such as that created by Kneehigh, but it is not just any outdoor thrust space. As Rylance says, it is a space where the 'theatre demands the style of the play',[200] suggesting in his opinion – which is one that, as a collaborator in the development of the building and its initial artistic director, is crucial – the space must come first, not the director's interpretation.

Jenny Tirimani, Director of Theatre Design at Shakespeare's Globe from 1997 to 2005, has written about how designers at the Globe do not need to make overwhelming creative decisions and put their stamp on a production.[201] Unlike the other case studies in this thesis, set design was not the overpowering element of Rice's production, and rarely is in any of her work. Rather than using a vastly dominating set to create location and mood, Rice relied on music, lighting, stage furniture which could easily be moved on and off stage, and handheld props. A large moon displayed on a screen above the central balcony could be lit in different colours and projected onto, creating clouds and changing the scenes' atmosphere. Other than this, Rice relied on the audience to use their imaginations to work out where scenes were taking place – the ship was present throughout, as was the moon, and stage furniture was suggestive rather than specific. In IV.ii, when Malvolio is being tricked and taunted by Sir Toby, Maria and Feste dressed as Sir Topaz (or 'Sister Topaz' as depicted by Gateau Le Chocolat), a bunk

[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Tirimani, J. 'Exploring early modern stage and costume design' in Carson, C. and Karim-Cooper, F. *Shakespeare's Globe: A theatrical experiment,* p. 60.

bed was wheeled on, Malvolio positioned on the lower bunk, and the other characters, along with ensemble members, above him, or moving the bunk around the stage, disorientating him. In II.iii, chairs and bottles were brought on for Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste and Maria's drunken antics in Olivia's house, and green sleeping bags covered with leaves were used by those tricking Malvolio in II.v, suggesting a garden. In a play which flits rapidly between settings, not having a restrictive set is a sensible choice, allowing for other performance elements to be used to tell the story.

Although set design was decided upon early, another aspect not confirmed until much later on in the rehearsal process was the use of costume and props, directly impacted it seems by the generation of material and adapting of scenes that took place in rehearsals. Whilst this may be an exciting way of working on a play for the director, writer (by which I mean Carl Grose, responsible for additional text, not Shakespeare) and actors, it once again takes away from the focus on the original text and the time that could be spent by actors on interpreting their dialogue and developing their characters. Early on in rehearsals it was noted that lots of props would be needed, likely a result of having little set. Items listed, and not originally planned for, included a confetti cannon (a Kneehigh staple), hip flask, shotgun, flowers, a whistle for Malvolio, and clothes for Olivia to fold in I.v. (representative of her dead brother), not items that would be deemed immediately necessary for staging the play upon first read, but useful to Rice and her style of adding stage action to the text, often in an attempt to create comedy. Rice gave her apologies on Day 2 of rehearsals for having so many ideas, but the additions continued to be made, particularly regarding props, many of which were added not in relation to the text, but as ideas for characters to

create humour, such as Sir Andrew having a crisp addiction, meaning lots of crisps were needed.[202]

A key moment from the production provoked much laughter from the audience, was the 'box tree scene' in II.v, where Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, Fabian and Maria are hiding whilst watching Malvolio read his letter from 'Olivia'. The decision to have the eavesdropping characters in large green sleeping bags covered in leaves was made on 4th May.[203] This allowed the characters to pose easily as 'trees', and the visual joke of the sleeping bags dropping at the end of the scene to reveal none of them had any trousers on. It was noted in the production meeting notes on 5th April that Rice had not yet decided how this scene would be staged.[204] Knowledge of Rice's practical approach to rehearsals suggests she may have wanted to work with the actors in this scene to find a comical way that suited their physicalities and their character portrayals. She has said that she finds the comedy of Shakespeare's plays difficult to perform, needing it to be physical rather than verbal,[205] an honest but somewhat worrying admission from a director at the helm (at the time) of Shakespeare's Globe. It also suggests she did not trust her own interpretation of Shakespeare's text, not having a firm idea of how one of the best-known scenes in the play would look in her version. It is telling that Rice feels she must add to the comedy of Shakespeare's scenes, particularly in a scene such as this where the interplay between his dialogue and the others' responses does the work for the actors, the dramatic irony for the audience being that it knows Malvolio is being watched by the very characters he is talking about while imagining himself to be Olivia's husband. Rice in fact made cuts to

[202] Promptbook for *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's Globe archives.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.

the text, removing the bawdy jokes – though fully understandable today – her focus clearly being on the visual jokes rather than the language. Although not using all the text in the scene, the humour created through Rice's staging of it is an example of her brand of 'directors' theatre', using methods in addition, or instead of, the playwright's language to enhance the text for her audience.

It was also decided that the ship would be called SS Unity and the 'In Love We Trust' slogan would be displayed on it, on 4th May.[206] This was notably late on in rehearsals, considering that these words conveyed key messages regarding Rice's overall themes. Another key decision was made at this relatively late date – the positioning of the interval at the end of III.i. The musical number that took place before the interval – bizarrely created before Rice knew where the interval was going – was then moved to this corresponding place. The start of the interval had to be marked by the holding of a placard with the word 'Interval' on it,[207] suggesting this was not the most natural place for it and that audiences would need to be told that the first half had indeed finished. Changes such as these during the rehearsal process make one wonder whether the ideas expressed by Rice in the programme really were at the centre of her decisions, or whether the ideas for additions, music and dance numbers were in fact the driving force. It is clear from this research into the promptbook text that Rice does not enter rehearsals with all decisions mapped out; decisions are made throughout the process. Organic and creative as this may be, they are not decisions that are led by the text.

[206] Promptbook for *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's Globe archives.
[207] Ibid.

Key Characters

The casting of two actors in particular was central to Rice's concept, focusing on music and delivering her Kneehigh-inspired physically comedic style. These actors were Katy Owen who played Malvolio, and drag artist Le Gateau Chocolat, who played Feste and had many musical numbers. As Feste's role had much to do with alterations to the text, this character will be discussed further in the relevant section. In both characters' cases, perhaps fitting in a play where one of the central characters – Viola – dresses as a member of the opposite sex, the actors were playing, or dressed as, characters of different genders to themselves – Owen as Malvolio (played as a man though performed by a woman), and Le Gateau Chocolat as Feste, played as a drag character. Olivia falls in love with Viola as Cesario, Antonio seems to be in love with Sebastian, Viola, dressed as Cesario, falls in love with Orsino, who then reciprocates: this is a play where confusions concerning love and gender are rife, yet this was not, it seems, central to Rice's interpretation.

Regarding the play's themes, Rice has stated that she 'do[es] not see *Twelfth Night* as just a romantic play'[208] as, although there are many examples of love and desire in it, it has little in the way of 'healthy romance'[209] – by which, perhaps, she means reciprocated love. Instead, she sees the key issues as being grief and trauma, and focuses on the way Viola and Sebastian have been separated and are existing without their status or place in their community, along with the way Olivia is 'frozen in sorrow as she comes to terms with the loss of her father and brother, but also the single-handed running of the house'.[210] Although she did convey some of these ideas in the

[208] Rice, E. in Robins, N. '*Illyria is in Freefall'*, *Twelfth Night* [Programme].
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.

play's opening sequence, which depicted the shipwreck and the twins' separation, contrasting with the upbeat ensemble disco dance number on board the ship that had come before (and through Olivia's slow folding of her brother's clothes), this is a play that leaves the ideas of loss and loneliness behind fairly quickly, the plot moving on swiftly to concern itself with desire, confusion and deception. Olivia's period of mourning, which she will not emerge from in order to entertain Duke Orsino's courtship (it is stated she will 'season / a dead brother's love'[211] and remain behind her veil for seven summers), is exited rapidly when she meets the dashing 'Cesario', and the fact that the audience knows Sebastian has survived (made even clearer in Rice's version as she chose to show him steered to safety by Antonio at the very start) detract from the feelings of fear and sadness that could pervade the play.

There are darker aspects to this play however. The treatment of Malvolio, Olivia's steward, 'a kind of puritan',[212] by Maria and Sir Toby is might be interpreted in the modern day as cruel, deepening in severity as the play progresses. Modern interpretations of the character often depict him as easy to mock, yet sympathetic, with well-known actors frequently cast in the role (Adrian Edmondson at the RSC and Tamsin Greig as a female Malvolia at the National in recent years). Malvolio's final line, 'I'll be revenged upon the whole pack of you'[213] can be performed as threatening, comical, desperate or sombre, but the lack of response made to him from any characters other than Orsino and Olivia in the text suggest that those who had mocked him are shamed into silence. Roger Warren writes, 'the more seriously Malvolio takes

[211] Shakespeare, W. *Twelfth Night*, ed. by Warren, R. and Well, S. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), I.i.: 29-30.
[212] Ibid., II.iii: 131.
[213] Ibid., V.i: 368.

himself [earlier in the play], the funnier he is',[214] which Warren sees as a basic principle for any comedy. This is then contrasted when that humour dissipates at the play's end.

Rice cast Katy Owen, an extremely physical and comical actor, with whom she has frequently worked, as Malvolio. I have watched Owen in other productions; she is seemingly able to transcend gender and age, giving stellar performances as a young girl in *946 – The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips* and as a scene-stealing butler in *Rebecca*, both previous Kneehigh productions. Owen can also come across as vulnerable, able to inject both humour and pathos into a role, which she succeeded in with her portrayal of Malvolio. Her performance was deemed one of the production's successes, receiving praise from a range of critics: Alexandra Coghlan described the 'tightly-wound, moustachioed neurotic [as] com[ing] close to stealing the show'[215], and Michael Adair called Owen 'an inspired Malvolio … [who] shift[s] ceaselessly between comic and tragic'.[216] These online reviewers seemed to have higher praise of this interpretation of Malvolio than did the more traditional newspaper critics, Ann Treneman finding Owen 'hilarious … but her character rarely gets beyond guffaw level',[217] and Michael Billington criticising Rice for 'not exploring the gender implications' of a female Malvolio, making Owen instead simply play a male character in women's clothing.[218] The comedy behind Owen's performance, her physical exuberance combined with her severity of manner, seemed to be the key element Rice

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[214] Warren, R. and Wells, S. 'Introduction to Twelfth Night', p52.
[215] Coghlan, A. *Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's Globe review - Emma Rice goes out with a bang* (25 May, 2017) <http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeares-globe-review-emma-rice-goes-out-bang > [Accessed 14/07/18]
[216] Adair, M. *Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's Globe, SE1* (25 May, 2017), <https://theatrecat.com/2017/05/25/twelfth-night-shakespeares-globe-se1/> [Accessed 18 June 2018].
[217] Treneman, A.'Theatre review at Shakespeare's Globe' *The Times* (26 May, 2017), <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/theatre-review-twelfth-night-at-shakespeares-globe-5j882d72p> [Accessed 18 June 2018].
[218] Billington, M. 'Twelfth Night review – Emma Rice's Highland fling brings that sinking feeling', *The Guardian*.

was intent on conveying, which not all critics appreciated, finding she missed the subtler melancholic traits of the character. However, moments such as the delivery of Malvolio's final line, spat with venom at those who had mocked him, and the broken-down demeanour presented by Owen as Malvolio slowly filled his pockets with stones did come close to showing a character with more to him than just comedic qualities.

The point Billington raises about Rice missing the gender implications of a female Malvolio is intriguing. Rice has stated that she never considered changing Malvolio's gender, as Owen 'on stage … doesn't need to be particularly defined by gender'.[219] The National Theatre production which played on the South Bank at the same time as Shakespeare's Globe's performance, did not have an issue with a female Malvolio in love with Olivia, but Rice felt 'it was quite important that this man felt he could marry Olivia … it's the moment when he says "Yes I could. I can imagine myself being the big man"'.[220] The fact that the diminutive Owen played the 'big man' created immediate humour – she performed a blustering, self-righteous character full of ambition and piety, feeling he was superior and constantly trying to assert his dominance, often through the use of the added prop of a whistle, though physically smaller than the other characters in Rice's production. The whistle was a key prop for Owen, giving Malvolio status; it frequently allowed him to break up moments he was unhappy with, such as the carousing of Toby, Andrew, Maria and Feste in II.iii. Although a humorous moment, Warren points out that this is one where Malvolio is 'again legitimately exercising his stewardship'.[221] This is an example of where Warren says the text, with the simple stage direction of '*Enter Malvolio*'[222] 'gives no idea of the size and impact

[219] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Warren, R. and Wells, S. 'Introduction to Twelfth Night', p. 48.
[222] Shakespeare, W., Twelfth Night, II.iii: 81.

of th[e] theatrical moment',[223] suggesting it is the realisation on stage and how the directors and actors interpret the moment that creates the humour. He points to several productions where directors have utilised costume to emphasise the comedy and drama of this moment, allowing the audience the humour of seeing Malvolio out of his puritan or uptight garments, such as Ian Holm's 1966 Malvolio with his hair in curlers.[224] Rice used this idea, putting Owen in a dressing gown and pyjamas but still using a whistle to try to regain some control.

However, other Malvolio moments, whilst very amusing, were complete additions to the text such as when he admonished Fabian (Nandi Bhebhe) for getting carried away and 'harmonising'. This took place in an additional song and dance number at the end of I.v, involving Feste and the ensemble. Malvolio blew his whistle violently at Fabian, before asking the audience, 'What is this now? Some form of community theatre? They'll be playing Zip Zap Boing next!'. This provoked laughter and was an example of the breaking of the fourth wall work seen in Kneehigh's theatre. The proximity of the Globe's audience to the stage, in the shared light of the afternoon, may have made these ad-libbed, additional moments feel appropriate, but are examples of Rice not fully trusting Shakespeare's characterisation, preferring to add her own material and use physicalisation on to the text.

Malvolio's whistle was made much of throughout the production, an enduring image of the character being Owen standing bolt upright, making the most of her height with whistle to pursed lips. The use of a prop or an exaggerated physicality or added mannerisms were used for many of the comical characters in *Twelfth Night*, indicative of Rice's background in clowning. I also saw the production when Pieter Lawman, the

[223] Warren, R. and Wells, S. 'Introduction to Twelfth Night, p. 46.
[224] Ibid, p. 47.

understudy, played the role; he performed the character in the same manner as Owen but some of the physical comedy did not come across, perhaps due to his larger size and lack of familiarity with the role. He did not know the lines – his usual role was Antonio – suggesting Owen's absence was unplanned; he carried a clipboard throughout which for me did not diminish the performance, as the clipboard was an apt prop for the character. The unplanned clipboard prop was in fact less of a distraction in the performance than the rehearsed use of items such as Malvolio's whistle and Sir Andrew's crisp packets, Lawman only using it when he needed to check his lines.

Although Lawman's performance did not, to my mind, match up to Owen's, Rice's version of Malvolio having been created specifically by and for Owen, it was still comical and at times moving, with a real sense of 'liveness' and freshness to the performance. There was a sense with the entire production that a slightly different version was performed each time, true of course of every theatre performance, but even more so of Rice's productions which have such celebration and energy through improvisation, music and dance. Whilst this creates engaging and lively theatre, and does in a sense suit the performance space of the Globe where the audience are such a large part of the theatrical experience, it is an example of Rice producing performances aimed at a young audience, unfamiliar with Shakespeare.

Another character given a comical physicality and gestures was Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Marc Antolin played him as a lisping, camp and cowardly character whose standout moments were falling over, sliding down bannisters, bending over provocatively for the audience in his tight pink underpants, and warming up with a skipping rope for his fight with Cesario while wearing a pink dressing gown and oversized boxing gloves. He also had a repeated physical gag: he runs into the set

when trying to exit the stage. Sir Toby Belch (Tony Jayawardena) and Orsino (Joshua Lacey) were given similar moments: Sir Toby hitting golf balls into the audience and Orsino lounging around listening to his own song on a tape recorder (a rock ballad version of 'If music be the food of love play on').[225] As an audience member, these were for me the most memorable moments performed by these characters, not their delivery of speeches or interactions with other characters.

From rehearsal notes and her own interviews, as well as what was seen onstage, it is clear that practical 'stage business', in the style of Commedia dell'arte's *lazzi*, was Rice's focus in her aim to make her *Twelfth Night* a version for today's audience, or perhaps more accurately, herself. This style of performance was described as 'pratfalls … clownish caricatures instead of credible characters'[226] by Matt Trueman from *Whatsonstsage*, whilst Mark Shenton found the actors of Malvolio, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby created 'comedy gold in spades'.[227] Felicity Brown found that the play's ideas throughout were 'compromised in favour of easy entertainment and laughs'.[228] It is a style with which Rice is comfortable, and is an accomplished director of, but was Shakespeare's Globe the right place for this style of acting?

[225] Shakespeare, W. *Twelfth Night*, I.i: 1.
[226] Trueman, M. *Review: Twelfth Night (Shakespeare's Globe)*, (25 May, 2017) < http://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/reviews/twelfth-night-shakespeares-globe-emma-rice_43684.html> [Accessed 10 June 2018].
[227] Shenton, M. 'Twelfth Night review', *The Stage.*
[228] Brown, F. 'Review of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night (directed by Emma Rice) at Shakespeare's Globe, 24 May 2017' *Shakespeare*, 13(4) (2017), 359-361, 359.

Technology

The programme for *Twelfth Night* contains revealing information about Rice's priorities as a director, and her treatment of the Globe's performance space. In addition to the technical credits for the production, an entire section entitled 'Season Installation' exists, crediting lighting, sound and electrical designers and installers – five designers and three separate companies.[229] In a theatre with no inbuilt lighting rig, designed for performances to take place in the natural light, a lot of work was evidently undertaken to transform it, and it is understandable why this made the Globe's board absolutely furious, raising questions about Rice's commitment to the theatre's core values and mission.

W.B. Worthen is of the opinion that 'Rice's appointment … was in a sense consistent with the "experimental" rhetoric associated with the Globe',[230] extending what had already been started in terms of staging, pointing to examples such as use of scenery in a production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the net placed above the pit in *Timon of Athens* and *Titus Andronicus*, the pointed thrust for *Henry V* addressing his troops, and steps added to the stage. There have been modern dress productions, and a version of *Macbeth* directed by Lucy Bailey in 2010 had groundlings popping their heads through an enormous piece of black material, forming the netherworld from which the witches (and bloodied bodies maimed during an additional opening battle sequence) appeared. The frequency of productions such as these suggest it was not Rice's overall staging and concept for the production that caused a problem, but the

[229] Rice, E. in *Twelfth Night* [Programme].
[230] Worthen, W.B. 'Interactive, Immersive, Original Shakespeare' *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 35(3) (2017) 407-424, 417.

extent of the technology used in a space specifically designed not to need modern day technical intervention.

Worthen puts forward the idea that what is known as 'Original Practice' Shakespeare is low tech, which Rice's *Twelfth Night* certainly was not. Worthen also describes this 'low-tech' approach as 'fostering interactivity between stage and audience' and as 'immersive theatre' which frees the audience from being passive spectators.[231] This description is, however, applicable to Rice's theatre, which involved the audience by using the performance space, addressing the spectators, and supplying a large number of popular song and dance numbers with which the audience joined, clapping along. It was not this 'immersive' element that was controversial about Rice's productions according to Worthen: 'Rice's most assertive – and apparently threatening – innovation was not thematic or stylistic, but technological … us[ing] contemporary amplified music, requiring the actors to be amplified as well, and install[ing] theatrical lighting instruments'.[232] This is what changed the Globe's space from what it was originally designed for, and what sets it apart from other theatres, and – as evidenced by her 344 lighting cues[233] – this is what Rice did not show respect for.

In terms of sound, Rice made full use of the music Shakespeare included in the play, though she lacked confidence with so many other aspects of the text. Rice made use of much of Shakespeare's lyrics, even putting sections of text not intended to be songs to music, and adding additional text by Grose, along with using 1970s disco numbers, as a way of making the time period of her production evident. *We Are Family* was used during the play's opening on board the ship, characters appearing for a dance number,

[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Promptbook for *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's Globe archive.

dressed in disco finery, platforms, flared trousers and glittery makeup, before the storm and shipwreck took place. It was heard again as a final number, harping back to the play's opening and reminding the audience, not particularly subtly, of what Rice interpreted as the play's message – she feels it is a play about love, transgression, and grief. The words emblazoned on the ship's buoys: 'SS Unity' and 'In Love We Trust' were a visual reminder of the important themes – love, and being united.

Feste, dressed in a flamboyant sequined ballgown, introduced the ship and the play to the audience with additional text at the very start of the play, whilst cabin bunks on board the ship were wheeled on by the ensemble, crew members dancing as they dressed themselves. Many of Kneehigh's plays involve actors 'putting on' their roles in a Brechtian style, representing the characters rather than fully inhabiting them, often starting in white vests and underwear. Rice used this familiar convention in *Twelfth Night*, perhaps suggesting the characters were all the same underneath, or that they all belonged together in one 'family', but these were not central to the play's main ideas. She may have been foreshadowing the way Viola would 'put on' a role as Cesario and how other characters would also put on an act – Malvolio trying to impress Olivia, Feste appearing as 'Sir Topaz', all transgressing and breaking from the expected norm, but again, these were not overt interpretations and were not mentioned by Rice in rehearsal notes or interviews, suggesting instead she simply used a method she was familiar with, finding her way into the text in her usual manner of creating theatre through music and choreographed movement. In this way, Rice was essentially turning the Globe into an extension of Kneehigh's work, using Shakespeare's plays to utilise her usual methods. Rather than think through the new space and its demands, Rice treated it as she does other performance spaces – simply staging her plays as she always does.

Feste's introductory dialogue then turned into the opening song and dance number. The sound of recorded waves was heard, the metal balcony structure collapsed, smoke appeared on stage and the cast's disco dancing went into slow-motion as they moved from one side of the stage to the others, trying to stay on their feet as though they were affected by the waves. This opening section created an up-tempo atmosphere, before contrasting this with the storm sequence, not what audiences familiar with the play would expect from the play's beginning, which starts with Orsino speaking and does not present the storm which has taken place prior to Act I. Whilst this made the background events to the opening clear with no need for dialogue, it could be seen as what Russell Brown calls 'stifl[ing] the plays'[234] with our modern-day methods, focusing on displaying the plays rather than letting them speak for themselves, criticising directors who feel the need to visually present events to the audience, rather than allowing the text to convey ideas. Rather than trusting the text to reveal the contextual information later on, Rice changed the meanings by needing to 'show' it to the audience. Rice said afterwards that she felt it was important that the audience saw the joy on the ship, that 'What [she] needed was something joyful to wash ashore to a sad island, because Illyria is sad'.[235] It is initially a sad place for Orsino and Olivia, full of unrequited love and grief, but this quickly changes when we meet Sir Toby and friends, and when the witty Viola arrives. Additionally, Illyria contains more clowns than most of his other plays, Malvolio standing out as sombre and serious compared to many of the other characters, contradicting Rice's opinion of the setting as 'sad'.

[234] Brown, J. R. *Free Shakespeare*, p. 48.
[235] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.

During rehearsals, this opening section was around ten minutes in length; it was brought down to eight by the performances, before Viola spoke her opening line. With almost ten minutes before a word of Shakespeare is spoken, and 55 lighting cues taking place in this duration, it is difficult not to agree with the reviewers who criticised Rice for not being 'true' to Shakespeare and prioritising musical and visual elements over the text. The use of lighting, as well as being contentious, was also ineffective in places. Whilst evening performances benefitted from the glowing moon and coloured lighting over the stage, the bright afternoon sun made these difficult to see in matinees, where changes in colour and intensity were barely noticeable. This suggests that Rice had not fully considered all the conditions of the run, focusing instead on ideas that would only be realised in darkness. This would work fully in every performance in an indoor theatre, but is another example of use of modern technology being put before the space of Shakespeare's Globe.

The focus on music was maintained as the play progressed, a combination of Shakespearean lyrics and new text. Feste, who oversaw proceedings of many scenes as an omniscient presence, sang the Act V song 'The rain it raineth every day' as Viola/Cesario entered, an extremely low, melancholy tune, sung by the baritone, which quickened in pace and was supported by drums. This then segued into Maria's singing of 'O mistress mine' – another Feste song – and the audience was introduced swiftly to Olivia's household staff, Sir Toby hitting golf balls into the audience, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek sliding down the bannister of the collapsed ship's balcony, used as a stairway for the rest of the play. The stage was fully lit, but it became clear at this point in the matinee performance that a brightly lit stage in the middle of a bright sunny afternoon was not really necessary; in fact it looked a little strange. There were some extremely effective lighting choices in the production, such as the cyclorama behind

the gallery backlit to illuminate clouds, which changed colour and hence mood in various scenes from purple to blue, to grey for Olivia's house. Sir Toby, Maria and Fabian appeared silhouetted against a brilliant white moon, high above Malvolio on the balcony in the scene where the cruel prank is played upon him, but this was only fully visible in evening performances, where overall the lighting choices were far more noticeable and effective.

Although clearly part of Rice's usual way of working and something she feels comfortable with, one questions what bringing a lighting rig into the Globe actually added. The magic of this production of *Twelfth Night* was in its vibrancy and life, the music, fun, joy and humour created as the play edged towards what was in this production an inevitable (mainly) happy ending, with characters reunited and problems resolved. Critics who found fault with many aspects of the production still praised its overall joyful anarchy, Tim Adams from *The Guardian* calling it a 'life-loving production'[236] and Quentin Letts describing it as 'the most exciting, entertaining *Twelfth Night* for years'.[237] However, Rice's use of technology, causing much controversy, and one of the main reasons for her leaving the Globe, was not what made the production special, proving underwhelming in the light of matinee performances.

[236] Adams, T. '*Twelfth Night* review – Emma Rice brings lights, music and the food of life', *The Guardian*, (28 May, 2017), < https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/may/28/twelfth-night-globe-london-review-emma-rice>. [Accessed 10 June 2018].
[237] Letts, Q. 'The bard with a drag queen? It's pure magic', *Daily Mail*, (26 May 2017) https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-4543618/Twelfth-night-Globe-pure-magic-QUENTIN-LETTS.html [Accessed 10 June 2018].

Textual alterations

Some of the harshest criticism of this production from reviewers was reserved for the alterations Rice made to the text, Coghlan being of the opinion that Rice changed so much of the play that the text only remained in 'bleeding chunks',[238] with what was left of the poetry 'choppy and unsettled'.[239] Few scenes were allowed to play at length. By making cuts and additions to the text, Rice was imposing her own vision on the play, turning it into Emma Rice's, rather than Shakespeare's, *Twelfth Night*. The main reason for the cuts appears to be that Rice was attempting to make the play more relevant for some members of a modern audience, particularly the young demographic who attend Kneehigh's performances, and easier to understand for both the spectators and, more pertinently, Rice herself. She spoke in the programme interview of how 'Much of what [Feste] says is very tough to connect to for a modern audience'[240] and that she struggled to 'find much wisdom in it'.[241] She goes on to discuss how she imagined Robert Armin, the original Feste, would have been a unique performer, whose acting style and gibberish would have been hilarious, but she feels it is not possible simply to present the character using the same text – 'it is one of the glorious challenges of *Twelfth Night* to find a new role for Feste that can chime with our world and our humour now'.[242] It is telling that Rice, who has described herself as 'not a Shakespearean scholar'[243] – another shocking admission from the Globe's artistic director, although she has since expressed much regret at making statements such

[238] Coghlan, A. *Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's Globe review - Emma Rice goes out with a bang.*
[239] Ibid.
[240] Rice, E. in *Twelfth Night* [Programme].
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Gardner, L. 'It's time for a big adventure: Emma Rice on her opening Globe production', *The Guardian*, (11 April, 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/apr/11/emma-rice-interview-shakespeares-globe-theatre-wonder-season-midsummer-nights-dream> [Accessed 5 June 2018].

as these[244] – made such drastic changes to the text in her production, adding entire sections, reassigning lines and coming up with elaborate and highly specific interpretations of characters, such as casting a drag and cabaret artist as Feste, making him the Lord of Misrule or the God of Revelry on board the boat.

In order to come up with modern-day equivalents of characters, a director needs an in-depth knowledge of the play. Rice's Feste, although clearly talented, impressing with his beautifully soulful voice and commanding presence, was also an incongruous fit within the production. Rice acknowledged the importance of Feste as a character, as he moves between the households, linking the plot, but she could not initially work out a modern-day equivalent and found little content in the character, saying that he 'doesn't move scenes on'.[245] But there are three options when it comes to interpreting difficult lines of dialogue – leaving the lines as they are and hoping the audience will understand or ignore them; changing the reference by updating words; or making cuts. Rice made the decision to give some of the more easily-understood and plot-relevant lines to Fabian, finding this made Fabian make more sense to her as a character, and took 'Feste out of the literal and into the metaphoric',[246] turning him into a cabaret act and then an omnipresence who observed and commented through song on events that then took place, but rarely intervened in scenes. Feste had extra dialogue written for him by Grose, consisting of monologues at the play's opening and close. The opening speech allowed him to introduce the play and the ship, explaining what the audience was about to see, rendering the exposition in Shakespeare's own lines redundant. His final monologue was a whole section of verse, summarising the play:

[244] Rice, E. 'A letter from artistic director, Emma Rice' (19 April 2017) < https://shakespearesglobeblog.tumblr.com/search/emma+rice+letter> [Accessed 7 June 2018].
[245] Rice, E., interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.
[246] Ibid.

We think, we swim, or we're thrown a line.

Perhaps for a moment the shore we find.

The wind blows again and we're all at sea

With our compass spinning wildly.

With luck, Feste might smile before we depart

And allow us to follow the way of our hearts.[247]

This conclusion was Rice's, not Shakespeare's, allowing her to leave the audience with her own final thoughts as to what the play was about, feeling the need to provide a final commentary not in Shakespeare's text, where Orsino has the final lines before Feste's 'When that I was a little boy' song, Rice's production did then launch into the same song – an upbeat interpretation, complete with a company dance. Rather than focusing on the text in the final song, or giving more focus to Orsino as he addresses Cesario, Rice chose to change the meanings of the end of the play. Giving Feste a final monologue where he comments on how the characters, and possibly the audience, are all 'lost' at times, but how if he 'smiles' on them, allowing them to find love and happiness, makes Feste seem like 'Fate' or a god, controlling and overseeing events. This neatly ties in with Rice's interpretation of Feste, a character whose role she admitted she found difficult to get to grips with.

The additional musical numbers given to Feste set the tone for scenes, whether uplifting pop disco numbers, or sombre renditions, such as 'Hey Ho', a version of 'When I was and a little tiny boy',[248] where Le Gateau Chocolate's baritone voice boomed in melancholy tones around the theatre space. This Feste was seen by

[247] Shakespeare, W. *Twelfth Night*, dir. by Emma Rice (London: Shakespeare's Globe, 2017).
[248] Shakespeare, W. V.i: 379-98.

Felicity Brown as ‘the most visually memorable figure’, but never fully integrated into the performance, instead ‘Overseeing the action like an ambivalent deity’.[249] Brown sees this as a problem: neither Rice nor Le Gateaux Chocolat could develop Feste’s character, who Brown sees as connecting the two households and unifying the play’s dramatic structure. This is how Rice wanted to present the character, but it seems she was led more by the actor she had cast and his skills, focusing on making the most of his singing and cabaret style drag performance, the host of a party rather than the wise fool of Shakespeare’s creation, who brings together the characters of the play and wittily analyses them through his foolish talk and song. A problem with Rice’s interpretation of Feste was that his role was confused and not clearly defined: he seemed to be a real person on the ship, observed action from a distance, then was fully involved when playing ‘Sister’ Topaz, before becoming detached and a commentator again, then leaving with Malvolio into the audience, presumably taking him to his death after Malvolio had filled his pockets with stones.

However, what this interpretation did do was provide a constant reminder of where Viola and Sebastian had come from, their time on board the ship at the opening of the play, perhaps foreshadowing to the audience that they will inevitably be reunited, again influencing the way the play is understood. This is an interesting idea, and one that is relevant to the production’s concept. The audience is shown scenes involving Sebastian so that from the start we know he is alive. In making choices such as this, Rice can be seen as developing Shakespeare’s ideas, drawing out themes and making them more apparent for an audience – love, loss, grief, being reunited, and forgiveness. In Rice’s interpretation, Feste also fulfils a function that links with the director’s focus on the grief of the play. She sees him as a character who drowned in

[249] Brown, F., ‘Review of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night’ *Shakespeare.*

the shipwreck, and is not seen by other characters, but comes into contact with them at times of grief. He is stuck in a kind of Purgatory, and finds his own release at the end when he leaves the stage with Malvolio. Whether or not this interpretation was understood by the audience is another issue; Rice's vision for Feste as explained in interview is not mentioned by critics and was perhaps obscure, pointing to one of the troubles that beset putting a concept onto a play which is not originally there.

The ramifications perhaps of making choices such as these, drawing out what Rice saw as the key ideas of the play, are that it is difficult to know where to draw the line, where Shakespeare's ideas become the director's, and where the methods used to convey these ideas are more in line with the director's ways of working. One ad-libbed joke that receives a laugh becomes entire sections of additional text, one opening sequence to music becomes an almost ten minute section with no Shakespeare spoken and 55 lighting cues, the focus moving away from Shakespeare and onto the director. Being so open to adapting Shakespeare's text makes it easy to avoid using the text as the basis of the performance, changing or cutting things that are problematic rather than using the language to find answers.

Additional non-textual moments, such Sir Toby and friends throwing handfuls of leaves out of their 'tree' sleeping bags whilst Malvolio snipped away with garden shears, and their synchronised strutting and clicking of fingers whilst dressed only in underwear when the police entered to arrest Antonio[250] were highly amusing, but not rooted in the text. Rice has stated that physical comedy is her preferred style, not always

[250] Shakespeare, W., *Twelfth Night*, III.iv.

understanding the written word of Shakespeare,[251] but the production began to rely on these moments, rather than the story and characters.

Shuttleworth pointed out that '[the] production is an all-singing, all-dancing, all-capering nonstop fun-fest. There's just one thing that might make it perfect: a bit of Shakespeare',[252] and at times, this is what it was lacking. Some of the most memorable moments involved dialogue not written by Shakespeare at all, such as when Owen's Malvolio, having entered the scene in III.iv, resplendent in his cross gartered yellow stocking and with a broad smile, sang, 'Yellow like a daffodil, yellow like a quiche Lorraine' raising a laugh from the audience; his yellow legs, however, are illustrated clearly through Shakespeare's text. Taylor describes these as 'cheeky interpolations to the text',[253] and sees the overall mood of the production as containing 'gleefully defiant irreverence', whilst Treneman asks where the story is, amid all the pratfalls, capers and jigs, claiming 'he [Grose] and Rice have created a gagfest with so many clever asides that it is exhausting'.[254] These opinions depend, of course, on how reverent a reviewer thinks a director should be when staging Shakespeare. Rice's argument is that 'Many people … will have seen a production of *Twelfth Night* or studied it at school, and you need to make sure that the production is surprising them'.[255] The additional textual material was one of the ways Rice attempted to 'surprise' her audience, putting her own 'stamp' onto the play in one of the ways that

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[251] Davies, S., 'Emma Rice appointed as artistic director of the Globe', *The Telegraph*, (1 May, 2015) < https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-news/11577787/Emma-Rice-appointed-as-artistic-director-of-the-Globe.html>. [Accessed 20 June 2018].

[252] Shuttleworth, I. 'Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's Globe – the Bard remixed', *Financial Times*, (30 May, 2017) <*https://www.ft.com/content/fe12d3d0-451c-11e7-8d27-59b4dd6296b8*>. [Accessed 21 June 2018].

[253] Taylor, P. 'Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's Globe, London: Gleefully defiant irreverence is the prevailing mood from the outset', *The Independent* (25 May, 2017), < http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/twelfth-night-review-a7755216.html>. [Accessed 10 June 2018]

[254] Treneman, A.'Theatre review at Shakespeare's Globe' *The Times*.

[255] Rice, E. interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.

she, as a deviser, is most familiar. By imposing her own ideas onto the play, drawing out some of its meanings but also adding her own and missing out some which are in the text, Rice was doing two things: making the audience see the play afresh, but also prioritising her own ideas over Shakespeare's. The rehearsal promptbook reveals three-word-breakdowns created by Rice for each scene, such as 'Olivia's House = out with Malvolio!' 'Lads out boozing', 'Truth comes out', 'Viola becomes Cesario' and 'Crazy 70s disco'. These titles get to the crux of what some of the scenes are about: simplified meanings, and ideas and language more concerned with modernisation than the plot. Whilst it is sometimes seen as vital that directors create innovative theatre, one thing is not so apparent: why Rice felt a Shakespeare play was the vehicle for ideas not in the text.

Conclusion

Prior to her appointment, Rice's radical, experimental ways were what she was renowned for as a director, creating exciting theatre that engaged audiences through its participatory elements. Shakespeare's Globe's CEO, Neil Constable, announced in 2016, after she had left the position, that 'Emma's mould-breaking work has brought our theatre new and diverse audiences, won huge creative and critical acclaim, and achieved exceptionally strong box office returns'.[256] There seem to be many successes within this statement, but the focus on 'new audiences' and 'box office returns' suggests those responsible for appointing Rice were more concerned with audience numbers and financial profit than Rice's regard for the theatre and what it

[256] Constable, N., quoted in Bowie-Sell, D., *Emma Rice to stand down as artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe*,(25 October, 2016), < https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/emma-rice-stand-down-shakespeares-globe_42096.html>. [Accessed 8 June 2018].

stood for. Rice has admitted that she did not discuss her plans for modernisation at her interview and was not asked about them,[257] surely a devastating oversight from the interview panel. Her departure created much discussion, many pleased that her irreverence and lack of respect for the text and building would no longer be seen in productions, whilst others, such as Matt Trueman arguing that the board were putting 'architecture before art and, worse still, before the audience'.[258]

Smallwood has asked whether a play should *tell* the audience something new about it, or simply *show* it to them, suggesting that the choices made in a production will be a result of whether or not the director thinks they know something new about it.[259] This is what Rice has done with *Twelfth Night*. Not being a Shakespearean scholar who feels she knows the answers to all the questions about the text, she focused on elements of the play she wanted to show her audience, mainly physicality, music and song. This is not 'authentic' Shakespeare, and Cavendish makes the point that it is not particularly a 'poignant *Twelfth Night* … Yet it achieved what critics of [Rice's] new regime have found wanting in too many of its shows – a joyous complicity between player and space, and a warm audience rapport too'.[260] Whilst appealing to a young audience who enjoy Kneehigh's aesthetic and expect Rice's productions to be full of colour, music, modern references, textual cuts and a celebratory atmosphere, the director was alienating those who go to the Globe hoping to see Shakespeare – his language, his characters, his stories. Adams finds a pointed coincidence in the way *Twelfth Night* is a play which 'reserves its sharpest barbs for purists and puritans'; its

[257] Rice, E., interviewed for Shakespeare's Globe.
[258] Trueman, M., *Review: Twelfth Night.*
[259] Smallwood, R. 'Directors' Shakespeare' in Bate, J. and Jackson, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage*, p.180.
[260] Cavendish, D. 'Emma Rice's superbly defiant farewell to the Globe – Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's Globe review', *The Telegrap*h (25 May, 2017). < http://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/emma-rices-defiant-farewell-twelfth-night-globe-review/>. [Accessed 10 June 2018].

excesses of music, food and love echo, he claims, Rice's celebratory final production.[261] *Twelfth Night* was evidently a joyful, exuberant production which did draw out some interesting ideas from the play – transgressions, love, grief. At another venue, it may have received more favourable reviews. Once again, the impact of space on the production cannot be underestimated. Rice overlooked the way her ideas worked in the theatre space – privileging lighting and modern technology over a building designed to look 400 years old.

[261] Adams, T. '*Twelfth Night* review – Emma Rice brings lights, music and the food of life', *The Guardian*.

Conclusion

Each of these three productions undoubtedly takes a radical approach to the staging of Shakespeare's plays. Neither Findlay, Doran nor Rice can be accused of simply putting the text on stage in a way that has been done before; each director made innovative decisions creating powerful theatre, and clearly aimed at attracting particular audiences. For Findlay, this was the National's regular theatre-goers and a younger audience, those required to fill the Olivier's vast space and provide validation for allowing Findlay to direct her first main stage show. The transposition of the court to a more modern, colourful office setting, the restructuring of the text, the Forest of Arden as 'Glastonbury', the focus on modernising the comedy and the spectacular scene change all seem to be aimed at attracting a younger audience and simplifying Shakespeare's ideas. Doran's production attempted to combine a text-focused approach with two years of background work into the digital technology used on stage, the final production being a fusion of acting and technology, intended to create a family-friendly performance, appealing to all ages, although the modern technology used suggests a focus on the younger generation. Rice's production was unapologetically aimed at her usual fanbase – an audience perhaps unfamiliar with Shakespeare. She made the least attempt to cater for the theatre's usual audience, prioritising music, lighting and textual alterations over the Globe's ethos.

It is intriguing that in each case, the directors did far more than interpret and stage the play, to the extent that the theatre they created became more about them as directors than Shakespeare, placing each production firmly in the category of 'directors' theatre'.

Each made many additions – even Doran's production which, on the surface seemed to have all its decisions rooted in the text, essentially added a new character – the Ariel avatar – and created a whole new method of communicating to the audience by presenting this. The additional elements in each production, many of which required much rehearsal and preparation time, as evidenced by my research into archival material, impacted the performances in many instances and in each case suggest the directors viewed their own ideas and embellishments as of equal, or more importance to Shakespeare's text.

Although a director will always do more than simply require an actor to read lines and suggest blocking, the amount of additions to each production explored in this thesis, whether these additions are extra text, movement sequences, whole scenes and sections not in Shakespeare's plays, or design elements, point to the fact that these directors aim to create theatre more interesting and relevant to a modern audience than that found in Shakespeare's language. If this is the case, then it raises the question as to why stage Shakespeare. New writing or devised work might allow directors more freedom to communicate their ideas through a production, without the centuries of previous productions, analyses and audience expectations that exist alongside Shakespeare's plays. The answer is that his prominent position in the literary canon and in England's heritage, along with his value in terms of cultural capital, clearly makes his plays an ever-popular choice. Directors may also choose to stage Shakespeare's plays as audiences' familiarity with the storylines allows directors to make radical changes and take liberties with the text, confident that the majority of audience members will still follow the plot. Indeed, there are many directors who stage far more radical interpretations of Shakespeare's plays than those explored in this thesis, adapting or deconstructing rather than interpreting or staging the texts. Whilst

Shakespearean traditionalists may be frustrated at interpretations which are not 'straight' Shakespeare – although what that constitutes is extremely difficult to define – and that such concept-driven productions are so frequently found on the stages of the National, Royal Shakespeare Company and the Globe, it is evident that there is a demand for innovative, challenging and entertaining versions of Shakespeare's plays that draw out new meanings, interpret characters in new ways, and use modern means of communication.

What this study has proved is that Findlay, Doran and Rice are examples of twenty-first century directors who are part of what I propose is a new type of 'directors' theatre', one in which collaboration is key, and where a multi-disciplined approach is integral to engaging the intended audience. The audience in each case seemed to be particularly young, and sometimes those who were unfamiliar with Shakespeare. Rather than trying to appeal to Shakespeare 'afficionados' or completely deconstruct the text to create a new play, these directors are somewhat in the middle, creating a modern and mainstream Shakespeare on stage that retains most of what is seen as 'traditional' about the texts, whilst focusing on making them accessible to these audiences. The directors used visual means as a major method of communication, collaborating intensively with other practitioners. In *As You Like It* this was Findlay's work with Clachan, the spectacle of the set change, the modern day office and additional physical sequences such as the sheep scenes; in *The Tempest* it was the long process Doran embarked upon with the Imaginarium Studios and Intel, the use of motion capture and projection mapping, and the close work with Brimson Lewis; in *Twelfth Night* it was Rice's partnership with Grose, along with the lighting, physical comedy, modern setting and costumes used. As has been discussed, these visual means did not always enhance the text, sometimes overwhelming or confusing its

meanings, prioritising the directors' ideas over the playwright's, but certainly creating entertaining and engaging theatre, and suggesting a process of theatre-making and staging Shakespeare where other practitioners and their input are as integral to the director's way of working as their own ideas about the text.

What is evident is that Shakespeare on stage is an ever-changing entity, sometimes enhanced and sometimes inhibited by a director's interpretation, although the success of a production is of course in itself subjective and problematic to measure. Difficulties that arise for directors when devising a modern concept for a production of a Shakespeare play can be glossed over – the issue of a wrestling match in an office, or office workers in the office at night in their pyjamas – or solutions found that change the meanings of the play – Rice's interpretation of Feste which differs so greatly from Shakespeare's. When so many changes are needed that entire speeches are cut, scenes reordered, and ideas forced onto the drama that do not make sense in the overall play, then the line between whether a play is the director's or the playwright's is certainly blurred. However, 'directors' theatre' is just that: theatre where the director's ideas take precedence, and this can often be a valuable way of approaching a play, ensuring a clear overarching concept is communicated, even if it differs from what might be seen as the play's 'original' meanings and messages. There are of course difficulties with defining exactly what 'authentic' Shakespeare is and what the 'correct' way of staging it should be. Stephen Orgel has argued that there is no definitive version of any of Shakespeare's plays, and 'no such thing as "authentic"

Shakespeare',[262] raising the question: what is being changed if there was never a 'true' version?

Although it is not valid to suggest there is one 'truth' to be found in a written text, a common theme found in the reviews of the three case study productions is that each may have benefitted from more focus on the performing of the text itself, allowing actors to communicate Shakespeare's words, rather than trying to communicate through other means. Language is often changed to ensure sense is communicated to the audience, but these case studies have demonstrated how cutting Shakespeare's words and adding a director's own convey a lack of trust or belief that Shakespeare can still speak to audiences today, and that audiences will understand. The argument can be made that it is difficult to understand completely a Shakespearean play for the first time without having read or studied it, so why not make it more accessible for audiences and make changes to the text? Directors such as Doran[263] and Nicholas Hytner[264] have admitted in interviews that they do not necessarily understand every word of Shakespeare, and Rice was more than forthcoming from the start about the fact that she found some of Shakespeare's language and words difficult. By making changes to the text, performances can be seen as more egalitarian, making it possible for a wider range of audience members to enjoy the plays, rather than keeping them for the elite. Doran argues that it is patronising to change words, however; he wants to be transported, not to have

[262] Orgel, S. quoted in White, S. 'Shakespeare criticism in the 20th century' in DE Grazia, M. and Wells, S. [eds.] *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 280.
[263] Furness, H. 'Director of RSC: even I struggle to understand first ten minutes of Shakespeare', *The Telegraph* (4 June, 2016), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/04/director-of-rsc-even-i-struggle-to-understand-first-ten-minutes/> [Accessed 10 May 2018].
[264] Furness, H. 'Keep it simple: even I struggle with Shakespeare, says Hytner', *The Telegraph* (10 October, 2013), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/william-shakespeare/10371300/Keep-it-simple-even-I-struggle-with-Shakespeare-says-Hytner.html> [Accessed 10 May 2017].

everything simplified for him[265] – a slightly contradictory statement as he added modern jokes and ad-libs into his version of *The Tempest*. However, directors and theatres want to attract as large an audience as possible, and a young, new audience is needed if theatre is to carry on living and evolving. Whilst the text is of course important, 'directors' theatre' today places equal importance on other theatrical methods of communication, and will continue to do so as new productions are staged and audiences sought.

One of these theatrical elements is the space a play is performed in, and an issue that has arisen from the exploration of these productions is the consideration of the stage space, and the fact that a performance on stage is different from the text on a page: the production comes to life in the theatre it is performed in. It is a different entity to what is on the page, although the text is vital. The very theatre space each of these productions took place in had an enormous impact on directors' choices and the way the play was received. I believe the space used in each case was a vital factor in the collaborations that took place. For Findlay, the attempt to fill the Olivier's vast stage led her to focus on design over text; for Doran, his play and its elaborate technology was carefully designed for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, but hit stumbling blocks and received poor reviews when it moved to the Barbican where the same effects were not created for audiences. Rice utilised the audience-actor relationships created in the Globe, making use of textual alterations, but ignored the reasons why the theatre was built, and did not fully consider the ramifications of using lighting in an outdoor space, an example of where a collaboration (with sound and lighting designers) did not work effectively, or sympathetically, in the performance space.

[265] Furness, H. 'Director of RSC; even I struggle to understand first ten minutes of Shakespeare' (4 June, 2016).

The role of the director and the definition of directors' theatre, is still nebulous, and still developing. The term 'collaboration' is key for today's directors and I feel the type of collaborations will continue to develop, as relationships with technology and other media are explored. Set design, costume, lighting and sound have been important theatrical elements for decades and centuries, but set having such an enormous impact on the staging and interpretation of the entire play (as evidenced in *As You Like It*) and partnerships with digital companies such as Intel and the Imaginarium Studios are both new, exciting, and may have far-reaching consequences. A variety of theatre companies work with multi-media and have done for years, but the extent of the ground-breaking work in Doran's *The Tempest*, and the attempt to combine it with, rather than it existing alongside, the text and acting, paves the way for further experimentation and exploration. Doran's production proved that, although he certainly altered elements of the text and created a very modern version of the text, with performance-capture and visual imagery at the fore, collaborations on this scale can be used to enhance and reinvigorate Shakespeare for audiences today.

It is understandable that theatre-makers want to create work that is relevant to today's audiences, not simply repeating previous productions. Findlay created interesting parallels between the world of the court in *As You Like It* and our modern day fast-paced world; Doran used modern technology, although not without its critics, to show how theatre can work with other media and speak to a new generation. Rice drew in younger audiences less familiar with Shakespeare through use of pop-culture references and modern technology: there are clearly modern cultural and social issues that can be presented and explored through Shakespeare, and the case studies suggest that collaboration is key to doing this, and creating exciting versions of Shakespeare that audiences will want to watch. However, in these three productions,

the aim of attracting new, younger audiences through what some would view as radically 'high-concept' ideas ran the risk of alienating the audiences the theatres already had – a risk clearly acknowledged by The Globe's board in the sacking of Rice and the theatre's new experiment – 'the Globe ensemble', overseen by the first artistic director of the Globe who is not actually a director. Actor Michelle Terry is at the helm of this new initiative where the ensemble of actors directs the plays, although the productions still have designers and co-directors.

Although not a complete move to Brown's idea of an Elizabethan-style collective of actors staging the plays, this method does attempt to 'dismantle theatre hierarchies'[266] and allow actors to take more responsibility. Perhaps the only way of avoiding the downfalls of 'directors' theatre' is to further explore this idea, returning to theatre where, aside from a prompter, the actors were in charge, with no director, meaning the playwright's ideas were at the centre of the performance. Without one individual in charge, the text would hopefully become the focus. It is interesting that the Globe's new method of seemingly working without a director actually furthers what has been discovered in this thesis: that collaboration is central to the 'directors' theatre' on stage today. Rather than one practitioner finding means of communicating their message, a partnership or team of theatre-makers with a director at the helm and a plethora of modern theatre-making methods at their disposal promises a future of more radical and exciting collaborations and theatrical experiments to come. For theatre to survive and evolve, mainstream and established theatres such as the National, Globe and the

[266] 'New Globe director to let cast pick roles and audiences choose plays', *The Guardian* (4 Jan, 2018), < https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jan/04/new-globe-director-to-let-cast-pick-roles-and-audiences-choose-plays> [Accessed 14 May 2018].

RSC are likely to expand and explore partnerships, seeking audiences and pushing the boundaries of what Shakespeare's texts can offer.

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