

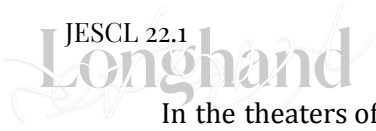
In Form(s) As Palpable: Liveness, Engagement, and Performance in Digital Shakespeares

Anne Nichole A. Alegre

Abstract

Early Modern studies have shown that the theaters of Shakespeare's London have always been participatory. Although this theatre-going culture is lost to us now, I would like to show in this essay that we might re-discover it in the form of digital Shakespeares by presenting and examining three of its forms—which are “just as palpable” as theatric performances, and just as “sensible to feeling as to sight”. These forms treat the medium or technology they use as a stage, and not merely a transmitter of performance. By this marriage of stage and medium, they encourage different levels of participation and engagement. Thus, these digital Shakespeares give agency to users in creating “Shakespeare”, uncouple the conventional associations between the Shakespearean text and Shakespearean performance, and finally subvert notions of liveness in dramatic performance. These three forms will thus be called: Bite-sized Bards, Social Bards, and Unmuted Bards. Conventionally, high-culture “Shakespeare” had rendered the spectator to a passive role: muted in his place in the auditorium. By acknowledging and leveraging “Web 2.0's emphasis on participation” (Fazel and Geddes 6), Digital Shakespeares offer a potential way to decenter Shakespeare by its fashioning of a new kind of spectator: one that can playfully create Shakespeare online (bite-sized bards), interact with performances and actors to create a network of fan community (social bards), and participate in the life of a Shakespearean performance (unmuted bards).





In the theaters of Shakespeare's London, playgoers who stood within the yard directly in front of the stage were called groundlings. They were known to be "excessively noisy, rowdy, or inattentive" (Astington 112). The open-air structure of the Globe and other Early Modern theaters may have been the culprit for such boisterous behavior. In her essay, *Text, Playhouse, London*, Stern describes Early Modern London's spectators as an important element of the play:

...spectators and actors clearly saw each other and borrowed reactions from one another... Shakespeare's original audience was as well-lit as the actors, as visible and, sometimes, as talkative. This was an audience constantly in need of taming. It might throw stones or even lathes. It often threw fruit, which was available for sale throughout performances... Actors were expected to respond to events outside the texts, and seem to have had a body of known jokes with which to do so. (26-27)

This kind of theatre-going behavior would seem so base and rude to us in the 21st Century, where, in order to watch a play like *Miss Saigon*, one must pay at least P5,000, sit in the dark, shut up, and enjoy the show. So where has the "raucous and participatory" (Lanier "Unpopularizing Shakespeare" 23) nature of Shakespeare's theatre gone? Shakespeare's long and complex journey from stage to page might offer an insight, but that is another fascinating essay on its own. I bring up this piece of theatre history to make this point: that the theatres of Shakespeare's London have always been participatory. And although this culture is lost to us now, I would like to show in this essay that we might rediscover it in the form of digital Shakespeares by presenting and examining three of its forms—which are "in form

as palpable" (*Macbeth* II.i.52) as theatric performances, and just as "sensible to feeling as to sight" (*Macbeth* II.i.7-48). These forms treat the medium or technology that they use as a stage, and not merely a transmitter of performance. Through this marriage of stage and medium, these digital forms encourage different levels of participation and engagement. They give agency to users in creating "Shakespeare," uncouple the conventional associations between the Shakespearean text and Shakespearean performance, and finally subvert notions of liveness in dramatic performance.

In earlier iterations of this study, I categorized these forms by the platforms or websites they use. But in light of recent developments in the field ushered by the COVID-19 lockdown, I find it necessary to rethink this categorization. As the study of Shakespeare in digital media expands, I have come to realize that the essence of Digital Shakespeares as performance lies not in the platforms used—or what Pascale Aebischer might call "technologies of performance" ("Introduction: Shakespeare, Spectatorship, and the Technologies of Performance" 9)—but rather in the kind of participation and engagement that they encourage. These three forms will thusly be called: Bite-sized Bards, Social Bards, and Unmuted Bards.

In *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*, which was published in 2003, W.B. Worthen writes that "Electronic media offer a site for performing ... as well as a means for representing performance, in the various archives, illustrations, animations, and video performances available in digital form" (173). At the time, the dominant form of Shakespeare in electronic media was the Hypertext

which Worthen argues to be a kind of cyber-Shakespeare “performance” for its embodiment or enactment of print. According to him, “hypertextual sites enable, perhaps even invite, readers to engage with Shakespeare, with dramatic writing, and with reading in some characteristic ways” (198). In writing this, Worthen is one of the first scholars to think of performance “beyond the single room shared between actors and audiences” (Kirwan and Prince 7). Conventionally, theatre and performance studies “tend to regard stage performance as the sole site of the drama’s materialization” (Worthen 172). Peggy Phelan, for example, contends that “[p]erformance’s only life is in the present” (146), thereby highlighting the necessity for the players and spectators to occupy the same space synchronically. On writing about performance criticism, Margaret Kidnie states that “[l]ive performance, by nature of its medium, disappears as quickly as it happens. One can attend a production multiple times, but one can never see the same performance twice” (40). Yet again, there is the emphasis on performance’s ephemerality and a concept of liveness rooted in synchronicity and co-presence. While I do not deny the value and liveness of bodily and temporal performance, I do not consider these to be necessarily participatory, as most conventional dramatic performances do not encourage engagement nor give agency to spectators in the same way that Digital Shakespeares do. Kidnie, however, acknowledges later on that new technologies might complicate and give rise to different kinds of spectatorship—and indeed, they have.

Over the past thirteen years, we have seen Shakespearean scholars such as Geoff Way, Erin Sullivan, Pascale Aebischer, and Stephen O' Neil problematize the role of digital or new media in re-shaping Shakespearean performance and spectatorship. In "Social Shakespeare" (2011), one of the performances that Way examines is RSC's *Such Tweet Sorrow*, which used Twitter as a performance site. In his analysis, he calls into question the validity of the terms "live" and "mediatized" when it comes to social media performances, arguing that social media platforms—in and of themselves—become the very stage of dramatic performance (413). As the boundary between live performance and mediated performance is blurred, the spectator's role in it becomes an interesting point of discussion. New media has allowed spectators to become "users" who are able to interact and participate in dramatic performance. Erin Sullivan writes precisely about audience presence, participation, and "a-liveness" in her essay "The Audience is Present" (2018). Combining close reading and distant reading methods with the aid of digital tools, Sullivan examines the discussion threads that unfolded on Twitter during and after live broadcasts of KBTCLive's *Romeo and Juliet* (2016) and The Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016). She concludes that while the audience of such broadcasts are geographically dispersed, social media is able to become a site for experiencing collective "a-liveness", therefore achieving a kind of participation that might even surpass an in-person production: "[t]he ability to discuss such issues online allowed participants to engage collaboratively in the process of meaning-making around the production and, in doing so, to animate

their communal experience of this theatre broadcast” (71). Participation in some form—before, during, and after the performance—seems to be key in thinking about the “Shakespeare User” (Fazel and Geddes). Whereas Sullivan discusses participation and meaning-making via online discussions, Pascale Aebischer studies how digital performances during the pandemic “generated liveness, a sense of community and emotive responses” (“Creation Theatre and Big Telly’s *The Tempest*: Digital Theatre and the Performing Audience” 89) as spectators are given direct hand in influencing the events of the performance. In her book *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, Aebischer considers the role of technologies of performance from “the use of architecture and candlelight, live video and performance capture, or the live theatre broadcasts that have widened access to Shakespeare for worldwide audiences” (3) in creating a sense of liveness and engagement out of individual and collective experience that is “intense, and sometimes disturbingly visceral” (3). Indeed, it is the so-called technologies of performance that generate a sense of “a-liveness” in dramatic sites that are otherwise conventionally seen as mediatized. What is common in these theories of liveness and performance in the digital age is the underlying assumption that “liveness is an interaction produced through our engagement with the object and our willingness to accept its claim” (Auslander 9). Whether this engagement is achieved through synchronous and physical co-presence or through “virtual congregation” and “event-connectedness” (Allred 84) does not seem to be an issue.

Thus, I was prompted to reconsider the wide vista of Digital Shakespeares not by the technologies utilized by the performances—TikTok, YouTube, or Zoom—but rather by the engagement that they generate: an engagement that brings about a sense of individual or collective ownership and agency over Shakespeare; an engagement that is sometimes raucous, but always participatory.

In the next sections of the essay, I will be introducing each type of Digital Shakespeare and show that each one is a performance that facilitates live engagement between or amongst spectator, creator, institution, actor, and ultimately engagement with Shakespeare as a cultural icon. These new practices of performance imposed upon Shakespeare are rooted in a kind of digital spectatorship that is characterized by the 21st Century tendency towards “use”—a tendency that is created by “Web 2.0’s emphasis on participation” (Fazel and Geddes 6). Through this essay or study, I hope to be able to fill what Douglas Lanier finds lacking in the study of Global Shakespeare, which is attention to the “liberatory or progressive potentialities, however fleeting and perhaps ultimately compromised, that contemporary Shakespearean adaptation can offer, the joys of irreverence, anarchy and excess, the intimation of community” (244).



Figure 1: Dear Taylor Swift, an example of an image macro meme



Figure 2: Hurly-burly soup, shared by user Marie Novotna in *Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Meme Facebook Group*

Bite-sized Bards

Bite-sized Bards are small, easily-consumed memes that are not necessarily platform-specific and whose original creator might be difficult or impossible to trace. According to Knobel and Lankshear, memes are “contagious patterns of ‘cultural information’ that get passed on from mind to mind” (199). Meanwhile, Buchel specifically defines memes as “humorous imitations of some product or concept” (30). With a lack of formal vocabulary to define an Internet meme, Davison works with this definition: “[a]n Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online

transmission" (122). The first iterations of Shakespeare in meme form might have come as an "image macro" and possibly been first shared on now-defunct websites like 4chan or 9gag (Figure 1).

But today, memes about Shakespeare are created and shared on virtually any social platform: Reddit, Facebook, TikTok, and even Instagram. They may come in the image macro form as seen in Figure 1, but they may also simply be screenshots of Tweets or threads, as in the example in Figure 2, which is taken from Twitter (now X) and now shared on Facebook as a post with 3,000+ reactions and 600+ shares. With the recent popularity of short-form videos such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, we may also consider Shakespeare's appearance on these platforms as another form of memes. Figure 3 shows a TikTok video incorporating a dancing JoJo Siwa in the middle of a battlefield with superimposed text indicating that this is probably how Macbeth must have felt after hearing one of the prophecies in Act IV.

Although bite-sized bards may come in many forms, some distinct characteristics emerge. In order to appreciate the engagement that bite-sized bards as performances generate, it is first important to acknowledge these characteristics. In this section, I am going to use memes of *Romeo and Juliet* to explain these characteristics and to illustrate how bite-sized bards allow a network of interactions that we may consider live, participatory, and also interpretive. Memes that have been selected for this essay come from a Facebook group named *Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Meme*,

which was created in 2021 and is now virtually populated by over 11,000 users from all over the world.

First, a meme must be repeatable and malleable. Figure 4 shows the incorporation of the Blinking Guy meme and the tragic-now-made-comic ending of *Romeo and Juliet*. The Blinking Guy meme is widely recognized as either a GIF or a panel of photos of a man, Drew Scanlon, and is commonly used to express confusion or incredulity. In this particular image, the inclusion of the labels “Romeo” and “Juliet” on the Blinking Guy series of images imposes a comic interpretation of the star-crossed lovers’ suicides. What is, of course, replicated is the Blinking Guy, but instead of expressing incredulity, it is now used here to dilute and parody what had essentially happened in Act V, Scene 3 of the play.

Aside from replicability, Figure 4 is also intertextual. Intertextuality is what allows these bite-sized bards to acquire



Figure 3: JoJo Siwa and Macbeth TikTok by @shakesqueermolly



Figure 4: Romeo and Juliet as told by The Blinking Guy from *Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Meme* Facebook Group, posted by user Jenna Edwards



Figure 5: Juliet as Distracted Boyfriend from *Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Meme* Facebook Group, posted by user James Watt.



Figure 6: Romeo and Distracted Boyfriend from *Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Meme* Facebook Group, posted by user Joel Pridg.

humor and become parodic. Bite-sized bards tend to “quote” or “reference” existing cultural texts that may have no relevance to Shakespeare. In Figure 1, for example, we see the intertext between Taylor Swift and *Romeo and Juliet*, and in Figure 3, between JoJo Siwa and *Macbeth*. The first two characteristics of bite-sized bards—replicability and intertextuality—pave the way for the participation of users in critical and interpretive meaning-making. According to Stephen O’ Neil, “the media consumer is an active participant who seeks out new content, repurposes old and forges new connections with other media users” (8). The juxtaposition of Shakespeare and other texts allows users to exert control and ownership over the bard. Users or media consumers participate by replicating memes and mixing them with other cultural texts to create a digital artifact that is playfully irreverent. This leads me to the third and perhaps most obvious characteristic of bite-sized bards.

I have thus far explained how bite-sized bards are participatory owing to their replicability and intertextuality. But how are they interpretive and live? In *The Force of Modern Performance*,

Worthen further describes performance as an “illustration, interpretation, embodiment, realisation of a text” (194) that can also be a “means of critical interpretation of the text’s internal dynamics” (207). Bite-sized bards, from the simple image macro form to the viral TikTok video, indeed illustrate and embody the plays by mixing Shakespeare with other cultural texts. Figures 5 and 6 show the same Distracted Boyfriend meme and stage a critical interpretation of Romeo and Juliet’s characters in a playfully irreverent way.

Figure 5 reveals a Juliet who is drawn to toxicity and tragedy rather than stability and security. The events referenced from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* are true: Juliet indeed chose Romeo over Paris. But the meme’s use of the Distracted Boyfriend image exerts a critical stance over Juliet’s decision to elope with Romeo rather than marry Paris. As an actor would portray a character, the meme portrays Juliet as particularly insensible and foolish. Using the same meme, Figure 6 also presents an interpretation and critical evaluation of *Romeo and Juliet*’s tragic ending. While Figure 4 uses the Blinking Guy to illustrate the events of Act V, Scene 3, Figure 6 draws on the same part of the backgrounded text using the Distracted Boyfriend image. Whereas the former meme transforms the tragic ending into a comic one, the latter parodies the role of chance or accident in Romeo and Juliet’s twin suicide.

Bite-sized bards, in either image macro or viral TikTok form, seek to mock Shakespeare in a similar way that parodies do. Linda Hutcheon explains that:

Parody, then, in its ironic ‘trans-contextualisation’ and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. (32)

Parody is key in making bite-sized bards playful and—more significantly—interactive, and therefore live. Memes and short-form videos that garner a lot of engagement tend to be the ones that parody Shakespeare’s associations with Britishness and high-culture elitism. Figure 7 is an example of a viral TikTok video with 1.2 million views, 300,000+ reactions, almost 3,000 comments, and 13,000 saves. It shows user @flooptherocket reading Shakespeare’s play with the sound bite called “Peaches confused about question.” This sound bite is a popular meme on TikTok replicated by users to express their reactions to unintelligible texts.

Another example, as shown in Figure 8, is @readchoi’s TikTok video reading Hamlet’s soliloquy in a Southern American accent. It has 2.1 million views, 190,000+ reactions, 5,000+ comments, and

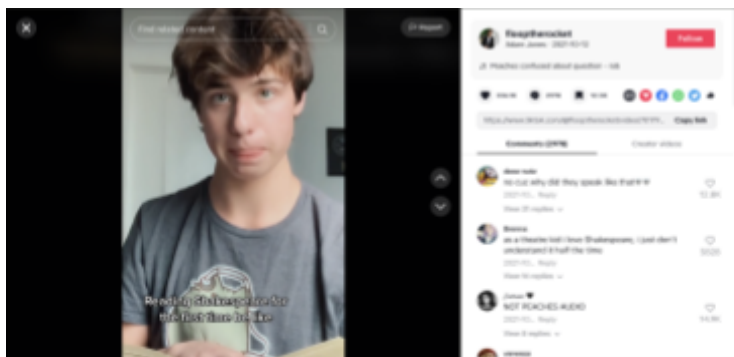


Figure 7: Screenshot of @flooptherocket’s TikTok video “Reading Shakespeare for the first time be like”

almost 19,000 saves. Before the soliloquy begins, it is preceded by a woman saying: “So Americans are starting to realize that Shakespeare sounds better in a southern accent,” implicating the difficulty of hearing Shakespeare in its “original pronunciation.” The numbers make apparent how these posts amassed high levels of engagement, engagement which in turn creates “a sense of aliveness that transcends physical co-presence” (Sullivan 63). But the quality of interactions sparked by @reachchoi’s TikTok is by far the best example of how bite-sized bards generate liveness and participation as other users on TikTok replicated the video and filmed themselves reciting other lines from Shakespeare’s plays in a Southern American accent. This particular instance illustrates what Stephen O’Neil calls the logic of participatory culture:

[B]y way of contrast with ‘older notions of passive media spectatorship’, media consumers are understood to have greater opportunities to intervene in media production that was typically – though not universally – the preserve of commercial and professional producers. (38)

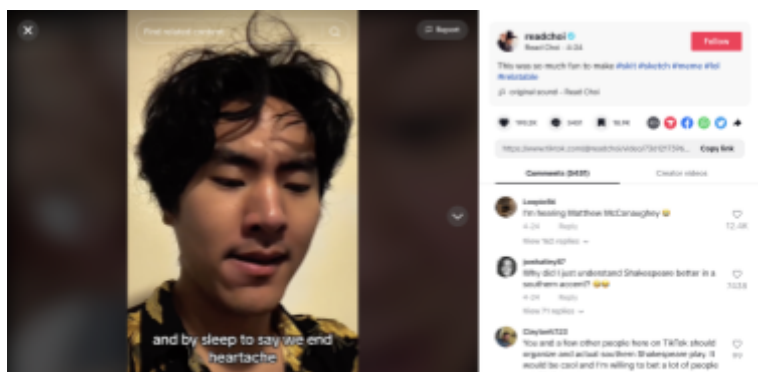


Figure 8: Screenshot of @reachchoi's TikTok video Hamlet in Southern American accent

Be they anonymously-shared memes on social media platforms or short-form videos on TikTok, bite-sized bards allow individual users to create a Shakespeare of their own and use him to generate engagement and a sense of community with other users. The creators and the audience of bite-sized bards may not be congregated in one auditorium, but both experience and participate in the creation of Shakespeares. This participation may either be a confirmation or a redefinition of Shakespeare's cultural capital—it depends on the creator and the interactions that the meme generates. Whatever it may do to Shakespeare, it is clear there is “a productive attitude to the texts as open to further interpretation, especially where they transpose the Shakespearean text to new contexts or combine it with other media” (O'Neil 40), and such an attitude leads to reflections about the role of individual users (as opposed to institutional groups like RSC or The Globe) in making ‘Shakespeare.’

Social Bards

Social Bards are performances of Shakespeare's works using social media platforms alone as the stage. The first forays into this medium were RSC's *Such Tweet Sorrow* on Twitter (2010) and *A Midsummer Night's Dreaming* on a variety of platforms, including Google+ and a physical performance counterpart that happened live at Stratford-upon-Avon (2013). There is also Northern Rep's 2017 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which had combined the visceral experience of Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* (2011) and the online engagement of RSC's #dream40. The theatre troupe staged the

comedy where “the audience is thrown into an immersive stage—which revolves around a DJ and bar—and follows the action as it plays out around the vast warehouse space” (Manchester Evening News). While the reimaged play is set in the club warehouse, the narrative is uploaded on Instagram as well. The actors upload posts without breaking character. In these examples, institutions and theatre groups have shown that they are able to “borrow the positive qualities, associated with new media, of immediacy, reach, and relevance—ideal for engaging a young demographic for whom Shakespeare may seem remote, complex, or painfully compulsory” (Rumbold 318-319). With the exception of *Such Tweet Sorrow*, the employment of social media in the aforementioned examples still assumes that the medium is a mere auxiliary to the physical stage. Social media becomes a ‘tool’ to transmit an existing stage, and not a stage itself.

In this part of the essay, I will be examining two social media performances that deconstruct the conventional idea of the Shakespearean ‘stage’ in order to “recast Shakespeare’s relationship to stage performance and text” (Lanier “Post-textual Shakespeare” 151). I argue that these social bards generate engagement through their visual articulation of Shakespeare, thus resisting the text-centric notion that dramatic performance must always yield to the authority of the dramatic text. On one hand, there is British Council’s *#ShakespeareNoFilter* in 2016, which used Instagram to perform *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; on the other is a lesser-known group called The Candle Wasters and its 2014 webseries called *Nothing*

Much To Do (NMTD). Theatrical performance tends to "betray a desire to locate the meanings of the stage in the contours of the dramatic text" (Worthen "Drama, Performativity, and Performance" 1093). #ShakespeareNoFilter and *NMTD* prompt the question: what happens to the authorial text when the physical stage is taken away? Both performances' subversion of stage performance displaces the primacy of Shakespeare's text through its brazen visual (rather than verbal) storytelling. In the process, these social bards create a kind of engagement that allows spectators to interact and "perform" with the actors.

Part of the British Council's *Shakespeare Lives* campaign was a modern Instagram "re-telling" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In mid-July 2016, spectators were invited to "follow" the story of the Biologicals, an indie band composed of Hermia, Demetrius, and Lysander. Helena was chosen to be the character who uploads the events of the band's indie-festival tour, and it is later on taken over by Puck.

Figure 9 shows one of the Instagram posts in the performance: Lysander is glaring in jealousy at Hermia and Demetrius. The caption suggests that the photo was uploaded by Helena with a popular hashtag #tbt, Throwback Thursday. It is also worth noticing that the uploaded image uses a desaturated filter, making it look like it was taken on film. These are popular aesthetic practices within the Instagram platform. Without citing any particular scene or gesturing towards any part of Shakespeare's text, the photo is able to capture one of AMND's central plot conflicts.

The Candle Waster's *Nothing Much To Do* offers the same deferment to "visual articulation" (Lanier 146). The web series, which was first released in July 2014, heavily relies on YouTube vlogging aesthetics and practices to adapt Shakespeare's *Much Ado* to a



Figure 9: Screenshot of #ShakespeareNoFilter's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The caption says: "#TBT to this cracker... Lysander was not impressed with how touchy feely Demetrius was towards Hermia (laughing emoji) Helena x"

Longhand

21st-Century high school context with teenagers discovering their self-identity and exploring relationships with peers in the digital epoch, where most interactions are mediated by social networking services. Video blogs or vlogs function as “social commentary, alternative newscasts, creative outlets or personal online diaries” (Molyneux, Gibson, O’Donnell, Singer 2). Given this nature, the majority of vlogs are concerned with and interested in the spectacle of ordinary life. In an essay entitled “Cinema without Show-business”, Luers explains that a vlog is a “serial expression of... a life-world. These expressions are usually moments in a blogger’s daily life, but



And So It Begins... | Nothing Much To Do



Nothing Much To Do

Subscribe 11,119

95,299 views

+ Add to Share ... More

1,081 10

Figure 10: Screenshot of Beatrice’s vlog: *Nothing Much To Do*. Episode 1. On the landing page of her YouTube channel, it reads: “Hello, I’m Beatrice. I had nothing much to do so I made this channel. My cousin Hero found she too had nothing much to do so I let her join me in this vlogging expedition. Let us know what you think!”

might also be the staged and poetic evocations of emotional states... even a staged fiction as a vehicle to explore a microcosm" (4). NMTD depends upon this embeddedness in a life-world as a visual mode of storytelling and as a way to engage its users. Figure 10 shows Beatrice speaking directly to the camera as she introduces herself to the viewers. We can clearly see her room as the background of the video: the posters of her fandom, the artworks, her bed, and the little lanterns hanging on her wall. We are treated to see the everyday lives of Beatrice, Benedick, Ursula, Hero, and others as they reveal it on their own YouTube channels.

The dominance of these visual articulations on social media Shakespeares are similar to the BBC Shakespeare Series that Michele Willems examines in *Shakespeare and the Moving Image*. Willems describes the screen as a medium that "addresses its public through pictures which often replace words so much so that words may seem out of place and too much speech may be prejudicial to the effect of a film" (70). Although she pertains to film specifically, I find that the same idea applies to social media performances where "words are secondary; the dialogue follows the image" (70). Instagram and YouTube performances in my examples focus more on the essential story structure and characters, and have thus relegated Shakespeare's words to accessories. The image in Figure 11 shows Puck concocting a love juice that will remedy the mishap she has caused amongst the band members. In Act III, Scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it had been Oberon who "charmed [Demetrius'] eyes". In order to portray this on Instagram, an actual love juice is shown and labelled



Figure 11: Screenshot of #ShakespeareNoFilter's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The caption reads: "These flowers force in stirring love. Let's see if it works to get Demetrius in love with Helena.... @WhatsTheWorstThatCouldHappen #Yolo (shooting star emoji) Puck"



Figure 12: Screenshot of #ShakespeareNoFilter's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The caption reads: "Flower of this purpose dye, hit with cupid's archery, sink in the apple of Demetrius' eye. When Helena does spy, let her shrine as gloriously, as the venus of the sky. (shooting star emoji) Puck"

"Demetrius" to establish that the juice is meant for him. Later on, Puck uploads a quick five-second video (Figure 12) which shows Demetrius drinking the love juice. The captions, some of which contain direct words from the play, assume a supporting role in the performance. In this instance, the dialogue or speech as dictated by the text is put in the background while the prop and the actor take a more active role in telling the story.

The granular nature of social media texts might lend explanation for how social bardos surrender the authorial text to the visual image. Due to "bandwidth limitations, respect for how media is consumed in a networked environment and time investment of the creator..." (Luers 5), texts produced within social media platforms tend to be short and brief. It must be comprehensible at a quick glance: a tweet, an image, or a video that takes only a few seconds' or minutes' worth of our time. Internet users tend to prefer digital texts that take less time to consume because of the massive quantity of information generated online. This is also why *NTMD* serializes

Shakespeare's *Much Ado* into shorter videos dispersed throughout different channels.

NMTD's granularity further adds to the immersion of viewers and fans into the life-world of the characters. Figures 13 and 14 show two screenshots from Beatrice's vlog and Benedick's vlog, respectively. The couple's sly remarks about each other from Act II, Scene 1 of *Much Ado* are performed as vlog responses. Figure 13 shows Beatrice as she commits herself to a life of celibacy and scorns all men. This was uploaded on the 6th of May 2014. It was quickly followed by a post from Benedick's vlog, which is entitled "REBUTTAL," in which he angrily replies to everything that Beatrice had said in the previous episode. This was uploaded the following day on the 7th of May 2014. A follower of the vlog series will find that all social media platforms, from Benedick's vlog to Hero's Instagram account, consistently and synchronously correspond to the main events of the vlog's story.



Figure 13: Episode 14 "Introducing Leo": Beatrice claims that she would rather be single for the rest of her life. Cat animations are put on the video to emphasize her cat-lady aspirations.

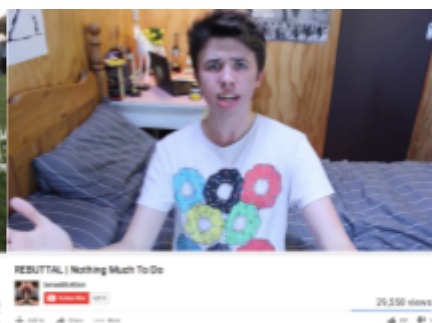


Figure 14: Episode 15 "REBUTTAL" on bennaddiction (Benedick's YouTube Channel). He angrily responds to Beatrice's insults from Episode 14.

Both #ShakespeareNoFilter and *NMTD*'s subversion of textual authority and their adaptation of the norms, practices, and aesthetics native to social media generate authentic interactions with the audience. A community of "followers" is made possible by the social bards' manner of temporal unfolding, thus creating an "experience of belonging to a physical and networked community of fans that spanned geographical locations and shared in the excitement of participating in a unique, ephemeral cultural event" (Aebischer, Greenhalgh 7). In this community, users can express their belongingness freely and candidly through the comments. A great example of this process is *NMTD*'s Episode 18 entitled "Q&A." In *Much Ado*, the past between Beatrice and Benedict is implicit. Beatrice speaks in hints and fleeting recollections of the past: "Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave / him use for it, a double heart for his single one" (II.i). In *NMTD*, a Q&A video was made to allow the explicit revelation of Beatrice and Benedick's past relationship, thereby prompting engagement and participation from the viewers. Beatrice is asked: "You and Benedick seem to hate each other so much but Pedro said you were friends when you were younger. Did something happen that made you guys hate each other so much?" (*Nothing Much To Do*, "Q & A"). Beatrice's answer is clearly something that cannot be found within the contours of the text:

I don't know I guess we hung out a bit that summer. I don't know he just sort of started talking like how we lived in the moment, and he didn't like thinking ahead, and he was all about the now, and he didn't like the idea of friendships developing, and like, 'oh, I'm Benedick and friendships like,

they die in three days.' You know I just felt like he didn't really value our friendship. I don't know, it just didn't feel right. (*Nothing Much To Do*, "Q & A")

The video generated user comments are seen in Figure 15. Viewers form their own conclusions about Beatrice and Benedick's relationship, and some even add information for viewers' understanding. User @beesampaio9176 explains the significance of Beatrice and Benedick's names to suggest how they are meant to be. Not only do the followers comment on the video, but they are also allowed to somehow perform their reactions. The comment of user @NotTheSauce expresses pity for Beatrice, while user @OlympicSpiritForever supports the Bea-Ben pairing.

#*ShakespeareNoFilter* and NMTD had been among the first performances that harnessed the technologies of social media to facilitate authentic engagement with the audience. Such

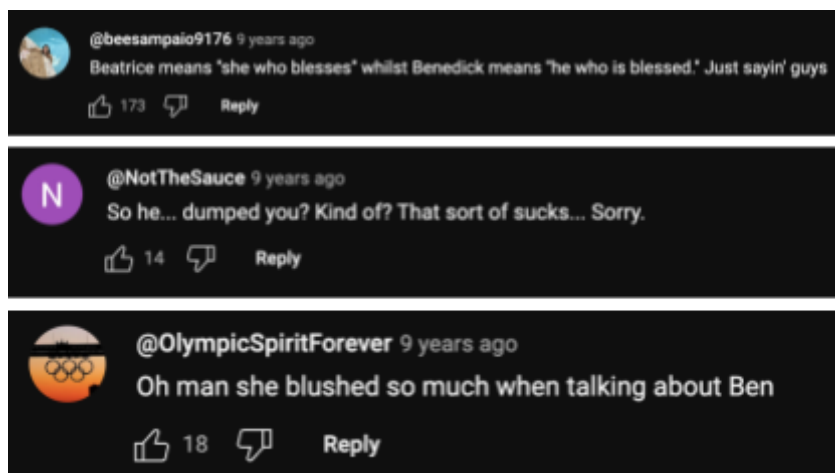


Figure 15: Screenshots of users' comments on NMTD's Episode 18: Q&A

performances, according to Erin Sullivan, “push us to consider how the very nature of performance itself might be changing—both on-stage and off—as Shakespeare and his publics evolve in response to an increasingly digital world” (65). Dramatic performance has conventionally been confined to the theatre, but media technologies have begun to change that. Mass media’s reproduction of Shakespeare in the forms of film, TV, radio, and merchandise has introduced the uncoupling of the Shakespearean text and the Shakespearean performance. And while digital and social media benefit from this uncoupling, it also introduces its own contribution to re-defining the nature of performance as participatory and interactive.

Unmuted Bards

In 2020, we find that Shakespeare and his publics did not only respond to a world that is increasingly digital, but also to a world that is suddenly locked down. Impelled by the closing of theaters and public spaces worldwide, creative institutions turned to digital media in order to survive and continue to make a living. This, too, came in many forms: the live-streaming of a stage performance, the streaming of a live stage performance, the live performance on a streaming platform, and so on. In all cases, the three words “live,” “performance,” and “streaming” had been prevalent during the 2020 lockdown, and this has naturally prompted recent discourse about the liveness of digital performances. In the book *Lockdown Shakespeare*, editors Gemma Allred, Benjamin Broadribb, and Erin Sullivan have categorized lockdown Shakespeares into five kinds: live-streamed,

Shakespeare in pieces, streamed, Virtual Theatre, and Zoom-to-YouTube. This essay is interested in Virtual Theatre, described as: “[a] production which is performed live on Zoom with the audience joining the actors on the call, allowing the audience to interact with the performance” (xvii). More than the other forms of Lockdown Shakespeare, it is Virtual Theatre where we can find the necessary ingredient of Digital Shakespeares that have thus far been discussed: the marriage of the stage and the medium.

The other lockdown Shakespeares enumerated in the book still make distinctions between a physical performance space and an online medium. A great example of this is how big theatre companies released a slew of archived recorded performances for public streaming. National Theatre, for example, eventually went on to launch NT@home, which contained select National Theatre performances available for video streaming. In these cases, there is still a stage that is *transmitted* by a video or streaming platform online. Such forms of lockdown Shakespeares give “a sense of ‘instead of’ rather than ‘being’ theatre” (Allred “Lockdown Shakespeare: The State of (the) Play”). Although such streams and live-streams do create a community of viewers and generate an “a-liveness” akin to Sullivan’s claim in studying broadcast TV, I find that they do not subvert what a Shakespearean performance conventionally is. Rather, it is the born-digital performances of virtual theatre that offer a kind of liveness embodied by the direct participation of the audience—a participation that is important in the narrative. Pascale Aebischer, Rachael Nicholas, and Gemma Allred have all written about Creation

Theatre's 2020 virtual production of *The Tempest*, which provides a great example of how virtual theatre facilitates audience participation:

Creation's *Tempest* co-opted the audience as Ariel's (Itxaso Moreno) spirits, helping create her magic... Clicking fingers suggested rainfall, stamping feet created thunder. A tangible action creating intangible magic. While not explicitly set on Zoom, Seaton's Island exploited the surveillance possibilities of multiple cameras and screens: Prospero (Simon Spencer-Hyde) appeared in front of a wall of surveillance screens as he monitored his island. (Allred 68)

Creation Theatre's *The Tempest* comes close to the audience participation that Early Modern playgoers might have experienced. In the performance, audience members on Zoom were encouraged to turn their cameras on and unmute themselves in certain key parts of the performance—almost like the well-lit theaters of Shakespeare's London where members of the audience can borrow reactions from one another. Such participation, she claims, creates a sense of community that generates the same feeling of congregation in a physical theatre.

I find in these discussions of virtual theatre an immense effort to uplift digital performances to match the experience of community provided by stage performances. In the same essay, Allred writes that "it is the temporal proximity of actor and audience, and the embedded markers of ephemeral performance, that afford digital theatre a new quality of liveness equivalent to in-person theatre" (67). Virtual Theatre is undoubtedly creative and playful in creating

performances during the lockdown. But I find that the quality of liveness is not quite equivalent to in-person theatre, but something of its own distinct kind. Within in-person theaters, we do indeed find live performances where “audiences feel themselves allied with each other, and with a broader, more capacious sense of a public” (Dolan 2). The sense of community derived from in-person theatre is affective; while virtual theatre can be said to achieve a similar feeling because audience members can see each other’s faces and homes, it also goes beyond visibility when eliciting direct participation affects the narrative flow of the performance.

In this part of the essay, I will be discussing Big Telly and Creation Theatre’s 2022 joint virtual production, *Friar Lawrence’s Confessional*, written and performed by Nicholas Osmond, and Big Telly’s 2020 *Macbeth*, directed by Zoe Seaton. Both serve as the best examples of using the medium (Zoom) and treating it as a stage, thereby combining the locus (the fictional world of the characters) and platea (the space including the stage and the audience watching it) of the performance. These digital performances produce a meta-theatrical acknowledgement of the medium and use this fact to engage the audience in the virtual plays.



Figure 16: Audience in the Zoom call are greeted by this “waiting room” sign, although the viewers are actually in the meeting room already and not in a waiting room. This visual cue is used to suggest the passage of time in Friar Lawrence’s confessional days.

In this digitally-performed version of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Lawrence holds virtual confessions through Zoom (see Figure 16). It is through Zoom calls that the narrative of the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet mainly unfolds. Interspersed with Friar Lawrence’s reading aloud of his emails and texts, as well as TikTok videos of supporting characters, we get a pared-down tragedy that focuses on Friar Lawrence’s work as a Catholic priest during lockdown.

Rather than having the action take place in the fictional world of the play (the island of Prospero as in *The Tempest*), *Friar Lawrence’s Confessional* takes place entirely on Zoom and shows an awareness and acknowledgement of that fact. Conflicts within the

play were localized in order to project a Verona that is also plagued by COVID. When Friar Lawrence encourages Romeo to attend the Capulet ball, he reassures him that all guests will be masked and that vaccination cards will be checked. A banished Romeo mourns his separation from Juliet, whose broadband connection is slow and almost non-existent. Characters like Romeo, Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Malvolio, and Prospero enter and exit the Zoom call, which becomes a “virtual confessional.” Only Friar Lawrence—as the host of the meeting—is left on for the entire duration of the performance. In Figures 17 and 18, Friar Lawrence is shown in a call with a banished Romeo and a hysterical Juliet. In between calls with Romeo and Juliet, other characters in the Shakespeare-verse also enter the call to hear confession. In another part of the virtual performance, an Act-V Lady Macbeth enters the meeting room and reveals her crimes; Malvolio joins the call using Olivia’s Zoom account; and Prospero enters the Zoom meeting room and casts a spell to make Friar Lawrence fall asleep for two days, thus forgetting to warn Romeo about Juliet’s death-like slumber.

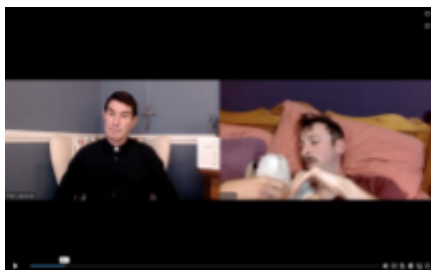


Figure 17: Friar Lawrence and Romeo. Romeo is lovesick over Rosaline.

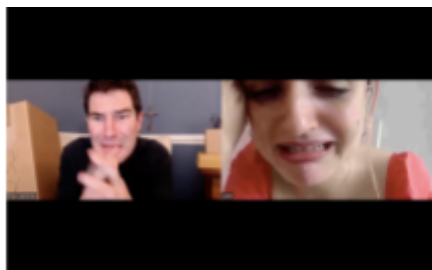


Figure 18: Friar Lawrence and Juliet. Juliet is distraught at Tybalt’s death and Romeo’s banishment.

Big Telly's 2020 virtual production of *Macbeth* plays with a similar blending of the performance's locus and platea to engage the audience members and facilitate high levels of participation. Whereas *Friar Lawrence's Confessional* used the COVID-19 lockdown as the backdrop of the performance, therefore acknowledging the use of Zoom as a stage, *Macbeth's* setting is also in a lockdown, except that it is the fear of witchcraft rather than a virus that keeps the characters and audience members separated. In Figure 19, the three witches/UK government officials, composed of the Prime Minister, Chief Scientific Adviser, and Minister for the Economy, are shown in a COVID-19 daily briefing-style conference. Parodying ambiguous political language during the pandemic, the opening scene pokes fun at Boris Johnson's public entreatments "to be alert" during these "unprecedented times" (Aebischer "Viral Shakespeare" 75). Drawing on the closing down of theaters and public spaces, the three witches are shown to be situated in an empty auditorium of Theatre Royal Brighton, from which they seem to control the events of the narrative



Fig. 19: The three witches pose as government officials in a daily briefing and ask the audience to reveal their locations.

and create the world of the virtual play. It is also of interest that their Zoom video names reflected the names of the characters: Malcolm, Macduff, and Banquo. From witchcraft, the Wyrd Sisters turn to stagecraft in order to create and project the prophecies for Macbeth. The production combines the use of green screens to conjure up Zoom backgrounds and pre-recorded videos for certain parts of the play. In her review of the virtual play, Amy Borsuk writes: “[a]t times, Zoom acts as a stage, with everyone meant to be inhabiting the same virtual-physical space. Sometimes, it’s more like a TV, with special effects, close-ups and multi-camera use. At other times it’s more like a video call, with direct addresses to the viewer” (*Exeunt Magazine*).

On the topic of technologies of performance, Aebischer writes that “[d]ifferent technologies, it follows, also reveal different ‘truths’ that may be particular to that technology and/or to the play they mediate” (*Shakespeare, Spectatorship, and Technologies of Performance* 11). In Creation Theatre’s *The Tempest*, for example, what is revealed is the significance of Ariel’s liminal character in creating “a sense of shared experience and synchrony, participation and an intense feeling of liveness” (“Creation Theatre and Big Telly’s *The Tempest*” 89). Ixtaso Moreno, the actor who played Ariel, had been the bridge between the audience, and the performance is the key in immersing the audience within the story. Similarly, Friar Lawrence’s folly is reinforced and revealed through his interactions with the members of the audience in the Zoom call. In these

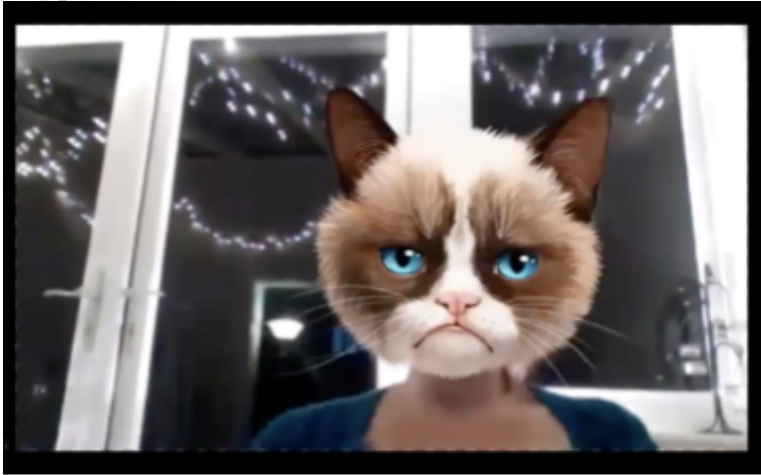


Figure 20: An audience member with a cat filter. Friar Lawrence encourages them to take the death-like inducing drug to escape humiliation.

interactions, what is underscored is Friar Lawrence's recourse to a "recently acquired drug, which when taken, gives the appearance of death" (*Friar Lawrence's Confessional* 2022). In the performance, Friar Lawrence randomly selects members of the audience and then gives them some advice for their plight. In Figure 20, an audience member who had left a cat filter on became Friar Lawrence's first penitent. This formula is repeated two more times in the play, which always ends with the Friar sending an email to an e-brochure with more information about this "recently acquired drug." The repetition of this part of the performance and its inclusion of the audience would be necessary to deliver a tragicomic effect when it was time for Friar Lawrence himself to take the drug in order to escape culpability for Romeo and Juliet's double-suicide. Whereas other versions of

Romeo and Juliet, in contrast, would highlight Romeo and Juliet's youthful impatience (see previous examples in Bite-sized Bards), *Friar Lawrence's Confessional* had used audience members' participation to underscore the extent of his accountability in the play's tragedy.

If *Friar Lawrence's Confessional* reveals the good priest's folly through repeated engagement with the audience, Big Telly's 2020 *Macbeth* reveals an answer to the question that Shakespeare's Scottish play prompts: Who controls what happens in the narrative? Is it the Wyrd Sisters, Lady Macbeth, or Macbeth himself? This question of agency finds its answer in how the Wyrd Sisters facilitated viewer participation in certain key scenes. For the opening scene, audience members on Zoom were asked by the three witches to write their locations on a piece of paper as a way to "screen" which ones may have been exposed to witchcraft and which ones can be marked "safe". Those who were witchcraft-negative had a big check mark appear on their Zoom box, and those who were witchcraft-positive had a witch hat filter appear on their heads. The revelation later on that the government officials are witches themselves who can conjure "illusions" in the form of Zoom backgrounds tells the audience who might be in control of the story's events. This creates dramatic irony because members of the Zoom meeting clearly know that the witches are manipulating Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and yet they are made to participate in the charade. One part of the Zoom production asked the audience members to wave to Macbeth as he marched to his coronation. Other parts had the

audience members “spotlighted” as dinner guests in Macbeth’s banquet or as witnesses to the succeeding prophecies about Macbeth’s downfall. The effect created is that “[n]ot only were the country’s leaders revealed as witches, but we, the audience, were ourselves transformed into those witches, binding us into a visual identity with the play’s instruments of disorder.” (Aebischer “Viral Shakespeare” 77). Online reviews of the performance found the interactive elements of the play to have no enduring effect on the narrative. I would contend, however, that without such audience participation or “spotlighting”, the virtual play would not have elicited a feeling of discomfort within the audience as they become complicit to the tragedy of Macbeth.

The inclusion of the audience in both *Friar Lawrence’s Confessional* and *Macbeth* generates “liveness, a sense of community and emotive responses,” thereby creating “a unique and specifically theatrical event” (Aebischer and Nicholas 89). What might contribute to the sense of community is the fact that audience members were encouraged to leave their cameras on. But what is also important is that the inclusion and immersion of the Zoom audience resulted in actor-audience interactions that are ultimately necessary to produce the performance’s intended effect. Quite unlike another pandemic-born performance, *The Show Must Go Online*, where the audience had been mere meeting “joiners” — they join the live Zoom call, but their participation is more similar to the participation of viewers in Social Bards. That is, they can comment via chat, but their cameras are off, their microphones muted.

The Bardic Question

Shakespeare and new media—out of a “marriage of true minds” comes Bite-sized Bards, Social Bards, and Unmuted Bards, which all encourage engagement between and amongst creators, actors, and spectators. And now the Bardic question that seems to haunt modern performance: Are they Shakespeare? The question comes from the assumption that there is a true and authentic Shakespeare, which all performances must either yield to or deviate from. It is difficult to imagine an original Shakespeare, especially with the plethora of afterlives ranging from Japanese *manga* to new media performances. Shakespeare in the 21st Century is an amalgam of texts, discourses, and cultural artifacts generated through a long history of print and performance. O’Neil describes Shakespeare as “mutable and dialogic” (5) for the signifier “Shakespeare” does not only pertain to the author, but also to “an aggregate of adaptations, citations, allusions, uses, transpositions, appropriations, revisions” (O’Neil 5). Instead of asking “is it Shakespeare?” to each new transformation afforded by new technology, I propose to revise the Bardic question and ask instead: “what does it do to Shakespeare?”, and why is it important?

In all three forms, Shakespeare becomes less of something we passively watch or study and more of something we actively use. Bite-sized Bards, through their repeatable, intertextual, and playful nature, allow anonymous and individual users to ‘create’ or ‘make’ their own Shakespeares. Social Bards invite users to interact and

participate through its visual—rather than textual and verbal—performance of Shakespeare. Unmuted Bards go beyond the notion of liveness as an emotive feeling by their inclusion and immersion of the audience in the events of the performance. What is latent in all three forms is the essential transformation of the Shakespeare Spectator to the Shakespeare User. A common thread amongst these Bards is the characterization of engagements they produce as that of “use”:

The rise of digital culture, particularly Web 2.0, has foregrounded user participation as one of the central tenets of its organizational structure and Shakespeare, as has been the case for the past four hundred years, has nimbly responded, yielding new iterations and acquiring new users who enthusiastically curate, and/or recreate additions to the Shakespeare archive. (Fazel and Geddes 2)

Traditionally, it had been Big Theatres and institutional giants like the RSC, The Globe, and universities that directly contributed to the cultural production of Shakespeare. In these theaters commonly associated with high-culture “Shakespeare,” the spectator played but a passive role: muted in his place in the auditorium. But with digital media comes the rise of small creative groups like Creation Theatre, Big Telly, and The Candle Wasters, which all acknowledge that the members of the audience are also internet users who can act and who have agency. Digital media has fashioned a new spectator: one that can playfully create Shakespeare online (bite-sized bards), interact with performances and actors to create a network of fan community (social bards), and participate in the life of a Shakespearean

performance (unmuted bards). These active verbs—create, interact, participate—are reinforced by the larger idea of “use” where, as Terence Hawkes suggests, “Shakespeare doesn’t mean: we mean by Shakespeare” (3).

The digital performances in this essay further prove that Shakespeare’s “acclaimed universality depended less on its connection to a specific moment in the past and more on [the] capacity to create immediately recognizable human experience within the narratives” (137). It is Shakespeare’s particularity (not universality) and timeliness (not timelessness) that allow new generations and technologies continued engagement with Shakespeare. Like the Early Modern theaters of Shakespeare’s London, digital performances might, in a sense, allow us to throw stones or fruit or shout curses and acclaims at the Bard. Whatever we groundlings might do to Shakespeare on this new “stage,” what is certain is that we don’t mutedly stay in the dark of the auditorium. We leave our mics and our cameras on.

Works Cited

- @britishcouncileurope. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”
#ShakespeareNoFilter. 2016. British Council Europe.
<https://www.instagram.com/britishcouncileurope/>. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- Aebischer, Pascale. “Introduction: Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance.” *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. 1–32.

—, *Viral Shakespeare: Performance in the Time of Pandemic*. Cambridge Elements in Shakespeare Performance, ed. by W.B. Worthen. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Aebischer, Pascale and Rachael Nicholas. "Creation Theatre and Big Telly's *The Tempest*: Digital Theatre and the Performing Audience." *The Arden Shakespeare: Lockdown Shakespeares: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation*. Eds. Gemma Kate Allred, Benjamin Broadribb, and Erin Sullivan. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2022. 87–106.

Aebischer, Pacale and Susanne Greenhalgh. "Introduction: Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience." *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience*. Eds. Pascale Aebischer, Sussane Greenhalgh, and Laurie E. Osborne. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018. 1–16.

Allred, Gemma Kate. "Notions of Liveness in Lockdown Performance." *The Arden Shakespeare: Lockdown Shakespeares: New Evolutions in Performance and Adaptation*. Eds. Gemma Kate Allred, Benjamin Broadribb, and Erin Sullivan. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Pls, 2022. 65–86.

Allred, Gemma Kate, and Benjamin Broadribb. "Lockdown Shakespeare: The State of (the) Play." *Action Is Eloquence: (Re)Thinking Shakespeare*, 18 May 2020, medium.com/action-is-eloquence-re-thinking-shakespeare/lockdown-shakespeare-the-state-of-the-play-88742a95d4ea. Accessed 11 May 2024.

Astington, John. "Playhouses, players, and playgoers in Shakespeare's time." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Eds. Margareta de Garzia and Stanley Wells. Cambridge University Press, 2001. 99–114.

Auslander, Philip. "Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2012, pp. 3–11. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26206427>. Accessed 10 May 2024.

- Borsuk, Amy. "Review: Macbeth Big Telly Theatre." *Exeunt Magazine*, 16 October 2020, <https://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/review-macbeth-big-telly-theatre-belfast-international-festival/>. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- Davison, Patrick. "The Language of Internet Memes." *The Social Media Reader*, edited by Michael Mandiberg, NYU Press, 2012, pp. 120–134. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzq5m.13. Accessed 10 May 2024.
- Dolan, Jill. "Introduction: Feeling the Potential of Elsewhere." *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre*. The University of Michigan Press, 2005. 1–34.
- Fazel, Valerie and Louise Geddes. "Introduction: The Shakespeare User." *The Shakespeare User: Critical and Creative Approaches in Networked Culture*. Eds. Valerie Fazel and Louise Geddes. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- "Friar Lawrence's Confessional," directed by Nick Osmond, performance by Nick Osmond, Creation Theatre. 2022. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Introduction." *A Theory of Parody: Twentieth Century Art Forms*. University of Illinois Press, 2000. 1-30.
- Kidnie, Margaret. "The Audience: Receiving and Remaking Experience." *The Arden Research Handbook of Contemporary Performance*. Eds. Peter Kirwan and Kathryn Prince. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021. 38-48.
- Kirwan, Peter and Kathryn Prince. "Introduction." *The Arden Research Handbook of Contemporary Performance*. Eds. Peter Kirwan and Kathryn Prince. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021. 1-21.
- Knobel, Michele, Lankshear, Colin. "Online Memes, Affinities, and Cultural Production." *A New Literacies Sampler*. Vol. 29. Peter Lang Publishing, 2007. 199-228.

- Lanier, Douglas. "Unpopularizing Shakespeare: A Short History." *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Eds. Peter Holland and Stanley Wells. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. 29-41.
- . "Post-Textual Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Survey*. Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 145-162.
- Luers, Williams. "Cinema Without Show Business: A Poetics of Vlogging." *Post Identity*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter 2007. MPublishing, University of Michigan Library. hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.pid9999.0005.105. Accessed 10 May 2024.
- "Macbeth," directed by Zoe Seaton, performance by Dennis Herman, Big Telly Theatre. 2020. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- Molynuex, Heather, et al. *New Visual Media and Gender: A Content, Visual and Audience Analysis of YouTube Vlogs*. 2008. National Research Center, PhD dissertation. All Academic Research. citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/3/2/4/8/pages232488/p232488-1.php. Accessed 10 May 2024.
- "Nothing Much To Do," directed by Elsie and Sally Bollinger, performance by Harriett Maire, The Candle Wasters. 2014. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- O'Neil, Stephen. "Introduction: Interpreting YouTube Shakespeare." *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare and YouTube: New Media Forms of the Bard*. Bloomsbury Publishing Pls, 2014. 1-24.
- Phelan, Peggy. "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction." *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 1993. 146-193. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203359433>
- Rumbold, Kate. "From 'Access' to 'Creativity': Shakespeare Institutions, New Media, and the Language of Cultural Value." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2010. 313-336. JSTOR, jstor.org/stable/40985587. Accessed 10 May 2024.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. New Folger's ed. Washington Square Press/Pocket Books, 1992.

—. *Romeo and Juliet*. New Folger's ed. Washington Square Press/Pocket Books, 1992.

Stern, Tiffany. "Text, playhouse, London." Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=200443>.

Sullivan, Erin. "The Audience is Present: Aliveness, Social Media, and the Theatre Broadcast Experience." *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience*. Eds. Pascale Aebischer, Sussane Greenhalgh, and Laurie E. Osborne. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018. 59-76.

"The Tempest", directed by Zoe Seaton, performance by Ixtaso Moreno, Big Telly and Creation Theatre. 2020. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Way, Geoffrey. "Social Shakespeare: 'Romeo and Juliet', Social Media, and Performance." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2011, pp. 401-420. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41427263. Accessed 10 May 2024.

Willems, Michele. "Verbal-visual, verbal-pictorial or textual-televisual? Reflections on the BBC Shakespeare Series." *Shakespeare and the Moving Image*, eds. Anthony Davies and Stanley Wells. Cambridge University Press, 1994. 69-85. Print.

Worthen, W.B. "CyberShakespeare." *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. pp. 169-215. 2016..

—. "Drama, Performativity, and Performance." *PMLA*, vol. 113, no. 5, 1998, pp. 1093-1107. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/463244>. Accessed 10 May 2024.

