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Edmonson, Paul, and Paul Prescott, gen. eds. Reviewing Shakespeare. Other

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February and April 2016. Ninagawa died shortly after closing, on 12 May 2016, at the age of eighty.

A key offering found often on the site are productions that, like this *Richard II*, mix “young interpreters with elderly ones.”⁷ Sayet also noted how her cast “ranging in age from 13 to 90, reminds us that we are accountable to the generations before and ahead of us for every decision we make now.”⁸ When my restless, community-involved, 102-year-old grandmother passed in December 2019, I had been teaching her how to use her new cell phone to market and manage her community outreach, a small token of what she taught me every day. I hope I can go like her and Ninagawa—older and involved, with younger generations teaching me new (performance) technologies like this site, to bridge divides, to collaborate, or to simply provide comfort.

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Edmondson, Paul, and Paul Prescott, gen. eds.

Reviewing Shakespeare. Other.

Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; Warwick: University of Warwick, 2013. Accessed 1 November 2020.

bloggingshakespeare.com/reviewing-shakespeare.

Reviewing Shakespeare is an online archive that aims “To create the most lively, comprehensive, accessible and intelligent guide to 21st-century Shakespearian performance the world has ever seen” (“About”). Hyperboles aside, the blog contains independent reviews and articles of global Shakespeare performances (or what the editors term “worldwide Shakespearian performance”). Produced by the University of Warwick and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and helmed by general editors Paul Edmondson and Paul Prescott, the site’s URL (bloggingshakespeare.com/reviewing-shakespeare) links to parent site Blogging Shakespeare, another archive powered by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and

7. “Richard II, Saitama Arts Theatre,” *Performance Shakespeare 2016*.

8. Sayet, “Why Shakespeare Deserves a Native American Perspective.”

one that likewise contains articles, commentaries, critiques, reflections, and project updates.

What remains unusual about this digital repository amid the many Shakespeare(-related) digital archives is its focus on the experience of the spectator-reviewer. Reviewing Shakespeare foregrounds evaluation and critique instead of production videos—a format many online digital archives have assumed. While there are accompanying images, the reviews emphasize instead critique and analysis of Shakespeare productions: these are detailed (to varying degrees) accounts and experiences of the respective performance in context. There is no other digital archive that provides such rich analytical reviews of individual Shakespeare shows. According to the site's information, "expert reviews of global Shakespearian performance will be produced and commissioned by an extraordinary team of international Associate Editors" ("About"). This characteristic also lends the site greater credibility and is particularly useful as a resource for research. The ontology of user-contributed archives can often raise questions of quality. Even as the articles in Reviewing Shakespeare vary in style, approach, depth, and length, they are well-written and strong in their analyses. Some provide lively and insightful performance analyses while others are more (meta)critical and self-reflexive in approach. The site then distinguishes itself from other generic performance reviews, or those found commonly in various broadsheets, not only because of the rigorous editorial processes involved, but also because contributors are themselves scholars and academics of Shakespeare studies. What this means is that what one reads is a review informed by scholarly understanding and knowledge of Shakespeare and Shakespeare (in) performance. While I have admittedly not read all 378 articles posted, the reviews of Shakespeare's plays that have appealed to me evidence thoughtfulness, acumen, and erudition. I particularly enjoyed reading Sarah Olive's review of *Othello*, performed by the Shakespeare Company of Japan. The article was not only contextual, considered, and detailed in the description of the *mise en scène*, it was also reflexive in the way Olive was aware of her "white, mainly monolingual" identity, one that "know[s] a bit of Shakespeare and about Japan, but little about the Ainu people,"¹

1. Sarah Olive, "Othello, Shakespeare Company of Japan and Pirikap, dir. Kazumi Shimodate and Debo Akibe. Tara Arts, London. 7 August 2019," Reviewing Shakespeare, accessed 31 October 2020, bloggingshakespeare.com/reviewing-shakespeare/othello-shakespeare-company-japan-pirikap-dir-kazumi-shimodate-debo-akibe-tara-arts-london-2019/.

which this *Othello* foregrounds in its consideration of cultural prejudice and discrimination. In sum, for a student or researcher seeking to know more about a production, the perspectives provided serve as an invaluable resource to comprehend the performance more deeply.

The site is basic in its layout and functionality; it resembles an unadorned WordPress blog but contains the relevant thumbnails for ease of navigation without the unnecessary clutter. The home page houses summaries and title links to the most recent reviews, accompanied by an image of the respective production; there are tabs that provide information about the site and the board of editors, as well as a scroll down menu that categorizes the articles by genres—comedy, history, tragedy. There are also reviews of Shakespeare adaptations, and adaptations as opera and musicals, television, and film of productions of Shakespeare's contemporaries, such as Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Jonson's *Volpone*. The site went live in 2013; at the point of this review, there are 378 articles in the archive. This seems to be far short of the general editors' intended target of one thousand reviews by the anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016. Reviews of the tragedies remain the most numerous, standing currently at 133. This figure inadvertently reveals our continued fascination with Shakespeare's tragedies (and with tragedy more broadly).

While Reviewing Shakespeare is easy to navigate, there are limited ways in which one can search for a specific performance review, with a generic "Search" bar being the only option that allows the user to type in keywords. Alternatively, one can more painstakingly scroll down the list of reviews arranged chronologically in each category. While "tags" at the end of each article help users to locate reviews with similar keywords, alternative search filters such as year, region, country, or date would be useful additions. While exploring the site, I became curious about Reviewing Shakespeare's peculiar relationship with Blogging Shakespeare; this "slash(ed)" relation(ship), as seen in the "/" which conjoins yet disconnects Reviewing Shakespeare from its parent location, is evident in the absence of any hyperlinks to either site on both sites. Blogging Shakespeare is conspicuously missing in Reviewing Shakespeare and likewise there is no trace of Reviewing Shakespeare on Blogging Shakespeare (apart from a broken link in the "Webinar" scroll-down menu). This oddity could simply be a consequence of a technical "mésalliance," yet the outcome reminds one of Thersites's declaration, in *Troilus and Cressida*, about illegitimate offspring: a "bastard begot, bastard instructed, bastard in mind, bastard in valour" (5.7.17).

Be that as it may, the site is advertised to be an archive of international Shakespeare performances reviewed, as mentioned above, by “*international* Associate Editors” (my emphasis). The term “international” (or its associated twin “global”) is frequently bandied today particularly where Shakespeare(an) performance and Shakespeare’s works are concerned; “Global” and “Shakespeare” have, according to Alexa Joubin, become near synonyms.² Even then, I would not readily agree with that view. Likewise, I find the use of “international” in the site’s description of both its reviews and its editors somewhat troubling unless the term were used to mean inter-national (which does not seem to be the case here). The reviews remain largely Euro- and American-centric in geographical representation. Most of the performances reviewed are those from and in the “West”—Europe, the UK, and the US. A quick keyword search of “Asia” reveals only a small handful of articles reviewing Shakespeare performances outside these continents. There are occasional reviews of “Asian Shakespeares”—adaptations of Shakespeare in an Asian performance mode or Shakespeare performed in locations across Asia—such as a review of the well-known *Pericles* (2015–16) and *Hamlet* (2014), both by the Yohangza Theatre Company, or a performance of *Macbeth* (2016) in Singapore, and *Titus Andronicus* (2012) performed in Cantonese at the Globe and directed by acclaimed Hong Kong director Tang Shu-wing. In a global age where Asian Shakespeare(s)—“Shakespeare from an Asian perspective”³—thrives, it is odd that reviews of such intercultural adaptations are conspicuously few. Oriented to the “West” in many ways, the performances reviewed are also distinctly “Western” in dramaturgical approach and style. Reflecting this slant, the team of associate editors likewise all teach and/or reside in the West—which explains the concentration of performance reviews in these geographical zones. Furthermore, one wonders about the site’s efficacy and impact on the Shakespeare scholarly community; without investigation, it is difficult to evaluate how Reviewing Shakespeare has benefitted both scholars and students. Additionally, like many such digital archives, initial enthusiasm often turns to lukewarm regimen, with these subsequently becoming ended revels and faded pageants. Recent reviews on the site have become scarce, averaging at two a

2. Alexa Alice Joubin, “Global Shakespeare,” *The Theatre Times* (27 April 2018), accessed 31 October 2020, thetheatretimes.com/global-shakespeare/.

3. Asian Shakespeare Association, accessed 31 October 2020, asianshakespeare.org/.

month, with the last entry dated 24 January 2020—a critique of the 2019 Oregon Shakespeare Festival. While COVID-19 may have threatened the continuity of Shakespeare performance as live events, and consequently led to the absence of articles, the death knell for this site may have been sounded even before the global pandemic occurred. Given how rapidly digital technology transforms and (re)invents virtual experiences, not only are blogs now regarded as an archaic medium and mode of Internet communication, particularly by the younger generation, they lack the appeal of more visually alluring applications prevalent today. Even as one sees the importance and value of Reviewing Shakespeare, one wonders if its continuity can be sustained.

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Fischlin, Daniel, project dir.

Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP). Archive.

Guelph: University of Guelph, 2004. Accessed 1 December 2020.

canadianshakespeares.ca.

The Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP, canadianshakespeares.ca/) is a digital archive of resources relating to the historical and more recent reception of Shakespeare in Canada, based at the University of Guelph. As the project website notes, “CASP is the first research project of its kind devoted to the systematic exploration and documentation of the ways in which Shakespeare has been adapted into a national, multicultural theatrical practice” (“Canadian Shakespeare News”). The project quickly outgrew its initial aims, which founder Daniel Fischlin and early team members Dorothy Hadfield, Gordon Lester, and Mark A. McCutcheon describe in a retrospective article as “conceptualized in primarily literary and historical terms with typical project outcomes projected—a critical book, an anthology for use in pedagogy, a CD-ROM of relevant archival materials, and a comprehensive bibliography.”¹

1. Daniel Fischlin, Dorothy Hadfield, Gordon Lester, and Mark A McCutcheon, “‘The Web of Our Life Is of a Mingled Yarn’: The Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project, Humanities Scholarship, and ColdFusion,” *College Literature* 36.1 (2009): 78, doi: 10.1353/lit.0.0032.