

What are the opportunities in working with Shakespeare?

Practical

- **Shakespeare is a global resource.** This means: no issues with copyright; can edit at will; can experiment with casting; translations in all major languages; opportunities to play, to discover, to talk, to connect...
- **Shakespeare is a cultural icon.**
 - His work is considered prestigious and although this can put people off, it also draws in audiences.
 - Shakespeare is compulsory in the National Curriculum for England and he is studied in schools across Europe and more widely.
 - Working with Shakespeare can build confidence in performers; speaking his language can make actors feel extraordinary.

Aspirational

- **Shakespeare is a site for cultural discussions.** Experiencing Shakespeare in performance can: bridge barriers between disparate groups of people; provide opportunity to discuss difficult issues; open up conversations
- **Shakespeare is a resource for exploring issues of humanity.**
 - Shakespeare can help people to understand more about themselves and others; explore different feelings and perspectives; create moments of empathy between characters and audience.
 - Shakespeare can help us to explore what interests and excites us; what divides and unites us.
 - Productions of Shakespeare can speak to audiences about issues that they might otherwise not choose to engage with

What are the challenges in working with Shakespeare?

Audience Expectations

- Literal casting
- Period costumes and sets
- Reverence
- Behaving appropriately
- Sedate pace
- The perception that Shakespeare will be dull and boring
- Concentration spans

Inclusion

- How to let everyone know Shakespeare is for them
- Different levels of expertise and expectations of those working with Shakespeare
- Diversity and accessibility
- High culture stigma
- Anxiety – students, teachers, actors
- When the 400 year gap opens up: racism, misogyny, sexuality, and faith issues in the text

- Defending cultural ownership
- Counteracting imperial impulses

400 year old texts

- Commonality of human experience not getting in the way of the past
- Materiality and practicality that underlies the material world of the plays reflected in structure and meaning of the texts
- The language becoming increasingly archaic
- Presenting something new and original while staying true to the text. Do we need to remain true to the text?

Other

- Funding more adventurous productions
- Reverence kills authentic connection
- Power issues
- Fear of exposure
- The problem with his status is that *everything* gets revived at some time or another, to the detriment of some of his peers. There are early modern plays far more worth reviving (not just Malfi etc) than at least a few of the weaker Shakespeares. WS sponges up our attention and energy to a disproportionate extent.

How might the British Shakespeare Association best support the community of practitioners working with Shakespeare in performance?

Building advocacy and evidence

- Facilitating connections between producers and researchers in order to consolidate evidence base on the value of Shakespeare
- Pilot study followed by national survey of Shakespeare productions and practitioners
- Approach exam boards to advocate for more creative approaches to Shakespeare to be fostered in schools
- Advocacy for arts education and participation in the arts - evaluating and studying benefits of arts.
- Finding mutually beneficial intersections between arts education, research and professional practice
- Evaluation / research projects which can serve as qualitative audit
- Online resources and information sharing

Sharing knowledge and resources

- Disseminating knowledge about Shakespeare's language (via workshops like the Shakespeare Encyclopaedia one in Belfast)
- What can original formats give with language (e.g. students acting from quarto punctuation)

- Authorizing texts online as performance scripts e.g. Actor-Friendly scripts
- Publicizing exciting online resource links e.g BL Quartos
- Archive of Shakespeare productions for Shakespeare hacks

Sharing skills and expertise

- Database of specialist experience and workshop offers
- Inviting academics into rehearsals and practitioners to conferences and seminars
- Providing continuing forum for practitioners and academics to meet and talk.
- Research resources to feed into rehearsal processes
- Academic and performance based database of specialists
- Dramaturgical support – ability to share questions and advice. Could help by not taking over the individual identities of the companies etc.
- Establishing networks – matchmaking academics and practitioners
- Workshops and opportunities to share knowledge regionally

General

- Work to eliminate some distrust between the groups and facilitate dialogue.
- Support non-mainstream Shakespeare
- There is currently a gap between the RSC and NT live screenings and the audiences worldwide because of the distribution process.

Events

- Shared conference with breakout sessions with practical experience.
- Explore the model of the STA (in North America) and ESN (European Shakespeare Festivals Network)
- Give progress report on consultation event to 2019 conference in Swansea
- Use Surrey conference as launch pad for action
- Make connections with European Shakespeare Associations (e.g lunchtime meeting of the Heads of European SS at conference)
- Members of BSA could approach their local cinemas, encourage local audiences, and hold talkback afterwards to get a sense of audience responses.
- Members use BSA grants to create regional events, for example researchers feeding into performances or to bring in local practitioners