STAGING CONVENTIONS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH THEATRE

How was medieval English theatre performed? Many of the modern theatrical concepts and terms used today to discuss the nature of medieval English theatre were never used in medieval times. Concepts and terms such as character, characterisation, truth and belief, costume, acting style, amateur, professional, stage directions, effects and special effects are all examples of post-medieval terms that have been applied to the English theatre. Little has been written about staging conventions in the performance of medieval English theatre, and the identity and value of these conventions have often been overlooked. In this book, Philip Butterworth analyses dormant evidence of theatrical processes such as casting, doubling of parts, rehearsing, memorising, cueing, entering, exiting, playing, expounding, prompting, delivering effects, timing, hearing, seeing and responding. All these concerns point to a very different kind of theatre from the naturalistic theatre produced today.

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Frontispiece: The York Crucifixion at the junction of Stonegate and Minster Gates, York (1992), by players from Bretton Hall. Directed by the author.
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PHILIP BUTTERWORTH

University of Leeds
For
Peter Meredith
mentor and friend
and
David Mills
scholar and friend
1938–2013
in the meane whyle our comedy shall please the [\&] shalbe acceptable or agreeable vnto the, calle to thy mynde [\&] remember (that we demaund no more of the) but that thou gyue a dewe reioysynge, accordynge to our deseruynges [\&] but that thou shewe the to be well apayde (with oure doinges by some outwarde sygne) as by clappyng of thy handes together, or by makynge of som gladsome shout, for our prologue [\&] for our forespeakynge (to prepare your myndes to perceiue our matter here ensewinge, this is sufficient or enough.

Ioannis Palsgravi Londoniensis, Ecphrasis Anglica in Comoedian Acolasti. The Comedye of Acolastus translated into oure englysshe tongue . . . by Iohn Palsgrave

(London: Tho. Berthel, 1540), sig. biw
## Contents

- **List of figures**
- **Preface**
- **Acknowledgements**
  - Introduction 1
  - Outdoors and indoors 23
  - Casting and doubling 46
  - Rehearsing, memorising and cueing 61
  - Coming and going 78
  - Playing, feigning and counterfeiting 91
  - Dressing and disguising 109
  - Expounding and monitoring 125
  - Effecting effects 140
  - Timing and waiting 156
  - Hearing, seeing and responding 169
- **Notes** 180
- **Bibliography** 239
- **Index** 263
Figures

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Frontispiece: The York Crucifixion at the junction of Stonegate and Minster Gates, York (1992), by players from Bretton Hall. Directed by the author.

1. Huntington Library, MS hm1, fol. 2r. page 5
2. Huntington Library, MS hm1, fol. 22v. 6
3. Huntington Library, MS hm1, fol. 17r. 7
4. Huntington Library, MS hm1, fol. 101v. 9
5. Huntington Library, MS hm1, fol. 51v. 10
6. Huntington Library, MS hm1, fol. 17v. 12
7. The Towneley Annunciation, Rievaulx Abbey (1989), by players from Bretton Hall. Directed by the author. 28
8. The Towneley Creation, Rievaulx Abbey (1988), by players from Bretton Hall. Directed by the author. 31
9. The Towneley Second Shepherds’ Play, Rievaulx Abbey (1988), by players from Bretton Hall. Directed by the author. 82
Preface

Positions of explicit *stage directions* on the pages of the Huntington MS HM1, discussed in the Introduction, are identified by appropriately positioned arrows in Figures 1–6.

There are certain words and phrases used throughout the work that have been consistently italicised. The emphasis placed upon such terms occurs because the words are effectively employed as technical ones in medieval application. Where the same words are not italicised, then other, modern meanings are relevant.

The work makes extensive use of volumes in the *Records of Early English Drama* series published by the University of Toronto Press. Other than bibliographical and note use, the volumes are referred to as *REED volumes* and identified by their geographical location.
Acknowledgements

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For many years I taught in the Drama Department at Bretton Hall in Yorkshire, and during that time I directed some twenty-five of the thirty-two plays of the Towneley Plays (formerly referred to as the Wakefield Cycle). These productions took place in the exquisite grounds of Bretton Hall, Rievaulx Abbey, Fountains Abbey, Roche Abbey, and on the streets of York and Wakefield, and at the S.I.T.M. Colloquium, Groningen. Many talented students took part in these productions. I thanked them for their work at the time, but in the intervening years my gratitude has grown even more. Thank you all once more.

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