

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

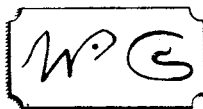
AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF
SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY & PRODUCTION

2

EDITED BY
ALLARDYCE NICOLL

Issued under the Sponsorship of

THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE
THE SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST



CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1949

PUBLISHED BY
THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

London Office: Bentley House, N.W. 1
American Branch: New York

Agents for Canada, India, and Pakistan: Macmillan

*Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge
(Brooke Crutchley, University Printer)*

CONTENTS

Notes are placed at the end of each contribution

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page vii
Fifty Years of Shakespearian Production: 1898–1948 by M. ST CLARE BYRNE	I
An Original Drawing of the Globe Theatre by I. A. SHAPIRO	21
The Projected Amphitheatre by LESLIE HOTSON	24
Ben Jonson and <i>Julius Caesar</i> by J. DOVER WILSON	36
<i>The Booke of Sir Thomas More</i> and its Problems by R. C. BALD	44
The ‘Shakespearian’ Additions in <i>The Booke of Sir Thomas More</i>	62
The Renaissance Background of <i>Measure for Measure</i> by ELIZABETH M. POPE	66
The Individualization of Shakespeare’s Characters through Imagery by MIKHAIL M. MOROZOV	83
Trend of Shakespeare Scholarship by HARDIN CRAIG	107
Shakespeare in France: 1900–1948 by HENRI FLUCHÈRE	115
<i>International News</i>	126
Shakespeare in New York: 1947–1948 reviewed by ROSAMOND GILDER	130
The Year’s Contributions to Shakespearian Study	132
1. Critical Studies reviewed by UNA ELLIS-FERMOR	132
2. Shakespeare’s Life and Times reviewed by D. J. GORDON	141
3. Textual Studies reviewed by JAMES G. MCMANAWAY	145
<i>Books Received</i>	154
<i>Index</i>	157

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

BETWEEN PP. 16 AND 17

- I. A. CHARLES KEAN'S *Macbeth*. Princess's Theatre, 1853
(Victoria and Albert Museum)
- B. HENRY IRVING'S *Henry VIII*. Lyceum Theatre, 1892
(*Black and White* 'Souvenir')
- II. A. WILLIAM POEL'S *Hamlet* (First Quarto). St George's Hall, 1881
(Enthoven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum)
- B. BEERBOHM TREE'S *Macbeth*. His Majesty's Theatre, 1911
(*Daily Mirror* and Messrs Newton)
- III. A. FORBES-ROBERTSON'S *Hamlet*. Drury Lane, 1913
(*Daily Mirror* and Messrs Newton)
- B. HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER'S *The Winter's Tale*. Savoy Theatre, 1912
(*Daily Mirror* and Messrs Newton)
- IV. Six designs by W. BRIDGES ADAMS for productions at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
(Reproduced by J. B. Charlesworth from the original drawings)
- A, B. *The Merchant of Venice*, 1920
- C, D. *Macbeth*, 1923
- E, F. *Coriolanus*, 1933
- V. A. SIR BARRY JACKSON'S *Macbeth*. Court Theatre, 1928
(Enthoven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum: Copyright Lenare, London)
- B. MICHAEL MACOWAN'S *Troilus and Cressida*. Westminster Theatre, 1938
(Angus McBean)
- VI. A. JOHN GIELGUD'S *Romeo and Juliet*. The New Theatre, 1935
(Bertram Park)
- B. TYRONE GUTHRIE'S *Hamlet*. Old Vic, 1938
(Angus McBean)
- VII. A. KOMISARJEVSKY'S *Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1938
(Daniels, Stratford-upon-Avon)
- B. JOHN BURRELL'S *Henry IV, Part 2*. Old Vic, New Theatre, 1945
(John Vickers)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- VIII. A. *Hamlet*. Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1948
(Angus McBean)
- B. *King John*. Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1948
(Angus McBean)
- IX. A. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1948
(Angus McBean)
- B. *The Taming of the Shrew*. 'Theatre-in-the-round' production by the Dallas Theatre '48, Dallas, Texas
(Associated Press)
- X. A, B. *Twelfth Night*. Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm, 1945
(Studio Järlas)

BETWEEN PP. 22 AND 23

- XI. Hollar's drawing of the "West part o[f] Southwarke toward Westminster". Pencil, mostly inked over, 5 by $12\frac{1}{8}$ in.
(Collection of Iolo A. Williams, Esq.)
- XII. The Second Globe Theatre and the Beargarden, ca. 1640. Full-size detail of Hollar's drawing of "West Part of Southwark".

BETWEEN PP. 48 AND 49

- XIII. *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, fol. 8a; Hand 'D'
(British Museum, Harl. 7368)
- XIV. *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, fol. 8b; Hand 'D'
(British Museum, Harl. 7368)
- XV. *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, fol. 9; Hand 'D'
(British Museum, Harl. 7368)
- XVI. Shakespeare's Signatures

Thanks are due to the Arts Council of Great Britain for permission to select the illustrations used for Miss St Clare Byrne's article from material collected by her for their Exhibition on the History of Shakespearian Production in England.

FIFTY YEARS OF SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION: 1898-1948

BY

M. ST CLARE BYRNE

To attempt an interim report upon Shakespearian production during the last fifty years is not quite so presumptuous an undertaking as the title might seem to imply. It is a good moment for taking stock of the situation, because we have now reached a position which can be apprehended and defined and can see how and why we have arrived there. Development goes on, but in the main we are working with assurance in an accepted mode. Practical experiment in the theatre, inventiveness and ingenuity have for the time being made their important and sufficient contribution, and are incorporate now in a new and vigorous tradition. It is, in fact, one of those propitious moments when mastery of technique and of material means is so assured that it should enable the fullest concentration of energy to be focused on essentials—in this case, upon the fundamental brain-work applied to the author's text to discover meaning and dramatic structure and purpose.

THE SCENIC HERITAGE: CHARLES KEAN AND HENRY IRVING

To understand the methods and achievements of Shakespearian production in the first half of this century we must turn to the last fifty years of the nineteenth. The work of Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's represents the culminating point in the history of spectacular Shakespearian presentation, which goes back by way of Irving and the Lyceum in the eighties and the nineties to Charles Kean and the Princess's in the fifties. Granville-Barker's Savoy productions and the first fifteen years of the Old Vic take us back to William Poel and the early work of F. R. Benson, and so back to Samuel Phelps and Sadler's Wells. No one is likely to ignore or undervalue the influence of European ideas in general in the English theatre since 1900, more especially the influence of Germany and Reinhardt in Shakespearian production; but our roots to-day are still, as they always have been, deep in our own past.

John Philip Kemble, and later his brother Charles, were responsible for the effective introduction of specially designed and appropriate scenery for Shakespeare. Following the precedent of Charles Kemble's much-praised *King John* in 1824, Macready's 1837-9 Covent Garden seasons made it the accepted thing for London productions; and with Charles Kean, spectacle, based upon archaeology and social history, established itself as the dominant consideration. With scenery went an insistence upon correct costume for the plays which could be assigned to definite historical epochs and countries. Shakespeare in modern dress, or in theatrical fancy costume, was not therefore banished from the Victorian theatre; but as Ellen Terry points out in *The Story of My Life* (1908), on the London stage in her childhood, carefully mounted historical productions were the norm under Kean's management: "in some respects they were even more elaborate than those of the present day." By 1860 Shakespeare had acquired all the material resources at the command of the English theatre, but the appeal of spectacle was so much

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

stronger than that of the full text that Macready was moved to describe Kean's productions as scenes annotated by the texts. Generally speaking the plays had been purged by then of most of the early 'improvers' passages; but the singing witches of *Macbeth*, removed by Phelps, were put back by Kean in 1853; Irving achieved one of the spectacular triumphs of his 1888 *Macbeth* with his "black spirits and white spirits" chorus, "Over woods, high rocks and mountains", which ended the witches' cavern scene; and it was not until 1911 that they made what seems to have been positively their last appearance in Tree's production.

Kean's spectacles determined the main trend in English Shakespearian production for sixty years: this was the tradition inherited by Irving at the Lyceum from 1878 to 1902. Irving still cut the texts freely and interpolated bits of spectacular business which took up precious minutes. If the present generation of playgoers is astonished to find a great actor cutting Hamlet's revenge soliloquy, it must be remembered that we have only just emerged from the period in which one of the critics' first-night excitements was to see how the text of a Shakespeare production had been 'arranged'. It was possible for *The Athenaeum* in 1901 to describe Irving's *Coriolanus* as "a virtual reconstruction of the play".

It is generally said that his productions, though in the Kean tradition, were less spectacular, more imaginative and more beautiful. Although his lighting effects were often severely criticized by his contemporaries, he was both a lighting pioneer and a lighting artist, and Antoine of the Théâtre Libre, who saw his *Macbeth* in February 1889, considered that the lighting of the discovery of the murder of Duncan and of the banquet scene went far beyond anything of the kind then known in France. He was equally enthusiastic about the settings: "Je ne me suis point émerveillé de ce grand acteur . . . mais ce qui est incomparable c'est sa mise-en-scène, dont nous n'avons guère la notion en France" (*Mes Souvenirs*). It is instructive to put this beside his comment on the Meiningers whom he had seen and admired in Brussels a few months earlier: "Notez que je ne suis pas du tout emballé, comme on dit, par eux. Leurs décors très criards, mais curieusement plantés, sont infiniment moins bien peints que les nôtres." His opinion, in fact, amply corroborates that of *The Graphic's* critic, who wrote of this production: "In scenic art England may now be fairly said to stand pre-eminent. With the exception of the Meiningers, who now and then, when at home, are worthy rivals, there is nothing to be seen on continental stages which will compare for *mise-en-scène* with the Lyceum productions."

THE SCENIC HERITAGE: SAMUEL PHELPS AND F. R. BENSON

The other nineteenth-century tradition from which the modern impulse derives some of its rooted strength was the tradition of simpler scenes and better texts as maintained for eighteen years (1844-62) by Samuel Phelps at Sadler's Wells. Macready is reported to have said: "I believe we must look for the drama, if we really wish to find it, in that remote suburb of Islington." Phelps did more than anyone, before William Poel, to restore a fuller text to the stage. His treatment of *Macbeth* is typical: in 1847 he dropped the music and the interpolated words, restored Lady Macduff and her son, killed Macbeth off-stage and brought on his head on a pole. His artistry of setting and lighting drew high praise from such discriminating critics as Henry Morley and Douglas Jerrold: while sufficiently decorative in the accustomed realistic historical manner of the time it was definitely a background and not an end in itself. He kept

FIFTY YEARS OF SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION

Shakespeare alive in the theatre for a popular audience; and no one among his contemporaries and immediate successors approached as nearly to the modern conception of the proper relationship between the text and the facilities and the conditions of the picture-frame stage.

In the last years of the century and until the outbreak of the 1914 war F. R. Benson did for Shakespeare in the provinces and at Stratford in his thirty years of repertory playing very much what Phelps had done earlier at Sadler's Wells. His work was a constant reminder to a country without a national theatre for the performance of its own classics that Shakespeare could and should be something more than the annual offering to the London public of a spectacular production of one of the most popular of the plays. In 1900 at the Lyceum he challenged London with his repertory company and a repertory programme, including the *Hamlet* in its entirety which he had presented at Stratford the previous year. His settings were mostly the fairly simple and ordinary theatrical stock of his time, but they were not designed to give unbroken continuity of playing and were realistically localized, so that in *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, the text had to be transposed in order that all the early Venice scenes could be played in succession, followed by all the early Belmont scenes. He took liberties with the text of the kind associated with the spectacular tradition, and in the tragedies in particular the pace of his productions was often too slow. His real achievement was other than technical, and something greater: it was the creation and maintenance, through three decades, of the company that bore his name, and the widespread love and knowledge of Shakespeare fostered throughout the country by its work. It is easy to decry his production methods as old-fashioned, and to forget that the presentation of the modern plays of his time would seem equally old-fashioned nowadays: it is better to remember that his methods were conditioned by and suited to the theatre, the audience and the standards of his own time; and that for many years his company was the only real nursery of Shakespearian talent in England.

The historical method of presentation was, in origin, an integral part of the nineteenth-century movement towards realism in the theatre. *Décor* and detail must be credible and accurate, whether it was a reproduction of the Rialto or a drawing-room in Grosvenor Square. Shakespeare and Tom Robertson, in production, were linked by a common theory: the one supreme commandment was; "Be thou real—to look at." In this the English theatre, from the time of Addison's sparrows to Tree's real rabbits, has rightly gauged the predilections of its audience. It was one of the major triumphs of Tree's 1898 *Julius Caesar*, which played from 8.15 to 12.15 although the text was drastically cut, that the audience was so literally transported to ancient Rome that a considerable portion of the *Telegraph's* scholarly review could be devoted to pointing out in some detail just what elements in the scenery, costume and colouring made it a replica not of the last days of the Republic but of the hey-day of the Empire. Tree's instinct was theatrically sound: his scene was Rome: to make his Rome superbly, theatrically itself, he had to give back to his audience their idea of Rome made bigger and better and three-dimensional: for an audience raised on Alma Tadema and Academy paintings of classical subjects he had no real alternative. In Tree's 1898 Rome, as in Reinhardt's completely real forest in his 1905 *Midsummer Night's Dream*, spectacular realism reaches its culminating point, and reaches it for Shakespearian production as effectively as for modern plays.

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

THE INFLUENCE OF WILLIAM POEL

“What’s come to perfection perishes.” In the nature of things, spectacle would have been bound to decline in the present century. But even before its apotheosis, cutting across at a tangent, there came in 1881 the ideas of William Poel, who advocated a complete break-away from normal theatrical methods for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plays. His first demonstration was a performance of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*, on which occasion, at the St George’s Hall, as later in other halls and in theatres, in London and elsewhere, he reproduced as far as was physically possible all the conditions that modern scholarship believes to have governed the performances of Shakespeare’s plays in his own theatre and time.¹

Poel realized that the picture-frame stage, as then used for Shakespeare, completely destroyed the vital speed and continuity of the action, broke the tension when it was essential to preserve it, distorted the fundamental dramatic structure, and made savage cutting a necessity. He found the whole tradition of Shakespearian acting as corrupt as the texts used by the theatre: it was cluttered up with traditional business, inserted, as often as not, to bridge a gap in the thought created by some cut in the lines; its presentation of the minor characters was almost entirely conventionalized; and in general the delivery of the verse was slow and declamatory. Ignorance of the Elizabethan social background and a facile readiness to identify secondary characters, as for example Maria or Polonius, with stock theatrical types such as the pert serving wench or the elderly dotard, had falsified their relationships and their dramatic functions and associated them with ludicrously inappropriate costumes.

Poel thought in terms of practical Elizabethan theatre-craft, and was at his best when producing, talking or lecturing: he was less good at embodying his sound theatrical common sense and his great knowledge of the Shakespeare plays in writing, so that the little he has left gives no real measure of the importance and the inspiration of his work in his own time as a practical corrective of the weaknesses of the old tradition, as an entirely new and original stimulus to actors, producers and scholars, as a continuous and consistent demonstration of the proper method of studying a Shakespeare text for production, and as a startling demonstration of the difference between the authentic Shakespeare and Shakespeare in the theatre. Between 1887 and 1914 not a year passed without a Poel production (see *William Poel and his Stage Productions: 1880-1932*), including not only Shakespeare but also an amazing number of other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plays; and among the list of his actors will be found such names as Granville-Barker, Herman Vezin, Lillah MacCarthy, Ben Greet, Robert Loraine, Lewis Casson, Nugent Monck, Esmé Percy, Sara Allgood, Edith Evans and Robert Speaight, to mention only some of the most distinguished. His principles were of profound influence in the work of Granville-Barker, the first modern Shakespearian producer of the commercial theatre; and although his Elizabethan stage with its purely architectural background has not, ultimately, been adopted for general use, it still lives and flourishes in Nugent Monck’s Maddermarket Theatre at Norwich, which began as Thè Norwich Players in 1911, was broken up by the 1914 war, reorganized in 1919, and has now an international reputation. Modern producers, on the whole, believe it is not necessary to give up the technical advantages of the modern theatre in order to regain the speed and continuity of Elizabethan playing; but the impetus, the principles and the methods which have determined the nature of our present tradition at its best all stem directly

FIFTY YEARS OF SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION

from Poel's insistence upon the vital relationship between the play and its own stage. In the face of the evidence of two centuries of theatrical practice he demonstrated the fact that Shakespeare was a practical man of the theatre and knew his own business best.

THE ADVENT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: BEERBOHM TREE

In Germany the kindred impulse to Poel's found expression in the professional theatre. Under the influence of the ideas of Appia, Craig and Fuchs, realism for the staging of Shakespeare and the poetic drama in general was being rapidly abandoned and being replaced on the new 'Raumbühne' by simplified settings, permanent or semi-permanent, free of all superfluous detail and of wings and perspective scene painting, equipped in most cases with a cyclorama for open-air scenes, and in some cases—as at the Munich Künstlertheater—with an arrangement of fore-, middle- and rear-stages that was almost Elizabethan.

At the beginning of the century, however, neither Poel nor the German simplified setting exercised any influence over English production in general. The fifty years under consideration begin, appropriately, with Tree's *Julius Caesar* in January 1898—the first of his great Shakespearian spectacles at the newly built Her Majesty's, which for the next fourteen years was to take the place of the Lyceum as "a home for Shakespeare". Tree's productions varied considerably in scale and elaborateness, and contemporary criticism and recollection make it clear that while his public and the critics admired the great shows, such as *Julius Caesar*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Henry VIII*, they enjoyed even more the simpler but beautifully staged *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives*. These were the items in his repertoire which were most frequently revived, and which give a better idea of the general standard of good London production at the time. The staging of Forbes-Robertson's 1897 *Hamlet*, for example, or of Oscar Asche's 1906 *Measure for Measure*, though elaborate to us, should not be confused with Shakespearian spectacle: but George Alexander's second (and last) excursion into Shakespearian management with *Much Ado* in 1898 was elaborate even for its own time.

At Her Majesty's, Tree produced *Julius Caesar* (1898), *John* (1899), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1900), *Twelfth Night* (1901), *Merry Wives* (1902), *Richard II* (1903), *Tempest* (1904), *Much Ado* (1905), *Winter's Tale* (1906), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1907), *Merchant of Venice* (1908), *Henry VIII* (1910), and *Macbeth* (1911). The student who wishes to see for himself the amazing contrast between representative work of the English and German stages at the end of the first decade of the century will find in the *Stage Year Book* for 1910 and 1911 some typical photographs of current German productions in juxtaposition with two scenes from *Twelfth Night* as presented by Tree in Berlin. The bare, stripped style of the former, in which all superfluous detail has been eliminated, makes the latter look as if the cast must have been almost crowded off the stage by their realistic garden set, which includes the famous grass carpet so much admired by Odell. Even at their simplest, Tree's settings involved severe cutting of the text, and the transposing and telescoping of scenes: at their most elaborate they necessitated what must really be described as an abridged version, the cuts amounting to as much as a third of the play. Gordon Crosse (*Fifty Years of Shakespearian Playgoing*, 1940) recalls that on one occasion he timed the intervals while the sets were built up and found that forty-five minutes were lost in this way; and as an example of the way Tree played havoc with the texts cites his omission of the whole of Act v, Scene 2, in *The Winter's*

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

Tale—a vital piece of construction frequently cut as dull, which, as Granville-Barker demonstrated in 1912, was genuinely amusing if properly handled. Tree also lost playing time with his elaborately worked-up entrances and his invented stage-business.

It would be unfair to give the impression that all production previous to Granville-Barker was equally unscrupulous in its handling of the text; Forbes-Robertson's 1897 *Hamlet* will still stand comparison with any cut version. He was the best Hamlet of his time, and gave a rendering of the character which for beauty, grace and charm of manner, and nobility of spirit is still generally held by those who knew it to remain unsurpassed. His sound critical perception of the author's intention was never more triumphantly manifested, however, than in his restoration of the end of the play. Other star Hamlets had always ended it themselves with "The rest is silence": Forbes-Robertson, with the producer's more balanced instinct for total effect, restored the entry of Fortinbras, and though he omitted the English ambassador's announcement of the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and cut down Horatio's two speeches to one of three and a half lines, kept the concluding speech intact save for "such a sight as this Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss". Hamlet was then hoisted on to the shields of Fortinbras's soldiers, and borne slowly away—an extremely fine and effective piece of business invented by his brother Ian Robertson. Such independence of the traditional acting cuts was rare, however, and this particular restoration was still matter for debate when he staged his last revival in 1913.

How long, but for the war of 1914, the tradition of elaborate mounting would have held its own in the English theatre, in the face of modern Continental methods, it is impossible to say, but reading the notices of Tree's 1910 and 1911 productions one is aware that saturation point had already been reached; and that even without Granville-Barker's Savoy productions there would have been some kind of a reaction against spectacle. The stage had never seen anything more elaborate and gorgeous than Tree's 1910 *Henry VIII*: it was a great success and the talk of the town: the furniture, the costumes and the banqueting hall of Wolsey's palace had all been designed by Percy MacQuoid, an acknowledged authority: from the point of view of pageantry, as *The Times* allowed, he had done the thing as well as it could be done... and there was really nothing more anybody could say about it.

Then, in 1911, came *Macbeth*, with the bad old business of the singing witches, and all Tree's usual bits of invention. Gordon Crosse describes the elaborate episode of escorting Duncan to bed: "His train includes a harper, and there is singing which turns to a hymn as the king blesses the kneeling company. When the stage is empty the witches enter and indulge in a few malevolent cackles." The most significant comment, however, was the ironic tone of *The Times* review:

Beauty is the thing this revival aims at, first and last. There is nothing ugly in the representation—not even the witches.... The sleep-walking scene was a scene of beauty. Flights of steps zig-zagged precipitously from the base to the very top of the scene. Evidently in an incident of sleep-walking it is appropriate that the sleep-walker should really have some walking to do. Lady Macbeth went slowly up and up, always beautifully. There was beauty again in the banqueting scene, barbaric beauty (including a fierce dance of retainers), and even the ghost of Banquo was a beautiful ghost.... Of course, we were never shaken with terror. Terror (on the stage) has had its day.

FIFTY YEARS OF SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION

THE NEW SPIRIT AT WORK: HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER

The time was ripe for change when *The Times* could greet a well-mounted and not unduly spectacular *Macbeth* in this fashion. Not that the younger generation knocking at the door exactly a year later was to be allowed to get away at once with all its new ideas: it had to face prejudice and dislike, especially in theatrical circles, and some sharp banter in *The Times*. "It was bound to come", was the national organ's greeting to Granville-Barker's production of *The Winter's Tale* in September 1912:

Here, like it or lump it, is post-impressionist Shakespeare. . . the costumes are after Beardsley, and still more after Bakst: the busbies and caftans and deep-skirted tunics of the courtiers come from the Russian ballet, and the *bizarre* smocks and fal-lals of the merry-makers at the sheep-shearing come from the Chelsea Arts Club Ball. . . Squads of supers have symmetrical, automaton-like movements which show the influence of Sûmûrun. . . The Old Shepherd inhabits a model bungalow from the Ideal Home Exhibition, with Voysey windows.

The Bohemian peasants were described as "genuine Thomas Hardy", with dresses "superfluously, wantonly ugly"; but the final verdict was: "It is very startling and provocative and audacious, and on the whole we like it."

A month later, with practically the same company, *Twelfth Night*, with 'decoration' and costumes by Norman Wilkinson, was the success of the season. *The Tatler* hailed it as "a breath of fresh air over a world super-stuffy with the theatrical conventions of centuries". *The Referee* wrote in the same vein: "Mr Granville-Barker serenely continues his task of spring-cleaning Shakespeare and of dusting the stage of some of its close-clinging cobwebs of convention." *The Times* critic found it the most enjoyable performance of the play he had ever seen—an opinion still generally maintained by all who had the same good fortune. He praised its beauty of line, colour, posture and movement, while finding it "great fun" and rejoicing that the usual exaggerated playing had been abolished, so that Henry Ainley as Malvolio was quietly and reasonably Shakespeare's Malvolio. The pace of it was also commended: "The main thing about it is its 'go'. It goes, if we may use the word, slick, but not too fast."

Then, in February 1914, with again many of the same company, came the famous *Midsummer Night's Dream* of the golden fairies. If its predecessors had been provocative and original, this was sensational and called forth gibes and enthusiasm in almost equal measure. "Artistically disappointing" was the verdict of *The Manchester Guardian*: "decadent" and "Barkerized Shakespeare" were two of the milder descriptions. Once again, however, the historian of the theatre will be well advised to refer to *The Times* review with which the late Harold Child completed his triad of judicious notices of this birth of modern English Shakespearian production. It is a fine piece of critical writing, and captures for those who did not see it the atmosphere and enchantment of that fabulous evening which held the first-night audience spellbound, to break, at last, into overwhelming enthusiasm. "The mind goes back to the golden fairies, and one's memories of this production must always be golden memories."

Whether the golden fairies were an inspiration, as Harold Child thought, or whether they were as ugly as others alleged, the methods employed by Barker in the staging of these three plays were revolutionary in England, even if they admittedly derived more than a hint from

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

what had already become the commonplaces of the German theatre. His arrangement of the stage was very similar to the average simplified Shakespearian setting already popular abroad. A false proscenium, fixed in the actual arch, reduced the depth and width of the stage proper, which was then raised by the height of a couple of steps and thus provided an acting area which could be used for set or furnished scenes in much the same way as the Elizabethan inner- or rear-stage but was at once larger and more useful. The front of the stage and the portion actually spanned by the arch made a wider but shallow middle acting area, at a lower level; and this was enlarged, again at a slightly lower level, by having an apron built out over the orchestra pit. Proscenium doors (restored) gave entry to the middle and down-stage areas: set speeches were delivered from the very edge of the stage directly to the audience. The footlights were abolished and the forward areas lighted from the front of the dress-circle by what *The Times* notice calls "search-lamps converging on the stage".

The general plan of the *décor* was the same in all three productions, and before the first Barker, in a letter to the *Daily Mail*, had explained his aims and paid tribute to Gordon Craig for having opened his eyes to the real beauty and dignity of 'stage decoration' and freed him from reliance upon the "stuffy, fussy, thick-bedaubed canvas" of the traditional nineteenth-century scenery. In each case only two main scenes were used, varied when necessary by painted curtains decorated with formalized designs or formal patterns. For the first part of *The Winter's Tale* the setting was "a simple harmony of white pilasters and dead-gold curtains": for *Twelfth Night* a formalized Elizabethan garden and a simple formal design of gates and walls were used. The wood near Athens and the Palace of Theseus were the two set scenes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the former had "very tall, draped curtains for a background, of greens, blues, violets and purples, changing much in tone according to the lights played upon them", and the floor was covered with a "very rough green velvety material, swelling to a hillock in the centre, on which are white spots indicating flowers" (*Westminster Gazette*). Over the hillock was suspended "a giant wreath of flowers from which depends a light gauze canopy in which fire-flies and glow-worms flicker" (*Evening News*). The *Telegraph* describes the palace as "a place of massive white columns with black decorations and a background of star-spangled black yielding to glimpses of a reddish-purple".

Granville-Barker presented unabridged texts. For this to be possible, in what was, after all, an evening's entertainment and not a test of scholarly endurance, the whole tempo of production had to be speeded-up. The methods he employed have given the present-day producer his ABC of Shakespearian stage-craft. He allowed only one break in the action: having learnt from William Poel "how swift and passionate a thing, how beautiful in its variety, Elizabethan blank verse might be when tongues were trained to speak and ears acute to hear it", he insisted on a much more rapid delivery than was usual in Shakespearian playing, and helped his actors by bringing them into closer contact with their audience for the set speeches; and finally he created physical conditions which gave him facilities similar to those of the Elizabethan playhouse for uninterrupted transition from scene to scene. Other precious minutes were saved by his ruthless excision of bits of traditional business and clowning; and H. M. Walbrook in the *Pall Mall Gazette* singled out for praise the straight performances of Bottom and his fellows, expressing the hope that this would "set up a new standard for the English stage, and that the old depressing imbecilities sacred to 'acting versions' have at last and forever been swept away".