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978-0-521-51552-8 - Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance

Edited by Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan

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SHAKESPEARE IN ASIA: CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

Addressing both theoretical and practical questions surrounding Shakespeare in contemporary Asia, this book asks why Shakespeare has been of use in these vast regions of the world that have no need to call on him. By investigating some of the ways Shakespeare has been reinvented and deployed, the study notes the differences between standard western approaches and those that can be seen in Japan, China, India, and Southeast Asia. The contributors come from a wide variety of backgrounds and traditions, West and East, and present distinctive, and sometimes conflicting, views on topics as diverse as speaking Shakespeare in Japanese, the importation and exportation of Shakespeare in Asia and the uses of the English national poet in Indian film and Japanese popular culture. The debates which occur within the book highlight the diversity of production and reception for the world's most popular playwright, whose work is now global cultural capital.

DENNIS KENNEDY is Beckett Professor of Drama Emeritus in Trinity College Dublin.

YONG LI LAN is associate professor and coordinator of the Theatre Studies Programme, National University of Singapore.

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Preface

The aim of this collection is to expand theoretical and functional discussion about the condition and significance of Shakespeare performance in contemporary Asia. As we explain in the introduction, we do not pretend to a comprehensive view of the topic, or allot an equivalent number of essays to competing regions, or suggest that our examples are necessarily representative of national or international trends. Any such approaches would distort the topic, given the size of Asia and the diversity of approaches to Shakespeare and performance found there. Instead we have tried to focus attention on why Shakespeare has been of use in an area of the world that has no inherent reason to call on him, investigating some of the ways his work has been reinvented and deployed. Inside of that general principle, the essayists – who come from a variety of backgrounds, countries, and linguistic traditions – have been encouraged to offer their own views, even when they challenge or contradict one another. Rather than force the chapters into a single theoretical position we have encouraged divergent opinions, since they are indicative of the substantially different cultural histories and positions through which people approach Asian handling of Shakespeare, interculturalism, and the use of the ‘foreign’ in performance. For example, the book is framed by opposing approaches: after our introduction, John Russell Brown takes a position that is disputed by Rustom Bharucha in the final chapter. Li Ruru’s view of the work of the Chinese director Lin Zhaohua is substantially different to that of Shen Lin’s later in the collection, while the significance and value of intercultural performance is argued a number of times from divergent standpoints.

We have taken a broad view of what constitutes performance of Shakespeare, incorporating into the book examples of cinema, Japanese Shojo Manga (comic books for girls), as well as live theatre work of many types, from Beijing Opera and verse recital to avant-garde performance and popular musical comedy.

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Preface

Regarding proper names, we have maintained the order customary in the country or language concerned. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are romanized with the family name first followed without comma by the given name or names, even if the person sometimes reverses this order when working in the West: thus we write Ninagawa Yukio, Gao Xingjian, Wu Hsing-Kuo. To be clear about the names of our essayists, we have capitalized their family names in the list of contributors.

We are grateful to a number of people and institutions for help. We particularly thank Thomas Rimer for advice and Trinity College Dublin for travel and research funds over some time. Grants from the Shaw Foundation, the Lee Foundation, and the National University of Singapore (Research Project R-103-000-027-112), together with the invaluable help of Marcus Tan, enabled us to host the preparatory workshop 'Shakespeare Performance in the New Asias' at that institution. At Cambridge University Press we are indebted to the persistently encouraging Sarah Stanton.

Three of these essays have appeared before in different versions, chapter 2 in *New Theatre Quarterly* 21 (2005), chapter 4 in *TDR* 50 (2006), and chapter 11 in *Theatre Journal* 56 (2004).