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978-0-521-63975-0 - The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film

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Film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays are increasingly popular and now figure prominently in the study of his work and its reception. This lively Companion is a collection of critical and historical essays on the films adapted from, and inspired by, Shakespeare's plays. An international team of leading scholars discuss Shakespearean films from a variety of perspectives: as works of art in their own right; as products of the international movie industry; in terms of cinematic and theatrical genres; and as the work of particular directors from Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles to Franco Zeffirelli and Kenneth Branagh. They also consider specific issues such as the portrayal of Shakespeare's women and the supernatural. The emphasis is on feature films for cinema, rather than television, with strong coverage of *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*. A guide to further reading and a useful filmography are also provided.

RUSSELL JACKSON is Reader in Shakespeare Studies and Deputy Director of the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham. He has worked as a textual adviser on several feature films including *Shakespeare in Love* and Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. He is co-editor of *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History* (1996) and two volumes in the *Players of Shakespeare* series. He has also edited Oscar Wilde's plays.

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PREFACE

At the end of the medium's first century, the cinematic repertoire had accumulated a fair number of films derived from (or inspired by) Shakespeare's works, and 'Shakespeare on Film' figures prominently in academic study of the dramatist's work and its reception. The essays in this *Companion* represent a diversity of approaches and responses to this lively topic. The primary emphasis is on feature films – made on celluloid stock and intended primarily for theatrical distribution – rather than television or video productions. (The shifting relationships between the dominant audio-visual media are discussed in the essays by Michèle Willems and Barbara Freedman.) The films are considered as artistic achievements in themselves; in terms of the economics of the entertainment industry; in relation to film and dramatic genre; in the context of studies of the director as *auteur*; and with regard to broader issues of cultural politics. In this *Companion* several films and plays are considered by different contributors from different points of view: in particular, the various films of *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* reappear in a variety of contexts.

As 'text adviser' I myself have had a hand or (in the words of the Elizabethan playwright Thomas Heywood) at least a main finger in a number of recent Shakespeare films, particularly those of Kenneth Branagh. As editor of this volume, I have not attempted to influence or alter the contributors' responses to them.

R.J., Stratford-upon-Avon

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