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978-0-521-79295-0 - The Cambridge Companion to: Shakespeare on Stage

Edited by Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton

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## The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage

This Companion is designed for readers interested in past and present productions of Shakespeare's plays, both in and beyond Britain. The first six chapters describe aspects of the British performing tradition in chronological sequence, from the early stagings of Shakespeare's own time through to the present day. Each relates Shakespearean developments to broader cultural concerns and adopts an individual approach and focus, be it on textual adaptation, acting, stages, scenery or theatre management. These chapters are followed by three explorations of acting: tragic and comic actors and women performers of Shakespearean roles. A section on international performance includes chapters on interculturalism, on touring companies and on political theatre, with separate accounts of the performing traditions of North America, Asia and Africa. Over forty pictures illustrate performers and productions of Shakespeare from around the world. An amalgamated list of items for further reading completes the book.

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THE CAMBRIDGE  
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EDITED BY

STANLEY WELLS

*Chairman, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust*

and

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## PREFACE

This *Companion* is designed for readers interested in past and present productions of the plays and to accompany the increasing number of courses devoted to the history of Shakespeare in performance. It joins other volumes in the series, developing one key aspect of the *Companion to Shakespeare* (edited by Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells) and complementing the *Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (edited by Russell Jackson).

The book addresses both British and international performance. While coverage cannot hope to be exhaustive, the first six chapters describe aspects of the British performing tradition in chronological sequence, from the early stagings of Shakespeare's own time, through the Restoration and eighteenth century, the Romantic and Victorian periods, bringing the reader up to the present via developments in the twentieth century. But this is by no means a uniform narrative: authors have been chosen for their expertise in a particular period; each has related Shakespearean developments to broader cultural concerns and, where relevant, to developments outside the UK; each has adopted an individual approach and focus, be it on textual adaptation, acting, stages, scenery or theatre management.

Following the chronological chapters is a sequence of three which explore aspects of tragic and comic acting and the subject of women performers of Shakespearean roles. The latter part of the book considers international performance, beginning with a chapter on the issue of interculturalism, appropriation and the translation of Shakespeare's plays into other languages. This is followed by an account of the phenomenon of national and international touring companies from Elizabethan times to the present. Geographical coverage of performance outside Britain is necessarily selective, but focuses on those countries or regions that have a continuous and/or highly distinctive history of performing Shakespeare, sometimes developing styles which have themselves fed back into the English idiom. Productions of Shakespeare in Germany, Eastern Europe and South Africa offer examples of the adaptation of Shakespeare plays to political ends; chapters on North American, Asian

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and African stagings provide distinct accounts of how Shakespeare has been assimilated into vastly different cultural and national traditions.

Throughout the book we have interpreted ‘Shakespeare on stage’ to mean spoken performances of the plays rather than operas or musicals, though the distinction becomes blurred at times, especially in the sections on Asian and African performance.

At the end of the book is an amalgamated list of items for further reading. This begins with references to books in the general area of Shakespearean stage history and proceeds to a set of miniature bibliographies arranged according to the chapter titles.

Quotations from Shakespeare’s plays are from volumes in the New Cambridge Shakespeare, where published, and from the Oxford *Complete Works* in other cases.

The selection of pictures is intended truly to illustrate and not merely to decorate the points being made in the text. In this respect, our thanks go to the sources listed for their permission to reproduce items from their collections, and especially to Michael Morrison, whose generous provision of prints from his own collection has enabled us to double the quantity we would otherwise have afforded.

Publishing a book, like staging a play, is a team effort and we have been fortunate in our collaborators. The contributors to this volume have been an inspiration. We have also had invaluable help from Hilary Hammond (copyeditor), Juliet Stanton (proofreader) and Kate Welch (indexer). Our Press editor, Vicki Cooper, has supported us throughout with enthusiasm, tact and tolerance. Both of us, in different ways, have been involved with CUP over many years and colleagues there have, as always, been a pleasure to work with.

SS  
SW