

‘THINK WHEN WE TALK OF HORSES . . .’

GREGORY DORAN

I sometimes think Shakespeare’s favourite word is ‘**Now**’!

It creates excitement and tension and insists on the vivid present; it demands the immediate.

‘**Now** all the youth of England are on fire’ says the Chorus of *Henry V* and ‘For **now** sits Expectation in the air’.

‘**Now**’ takes you right into the moment and coincides our experience of the present with the action on stage.

‘**Now** is the winter of our discontent’ announces the soon-to-be King Richard III as he launches himself into the chaos of his rise to power.

‘**Now** I am alone’ says Hamlet.

‘**Now** might I do it, pat, **now** while he is a praying’.

‘**Now**, Gods stand up for bastards’ says Edmund in *King Lear*, the play I am rehearsing at the moment.

‘**Now** the hungry lion roars’ whispers Puck.

‘I feel **now** the future in the instant’ urges Lady Macbeth.

And Iago wakes up Desdemona’s father yelling ‘Even **now, now, very now**, an old black ram / Is tugging your white ewe’.

With that potent short monosyllable ‘**Now**’, Shakespeare pulls his audience into an act of complicity with the performers, a magical, alchemical reaction, a charm which happens even now, now, very now, and lasts for the two hours’ traffic of the stage.

Shakespeare’s theatre, any theatre, is surely the home of ‘now’.

That ephemerality is part of its charm. The baseless fabric of a vision which melts into air, into thin air – an insubstantial pageant, which like the great Globe itself will dissolve, and leave not a wrack behind.

It is transitory: ‘a dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy’; ‘as brief as the lightning in the collied night’, as brief as Macbeth’s candle which reminds him that life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more.

Until now.

When I was appointed as artistic director, we started a journey through the entire canon of Shakespeare’s plays in this space, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, beginning with *Richard II* in October 2013, and we have filmed each one of them, broadcasting them live into cinemas around the country and indeed around the world. We also stream the productions for free into schools, providing teachers with a toolkit to help them introduce the plays to their pupils.

And what we are striving to achieve is perhaps the hardest thing to capture – Shakespeare’s ‘now, now, very now-ness’ on screen.

We are currently a third of the way through the canon (with *King Lear* next on the slate) and I am very proud of our back catalogue of productions (which are all available on DVD).

This is the text of the first plenary session of the 2016 World Shakespeare Congress in Stratford-upon-Avon, delivered on Monday 1 August

GREGORY DORAN

I have spent the last twenty years of my career, on and off, exploring how to capture stage productions on screen, either as a good archive recording or as something else, as something re-conceived for the small screen, which can preserve the text and still grip the viewer.

I am not the first director at Stratford to want to record productions for posterity, and I'd like to consider some of those widely differing instincts, and perhaps try to analyse what they tell us.

[EXTRACT ONE: *Henry V*, opening Chorus. The first extract shown during the plenary session was of Oliver Ford Davies as the Chorus in my own recent production of *Henry V*.]

The Chorus begins by admitting the inadequacy of the resources at the theatre's disposal to create the events leading up to the Battle of Agincourt. He begs our indulgence, and our complicity, if we will allow the actors to work on our 'imaginary forces'. It won't work without that, 'for 'tis your thoughts which now must deck our kings' he says, and then he gets down to specifics:

Think when we talk of horses that you see them,
 Printing their proud hooves i' th' receiving earth

And here's the challenge that confronts anyone attempting to translate Shakespeare onto the screen. Essentially, on film, we expect to see horses, and are reluctant to accept anything less or to fill in the gaps with our own imagination, and certainly not to 'work, work [our] thoughts' to create them. For the image not the word is the medium of film.

So if you have horses, you don't need any of the words Shakespeare uses to describe them. But what words! Here is the observant French Lord Grandpre describing the ragged English cavalry drawn up for battle. Listen to how he closes in on the scene, from the horses' eyes to the tackle in their mouths – a final devastating detail:

The horsemen sit like fixèd candlesticks,
 With torch-staves in their hand, and their poor jades
 Lob down their heads, dropping the hides and hips,
 The gum down-roping from their pale dead eyes
 And in their palled dull mouths the gimmaled bit
 Lies foul with chewed grass, still and motionless.

Indeed, often in rehearsal we talk about how Shakespeare's speeches act like a camera script. Listen to the Chorus calling the shots as the fleet sets sail from Hampton Pier. He focuses on the silken banners, a close-up of the ship boys clambering up the hempen tackle, the shipmaster's whistle, then the wide shot as the sails fill and the huge ships pull out to sea. Cut to the view from the cliff top of the whole fleet like a 'city on the inconstant billows dancing'.

And Shakespeare uses this technique again in *King Lear*. Edgar, describing the imaginary cliff at Dover, moves from 'the crows and choughs that wing the midway air' to the samphire gatherer (dreadful trade) half way down, to the fishermen way below on the beach.

Shakespeare pre-dates film. He works in images which he gets you, his audience, to supply, to imagine in your heads. And that is an active live interaction, or what we call a play.

Shouldn't we leave plays then to be a memory in the minds of our audiences?

Well, I can only tell you, this is nothing new. It stretches back over a century here in Stratford. The first attempt to capture Shakespeare productions goes back to 1911. It starts with the indomitable actor-manager Frank Benson. Benson signed a contract with the Co-operative Cinematograph Company to film a series of four of his productions: *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard III*.

Veteran actress Eleanor Elder described the filming of *Julius Caesar* in her diary. Her account gives some insight into the performances captured in those short reels, and indicates that the emphatic acting style may not precisely represent the way it was in the theatre itself.

Benson, known affectionately as 'Pa' by the company, was directing the proceedings from the stalls.

Of course everything has to be changed: business quickened and a lot of talk left out altogether. Our instructions are to put plenty of movement into it – to keep within certain lines drawn on the stage; and to do as we are told, and to obey orders shouted at us without being disturbed, or letting it affect our acting. We shall be muddled when we go back to the play proper.

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We have done Caesar, a most trying performance. We rehearse everything before we play it. Weird sights we are too – eyelashes and lips made up, and a little rouge. Awful blinding mauve light flickers at us all the time. The flying, hurried way we got through it was quite funny; and the language too (‘Give your cue and get off’). Cassius exclaimed ‘Good gracious, Hullo!’

When egged on to murder Caesar, Brutus made his exit saying: ‘I can’t do it. You beasts!’

Pa was yelling ‘Good!’ or ‘Buck up! do this!’.¹

Sadly only *Richard III* survives. It reveals Benson’s flamboyant performance as Richard, a part he had played regularly since 1886. It was recorded in the original 1879 Memorial Theatre, which burnt down in 1926. The Swan Theatre now stands in the shell of that original building.

[EXTRACT TWO: the second extract shown was of Frank Benson as Richard III.]

After Benson’s *Richard III*, we have a very large gap in any recorded productions from Stratford. The next foray into the filming of Shakespeare performance came in the star-studded Stratford of the 1950s when the new medium of television decided it needed a bit of culture direct from Stratford and arranged to live broadcast a production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It does not appear to have been recorded, so the earliest surviving version was sourced from a relay of the second half. It was screened on 2 October 1955.

[EXTRACT THREE: *Merry Wives of Windsor*. A very rare clip from Glen Byam Shaw’s famous Stratford production, with his wife Angela Baddeley as Mistress Page, Joyce Redman as Mistress Ford and Anthony Quayle (who was running the company at the time) as Sir John Falstaff.]

That, as far as we know, is the only other filmed recording of a Stratford production before 1959. There were of course sound recordings made for archive purposes only, which recently came to light, and which I collected together in two double CD sets called *Essential Shakespeare*. If you haven’t heard these British Library sound Archive recordings, I urge you to do so, for you hear Laurence Olivier viperous as Coriolanus and a sonorous Paul Robeson as Othello.

Then in 1959 came a production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which was filmed on three cameras for American television in the theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. It starred Charles Laughton (in one of his final stage performances) as Nick Bottom, and he introduces the film by taking his viewers around Stratford (which looks remarkably similar to today) and even goes for a row on the Avon before heading into his dressing room and handing over to the director, a young Peter Hall, at the back of the stalls to introduce the production, as if it is about to happen live right before you. Watching it over five decades later, I still found myself excited by the sense of occasion, of something special about to happen, and it’s something I have tried to capture in the presentation of our *Live from* productions today.

In fact, the production was not live, but filmed on stage over several days, and interwoven with audience reaction shots.

But by the time the company gained its royal charter in 1961 and became the Royal Shakespeare Company, with Peter Hall as its director, there was renewed interest in filming productions, and a new relationship with the BBC.

Hall obviously caught the filming bug, because when he and John Barton mounted *The Wars of the Roses* (the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* shaped into three parts), he committed them to film. It was a project of massive ambition. Even though the BBC had filmed their own version of the Histories in fifteen episodes in 1960, screened as *An Age of Kings*, they committed to this new cycle. The BBC’s Michael Bakewell wrote: ‘what was intended was to recreate a theatre production in television terms – not merely to observe it but to get to the heart of it’.

The productions again were filmed in this very theatre, but the stalls were boarded over to create a 360-degree studio space. They were landmark productions that defined the company’s renewed emphasis on verse speaking and an unsentimental performance style.

¹ J. C. Trewin, *Benson and the Bensonious* (London, 1960), p. 176.

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[EXTRACT FOUR: from *The Wars of the Roses: Richard III*, recorded in SMT in 1964. A clip from the wooing scene from *Richard III*, with Ian Holm, and Janet Suzman as Anne.]

We are fortunate that both *An Age of Kings* and *The Wars of the Roses* has been made available on DVD by John Wyver and his company Illuminations, of which more later.

Peter Hall then made another film (a ‘proper’ film) of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (in 1968) in the grounds of nearby Compton Verney, with Judi Dench as Titania, naked but for a few ivy leaves and some green paint. The film may never have achieved classic status, but it does start with a good joke. The opening shot shows a pleasant English landscape and over this the caption ‘Athens’ appears, neatly underlining the essential artificiality of Shakespeare’s world and the challenge of recreating it in literal terms.

Two other productions from Hall’s era were filmed: *As You Like It* (in 1963) directed by Michael Elliot, and Clifford Williams’s production of *The Comedy of Errors*. *As You Like It* reproduces the stage set in a studio, while the stripped back *Comedy of Errors* is filmed in front of a live audience at the Aldwych.

[EXTRACT FIVE: *As You Like It*. Vanessa Redgrave’s startlingly fresh performance as Rosalind, breathless with love.]

Hall’s successor Trevor Nunn was an avid advocate of filmed versions of his Shakespeare productions. He began with *Antony and Cleopatra*, one of the plays from the 1972 Roman season, with his then wife Janet Suzman as Cleopatra and Richard Johnson as Mark Antony. The design is clearly influenced by the extraordinary excitement around the blockbuster exhibition at the British Museum of the Egyptian boy-king Tutankhamun, which opened that year.

In 1976 Nunn had explored Shakespeare in the new studio environment of The Other Place in Stratford, which had opened in an old tin shed (once part of the costume store), and already seen some revelatory productions by Buzz Goodbody of *Hamlet* with Ben Kingsley and *King Lear*. Ian

McKellen and Judi Dench wanted to do *Macbeth* in this exciting new space, and what resulted was a now legendary stripped-down production of that play which explored its claustrophobic intimacy as never before. The production was subsequently filmed in studio, exploiting techniques impossible to employ in the theatre, with much use of close-up and whispering to the camera.

Another show which became a box office smash was Trevor’s production of Guy Woolfenden’s musical version of *The Comedy of Errors*, with Judi Dench, Michael Williams and Roger Rees. And again, that was filmed on stage by ATV.

Trevor was asked to return to direct the final performance in TOP in 1989, before its redevelopment. The production was *Othello* with Willard White as the Moor and Ian McKellen again as Iago. Trevor’s own personal style, which inclined to the naturalistic with realistic settings and detailed props, lent itself to this method of filming.

Meanwhile McKellen’s success at the National Theatre with *Richard III* had inspired him to lead the drive towards making a film of that play in 1995, having learnt greatly from the experience of playing it. Just as Kenneth Branagh had learnt about the play *Henry V* from playing the lead role in Adrian Noble’s 1984 brilliant production of the play, an experience he put to good, if uncredited, use in his own film of the play five years later in 1989.

McKellen and Nunn were reunited in 2006 to create a *King Lear* for the RSC’s Complete Works Festival. The production was filmed for TV and stands as a good archive recording of the production.

TERRY HANDS

It was perhaps Trevor Nunn’s growing preference for realism that prompted his successor as artistic director, Terry Hands, to explore a more abstract, less literal, more European style with his designer Abdel Farrah and regular leading actor Alan Howard. And this may account for their apparent lack of interest in committing their many great productions to film.

When I asked Terry Hands himself about this, he said with his typical cryptic wit: ‘At the time we

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did talk of Michelangelo’s greatest statue being the one he carved in ice.’

Vasari mentions the story of how one day in January 1494 it snowed heavily in Florence and Piero de Medici asked the eighteen-year-old Michelangelo to carve a statue in the snow, in the courtyard of his Palazzo. The reputation for the ice statue’s brilliance was only enhanced by its evanescence.

Perhaps the real reason that so few of Terry’s productions were filmed was that RSC leading actors such as Ian Richardson, Helen Mirren and Alan Howard were not thought to have the commercial clout then, and the BBC were engaged in their own filming of the canon, which Terry admits he and his colleagues at Stratford regarded with some disdain. Whatever the reason, as Terry himself mourns, ‘we lost Mark Rylance’s Hamlet, Ian Richardson’s Ford, Helen Mirren’s Queen Margaret, and David Suchet’s Iago’.

The production most frequently requested and most disappointingly not available from Terry’s regime is Bill Alexander’s 1984 production of *Richard III* with Antony Sher. I know. I never saw it myself. I wish I had, as I am now married to him!

It is worth noting that Terry did achieve a wonderful TV version of *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Derek Jacobi. But, personally, I regret the lack of a record of his Shakespeare productions. As a teenager, I watched their entire History cycle, in which Alan Howard played all the major kings bar Henry IV, and an acclaimed Coriolanus. We have sound recordings of all these productions, lodged (and available to listen to) at the British Library, but I wish I were able to see some of those memorable moments to refresh my memory of them: Falstaff greeting and being rejected by an almost automaton, robotic, gilded, armour-clad King Henry in the snow at the end of *Henry IV Part Two*; or Caius Martius suspended over the gates of Corioles.

I don’t believe these productions were just ice statues that my teenage memory has crystalized into great ones.

BROOK’S DREAM

Alan Howard appeared as Oberon in perhaps the most famous RSC production of the twentieth century: Peter Brook’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in 1970. Brook, it seems, never allowed this production to be filmed, so for those of us not lucky enough to see this historic, game-changing production, we can only read the reviews, and many accounts of those that did, or pore over photographs and the extended promptbook which was produced, and wonder what it was like. I have talked to a lot of the actors in that production, and worked with many of them: Alan Howard himself, Patrick Stewart, Sarah Kestelman, John Kane and Barry Stanton. And I know how extraordinary the rehearsals were too. But does the lack of filmed evidence of the production diminish or indeed enhance its reputation?

In fact, there are a few minutes of film available which give a taste of the production, but in the mythology that surrounds Brook’s *Dream* there is also tell of a film of the entire production, and tantalizing clues to its whereabouts. Apparently filmed while the production was in Japan, no doubt it will turn up someday.

But why did Brook not allow the production to be filmed? I suspect the answer is simple and celebrates the uniqueness and specialness of the production as a theatre event that exists only when it is alive and happens only between the live audience and the moment of the words creating that particular magic. And to render it in film would be to kill it. It’s a production whose revolutionary boldness and its influence may perhaps be inflated by its disappearance into air, into thin air, but it was certainly a production which re-defined now-ness.

Peter Brook was of course not averse to filming Shakespeare productions. After the stage success of *Dream*, he filmed his famous 1962 production of *Lear* at Stratford, a decade later, on location in the desolate, frozen landscapes of Jutland in Denmark. And of course he cut the play quite ruthlessly, for which he received a deal of criticism.

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But Brook put his finger on the challenges of transferring Shakespeare onto film. ‘The problem of filming Shakespeare’, he said, ‘is one of finding ways of shifting gears, styles and conventions lightly and deftly on the screen as within the mental processes’ inside a person, which can be reflected by blank verse but not by the screen’s ‘consistency within each single image.’²

So film is too literal: or Shakespeare is too abstract for film. He suits the bare stage where the mind contributes what is missing, enhancing the words and limited only by the capacity of the audience’s imaginations.

ADRIAN NOBLE

If Terry Hands seemed not to be interested in the potential of filming the productions from his regime, his successor Adrian Noble was, although he made only one film, and again it was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the third Stratford *Dream* to be committed to celluloid. Adrian attempted to realize the success of his own 1994 stage production and re-conceived the play for film, rather than merely recording his production.

Adrian himself distinguished the central challenge of the exercise: that on stage you have to appeal to the ear, but on film the principal sense you are appealing to is the eye.

He suggested that people love words less these days, that they don’t have the love and relish of language that they used to have, and he said ‘If you lose words you lose a lot in life.’ Nevertheless, and perhaps inevitably, the text of this *Dream* was radically cut, in particular the lovers’ scenes.

Adrian also made the point that on stage the narrative works in a linear fashion, whereas on film it works more vertically like airplanes stacking up waiting to land at Heathrow, each of the plots needs to be kept alive by more regularly revisiting them, which meant that in the edit suite he had to chop and cut back between scenes much more frequently than Shakespeare does or than we need to on stage.

He also found certain scenes that he had already shot in the film studio were redundant by the time he came to the edit suite.

MY OWN JOURNEY

My own journey in exploring how to transfer stage productions onto the small screen began in 1995 when I directed my partner, Antony Sher, in *Titus Andronicus* at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, in just post-apartheid South Africa. The production was an event, as it marked Tony’s first ever return to the country of his birth, and so like Titus, he came ‘bound with laurel boughs to re-salute his country’.

We filmed the production for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) with six cameras over three performances and a day of pick-ups in the theatre. The result is, again, a good archive of the production.

The same could be said of an RSC production of *The Winter’s Tale* that we did in 1999 with Heritage Theatre filmed at the Barbican. It is a worthy archive of the experience of watching the production in the theatre, but somehow a second-hand one. It somehow remains inert.

What do I mean by that? Well, by capturing the wide picture of the event it somehow failed to allow you to participate. You somehow felt outside looking in. And it did not solve the problem of scale. When the camera went in on a close-up of Tony Sher as Leontes delivering one of his blistering rages and projecting to the back row (Row T) of the Barbican Theatre, it felt uncannily like that dizzying dolly zoom shot in *Jaws* where the camera simultaneously zooms in and pans out on Roy Scheider seeing the shark for the first time.

We wanted to capture the live-ness of the event but somehow only caught its past-ness. So in our next venture we tried something different. In 1999 we did a production of *Macbeth* in the Swan Theatre, which subsequently toured to Japan and the United States. *Macbeth* is said to be a cursed play. It isn’t: it’s just that it’s very hard to do, to manage to reach the audience’s own imaginative experience of the play. But we were

² Peter Brook, ‘Finding Shakespeare on Film’, TDR 11 (1966), 117–21; 120.

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lucky and the production was lauded in the press as the best since Trevor Nunn’s a quarter of a century before.

During our final performances at the Young Vic in London, the then Culture Secretary Chris Smith came to see the production, and in an unprecedented move, phoned Michael Jackson, chief executive of Channel 4, suggesting that it was vital that they found a way of producing a film of this particular production. I guess perhaps because it caught something of the ‘now now very nowness’ of the moment.

John Wyver, director of a media company called Illuminations, came on board. They had filmed Deborah Warner’s *Richard II* with Fiona Shaw in 1997, and had just produced a BBC film of Phyllida Lloyd’s production of the Benjamin Britten opera *Gloriana* for Opera North with Josephine Barstow as Queen Elizabeth. John and I discussed how to capture the excitement of watching that *Macbeth* in the theatre, the relentless hold it has upon you, the sense of being trapped in the same room with a couple planning murder, the spontaneity, the feeling you have that it is unfolding in real time before your eyes, and you could stop it if you wanted. Your presence in the same space is crucial and, without you, the play would not happen. With film, it’s different. If you watch it or not, it has no impact on the action. It continues if you leave the room. A play you feel does not. The question is simple: how can you begin to reproduce that sheer immediacy in a medium as fixed as film?

I also wanted to let the words do it. Most film adaptations of Shakespeare inevitably cut large portions of the text. They have horses, if you like, and therefore don’t need to describe them. I wanted to keep a larger portion of the text, and lessen the irrelevant detail of the play’s setting, to find a vivid neutrality that would not draw attention to itself.

Eventually we decided upon the Round House in Chalk Farm to film the production. The venue, built in 1846, had once been a railway engine shed. It housed a turntable for manually turning round the trains, and the undercroft, a series of brick wall spokes on a supporting wheel underpinning that

turntable, provided wonderful film locations, with rooms whose walls apparently receded into nothing.

Macbeth is, in many ways, the most filmic of Shakespeare’s plays with its short, quick-fire scenes and its hurtling, dynamic momentum. In the film I tried to capture its raw energy and dangerous intimacy. I wanted a technique that would echo the jerky attempts of a film cameraman in a war zone trying to capture events as they unfolded. Our director of photography, and cameraman, Ernie Vincze, chose to film virtually the entire play on a single handheld camera, giving the action a sense of giddy immediacy and edgy unpredictability, borrowing techniques of fly-on-the-wall documentaries, which I felt echoed the experience of watching the play in the theatre.

[EXTRACT SIX: *Macbeth* 1999.]

Our last day of filming coincided with the anniversary of our first day of rehearsal. Harriet Walter, playing Lady Macbeth, said to me that, if I had asked her to play Lady M for a – whole year, she would probably have declined the offer, but because it grew organically from the production, to the world tour, to the filming, it had flown by.

My own feeling was that the whole year’s acquaintance with the play had allowed the performances to reach a sort of depth and visceral comprehension of the play, which is rare in other filming situations, where the actors are lucky if they get a few days’ rehearsal to acquaint them with the extremity of feeling which Shakespeare requires of his characters. The actors could breathe the language and could reproduce it wherever I asked them to play the scene, which in one case meant Harriet playing part of the letter scene submerged in a bath.

That production had a modest budget. In fact we joked at the time that we had less time and less money to make our film of *Macbeth* than Orson Welles had when he filmed his *Macbeth* in 1947 (he had twenty-three days to shoot, and \$700,000) – our Channel 4 budget was £450,000 and we shot it in twelve days. That’s a pretty staggering ten minutes of screen time per day!

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HAMLET

In 2008 the RSC, now under Michael Boyd's artistic directorship, was approached (via John Wyver) to do the first-ever live broadcast of a theatre production to cinemas across the globe with my production of *Hamlet* with David Tennant and Patrick Stewart. The Met in New York had pioneered this idea with their opera productions but nobody had by then tried to capture and simultaneously broadcast a theatre production.

For a variety of reasons, including nervousness on the part of some of the actors (it's fine fluffing the odd line in front of a thousand people one night, but in front of the whole world?), we did not go ahead with that proposal, and indeed the National Theatre successfully ran with the proposal and have been doing so since *Phedre* with Helen Mirren in 2009. In fact I am glad we did not do a live relay of that particular production, as we then got the chance to film it for BBC2. Again we chose to film it in a single location and wanted to find a venue which captured the vivid neutrality of the Roundhouse. Eventually we alighted on a derelict Jesuit Seminary in Mill Hill, North London.

I am very proud of our film of *Hamlet*, but here's an interesting thought. When listening to the archive sound recording of the stage production, recorded during the run in Stratford, I was reminded just how many laughs there were. David Tennant (playing Hamlet) and I had both noticed the line when the young prince says 'I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth.' Might not the line imply that, at one time, Hamlet was indeed a funny guy? And David's performance elicited wonderful sardonic humour from the prince. The scene where Hamlet mercilessly teases Polonius or his banter with that callow pair Rosencrantz and Guildenstern set the audience on a roar in the theatre. But of course, because the film has no live dimension, this humour is not immediately evident in the film version of the same production. The wit in David's performance as Richard II, the

first of our *Live from Stratford-upon-Avon* broadcasts, gives ample testimony to the humour in the role, and in the play, because it is amplified by having a live audience share the humour, which is shared in turn with the cinema audience.

JULIUS CAESAR

Our next foray into capturing stage productions on film was a mixture both of re-conceiving the play for a different medium (filming it in a different location) and of recording performance live in this theatre. In 2012, to coincide with the London Olympics, I did a production of *Julius Caesar* for the Olympic Shakespeare Festival. The BBC were keen to film the production but wanted it ready before we had completed its run in Stratford. So we hit upon a novel solution. The play is divided between the public and the private scenes, the backstage plotting and the presentational forum scenes. So we would film the private scenes first, in a London location, and edit it together with the public forum scenes once the production was in preview in Stratford.

Therefore, we brought the rehearsal period forward and, after a very few weeks in our Clapham rehearsal room, we filmed the play in the very vivid neutrality of Oriental City, a disused Chinese Hypermarket in Colindale, just off the North Circular. The production was in fact set in an anonymous contemporary African State, and somehow the rather anonymous modernity of the shopping centre provided a good fit. We assassinated Julius Caesar on the escalator. Then we filmed the public scenes, principally the central forum scene, on stage in Stratford during a live preview performance, using handheld cameras among the crowd. The two matched seamlessly together.

Julius Caesar is in some senses a hybrid, both of live capture and of a production re-conceived for the small screen. It is not a film, like Brook's *Lear*, Branagh's *Henry V*, McKellen's *Richard III* or Noble's *Dream*, but something in between.

My predecessor Michael Boyd generously allowed his chief associate to pursue these film projects, but never developed the idea of film

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capture himself. Although I regret that he was never able to film his crowning achievement in producing his entire History Cycle in 2007–8.

The *Live froms* which we are now engaged in, here in Stratford-upon-Avon, are a midway point between film and recording stage performance. They celebrate the ‘now now very now-ness’ of the live experience. They capture an immediacy, a danger if you like. But they also share the experience, by being a communal one. I remember being thrilled that my twin sister would be sitting down in her local cinema to watch it in Denver, Colorado, while my brother did so in North Wales, and my in-laws in South Africa did the same.

You share the actual performance as you sit down in real time with the audience in Stratford to watch the production: you laugh, gasp and cry with them, and applaud together at the end (a novel experience in the cinema!) and, even if you are watching an encore screening, the effect is curiously the same. You enjoy the ‘now, now very now-ness’ which is Shakespeare’s appeal.

So what now? What next? I guess as technology moves on, so will we. We are already. This autumn, I am directing a production of *The Tempest* here in this theatre. We have conceived it with Intel and The Imaginarium Studios. It will involve cutting-edge technology. Ariel will be an onstage presence, but he will also have an avatar digitally projected in real time, a revolutionary new technique never seen on stage before. The ship will sink, and Juno will arrive on her chariot drawn by gilded peacocks, all created by the amazing new technology being developed by companies such as Intel. We will do our *Live from*, but we will need to explore new ways of achieving that.

So watch this space. But always at the centre of our work will be the words Shakespeare wrote, delivered live by actors in this space, inspiring your imagination, in the quick forge and working-house of thought. How we share that more widely with a world that is hungry for new experience remains to be seen.

My suspicion is that the next step in our wider engagement with audiences will involve new modes of virtual reality to allow you to take part, or to participate in the action as it takes place, that we will forge new ways of acknowledging the audience and allowing them the experience of being in that room, and immersing themselves in the terror or the joy that Shakespeare makes his audiences feel.

Can you carry on watching as Gloucester is blinded, as the Macbeths decide to murder Duncan, as Iago deludes Othello? Can you imagine the thrill of being in that crowd as Mark Antony turns the mob from mourners to murderers, or the breathless intimacy of being in the moonlit garden as Juliet whispers her love to Romeo, or the joy of sitting in that virtual deck chair in that sunny forest of Arden as Rosalind and Orlando play endless variations in the game of love?

What I am sure of is that Shakespeare himself would have been at the forefront of that technology, and I am sure too that he is sitting on his digital cloud somewhere applauding our efforts, but encouraging us to be bolder yet.

‘**Now**, entertain conjecture of **that** time!’

[EXTRACT SEVEN: Two Hamlets. I concluded the plenary session with a double clip from the filmed production of *Hamlet* we did in 2008 and, to bring us right up to date, one from the *Live from* of Paapa Essiedu, then playing the role in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.]