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PERFORMING EARLY MODERN DRAMA BEYOND SHAKESPEARE

Edward's Boys

Harry R. McCarthy

Jesus College, University of Cambridge



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ABSTRACT: This Element provides the first in-depth study of the present-day all-boy company, Edward's Boys, who are based at King Edward VI School ('Shakespeare's School') in Stratford-upon-Avon. Since 2005, the company has produced a wide array of early modern plays, providing the most substantial repertory of early modern drama available for examination by scholars. The Element provides a comprehensive account of the company's practices, drawing on extensive rehearsal and performance observation, evidence from the company's archive, and interviews with actors and key company personnel. The Element takes account of the company's particular educational and strongly interpersonal environment, suggesting that these factors have a distinctive shaping force on their performance practice. In the hands of Edward's Boys, the Element argues, early modern drama becomes the source of company creation, ensemble practice, and virtuosic physical play, inviting us to reimagine what it means – and takes – to perform these plays today.

KEYWORDS: boy actors, early modern drama, theatre company, Shakespeare, Edward's Boys

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