

2016

# That question's out of my part: Shakespeare's original practices and the effect of surprise

Katherine Bussert  
kbussert@wellesley.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection>

---

## Recommended Citation

Bussert, Katherine, "That question's out of my part: Shakespeare's original practices and the effect of surprise" (2016). *Honors Thesis Collection*. 332.

<http://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection/332>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. For more information, please contact [ir@wellesley.edu](mailto:ir@wellesley.edu).

*That question's out of my part:  
Shakespeare's original practices and the effect of surprise*

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the  
Prerequisite for Honors  
in English

Katherine Miriam Kohlmeier Bussert

Adviser: Yu Jin Ko

*Wellesley College*

April 2016

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	3
Prologue	4
Chapter I: Research	10
Chapter II: Rehearsals	41
Chapter III: Performance & Conclusions	81
Epilogue	108
Bibliography	112
Appendices	114

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis process has spanned two continents and more than eighteen months of time, and throughout that time and space I have been helped along the way by many people, without whom this project would have been a lonely endeavor. These acknowledgements can never quite cover the breadth of people I have to thank, but I'll do the best I can:

My most sincere thanks go to my adviser Yu Jin Ko, for his unfailing patience, dry wit, and a knack for asking the right leading questions. He consistently reminded me to appreciate my hard work and the hard work of everyone around me, and without his calm and reassuring perspective I might have forgotten to pay attention to the wonderful discoveries we made. My most grateful thanks also to Diego Arciniegas, my adviser in the Theatre Studies Department, for referring me to the book that got this whole project started. His insights into performance practice helped me synthesize all the academic research I was doing and keep my focus on the actors, and his simultaneously sensible and inspiring life advice kept me excited about the next step.

I am deeply grateful also to Nora Hussey, for her unwavering faith in me and support of this project, and to David Towlun, whose unapologetic questions always push me to be a more honest and critical artist. To the rest of the Theatre Studies Faculty: Marta Rainer, Lois Roach, Melinda Lopez, and Carol Morley, I extend my gratefulness for the guidance and inspiration they provide on a daily basis. I would like to thank Sarah Wall-Randell for her enthusiasm and support, and for serving on my thesis committee with Catherine Masson, to whom I am also grateful. I would like to thank Dan Chiasson for reminding me that writing from one's passion is the most admirable pursuit, and William Cain for guiding me through my first big Shakespearean project my first year at Wellesley.

During my time abroad at the University of Oxford, I was privileged to study with some of the most inspirational scholars in the world. My first and most awestruck thanks goes to Tiffany Stern, not only for writing the only existing books on original performance and rehearsal theory, but also for kindly taking time out of her busy day to take a nervous undergraduate out to lunch and answer my questions, while also asking me some of the questions that shaped this project. I was privileged to attend lectures by Dr. Stern, as well as those by Simon Palfrey, Emma Smith, and Bruce Smith. I also owe a debt of thanks and personal growth to Sally Bayley for her guidance and honesty, Ben Morgan for his truly inspirational way of looking at Shakespeare that galvanized me to take ownership of my work, Stephen Pickles for his tutelage and depth of knowledge, Charlie Lee-Potter for her magical way of looking at literature, and Angie Johnson for teaching me more about playwriting and reminding me that I had a voice. A special personal thanks must be extended to Ellie Keel and Flo Read, who were the best distractions I could ever wish for, and for giving me some of the most exciting theatrical moments of my year in England.

A debt of faith and service must be paid to the Wellesley College Shakespeare Society, and its many members. This thesis simply could not have existed without you, nor would I be the person I am today. A special thanks to the cast and crew of *Twelfth Night*, who were inspiring at every new turn and worked harder than I could ever have asked of them. To my sonnet CXXX family, and to the thesisters in Shakespeare who went before: Kelsey Ridge, Morgan Moore, and Hilary Gross for bridging the gap between theatrical practice and academia.

I am personally so grateful to three people without whose love and support I would be a less wonder-filled person. Firstly, to Danielle Zarbin, for her love and support, and for being a constant source of artistic inspiration. Secondly, to Emily Frisella, for being the best friend and travel partner I could dream of, who has seen this thesis and me through all the stages of my adult life. Emily is also due my most heartfelt thanks for reading and editing my papers, and helping me become a better writer. And finally, to my Mom, Joy Bussert, for her love and kind words; for sympathetic phone calls and encouraging letters; for having written a doctoral thesis while I was an infant and being an all-around amazing woman.

All that is left to say is, "I can no other answer make but thanks / And thanks, and ever thanks" (III.3.315-316)

## PROLOGUE

**“Most wonderful!”**

—*Twelfth Night* V.1.236.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 2014, while poking through the Boston Public Library, I picked up a book called *Shakespeare in Parts*. Written by Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey, *Shakespeare in Parts* imagines rehearsals of Shakespeare’s plays in their original conditions. Stern and Palfrey pull examples and evidence from plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, journals and letters from the early modern period, and the few extant early modern theatre texts that we have. Using those primary documents, they imagine Shakespeare’s rehearsals, focusing especially on the scripts that the actors used. Actors in the early modern period received only their own lines, with a few cue words, written on a scroll called a “part.” Each actor would learn his part, then the company would convene to perform the play, with little “rehearsal” as we consider it in the modern sense.

Stern and Palfrey offer multiple scenarios for stagings of different excerpts from Shakespeare, exploring some possible interpretive options presented by the verse and the layout of each line. However, no documents can stand in for the true experimentation that arises in a live rehearsal process. I began to imagine the scenes from the book as done by live actors, fallible people onstage. I sent an email to Diego Arciniegas, my adviser in the Theatre Studies department, with the subject line “I’ve got my thesis topic:”

Right now, I'm reading *Shakespeare in Parts* and it makes so much sense [...] — she gives all of these possible interpretations of the lines and the cues and the stage directions *but why give possibilities when you can just do it?* Also, wouldn't you just love to see the people who have learned lines the same way their entire lives have to [...]

---

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts)

completely adjust to a new way? So many wonderful things could come of it. Think of the first rehearsal when everyone only knows their line and their cue, no more. Beautiful chaos.

*Shakespeare in Parts* is only about part-scripts, but as I continued reading, I started to realize that every part of the process is interconnected. The way that part-scripts function demands a certain set of rules for staging each scene. That in turn impacts the set design, which impacts the costuming, which impacts the actors' posture, which impacts the way the actors deliver their lines. I recognized immediately that I couldn't completely recreate an Elizabethan theatre, and didn't particularly want to. The Globe and other theatres already do that exceptionally well. What I became interested in was the relevance of these supposed early-modern theatrical techniques, and whether or not they still work in the modern theatrical climate.

Once I had decided that I wasn't interested in a museum-theatre style replication of Shakespeare's Globe, I had to determine the parameters of my project. In a conversation with my tutor Ben Morgan at Oxford University, I used the word "transposition." This became the defining idea of the project. Re-creating as much as we can of the past can teach us a lot, but there needs to be flexibility to account for our own modernity. Behaving as if we are working in 1595 is not entirely possible because we do not have the lived experience of the early modern English. We no longer have the same language, the same relationship to religion, the puns, or the pop culture that Shakespeare capitalized on so beautifully. Nor do we have the same relationship to art, and specifically to Shakespeare: the capitalist structure that dominates Broadway and the West End has moved Shakespeare's plays away from the cheap and dirty associations and ethos that they once held. We no longer have groundlings, unless we go to Shakespeare in the Park. And most people know how the story ends, and come with an

expectation for their evening at the theatre. We can't be *then*. How do we think about what happened *then* while simultaneously realizing that we live *now*?

I spoke to Simon Palfrey while I was at Oxford. After a lecture he gave on Shakespeare, I approached him and asked him what he thought of someone putting the theoretical techniques from his book into practice. "Pointless exercise," he said. "It can't be done." I understood his point; most of the scenarios in *Shakespeare in Parts* rely on the element of surprise, and he is right that the widespread popularization of Shakespeare eliminates that surprise. But I came to learn that it was more complicated than *surprised* and *not-surprised*. The preexisting conditions for Shakespeare's theatre do not exist any longer, but the plays themselves are enduring because they are well-built. Like a printing press, Shakespeare's 400-year-old play-machine still does its intended job, and we see clearly how the process works, although we no longer have the same need for it in our modern lifestyle. Though Shakespeare's plays have been adapted and re-interpreted over time to fit the changing theatrical climate, Shakespeare's carefully crafted play-machine still functions as it always did. By testing out each cog in the machine—the script, the technology, the acting style— as well as examining the social and artistic climate of the time, we can come to understand the way the plays were built to work.

During the year that I spent at Oxford University, I read books on Original Practices<sup>2</sup> and spoke to scholars, including Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey. I also attended plays at the Globe and became a Student Ambassador for the Royal Shakespeare Company, to learn as much as I could about both the historical research of the early modern theatre and the current practices in

---

<sup>2</sup> "Original Practices" will be used in the context of this thesis to mean Shakespeare's performance conditions. Not all scholars use the capitalization, but since this project compares Original Practices to modern practices, and discusses OP (Original Pronunciation), I will use the capitals for clarity.

Shakespearean performance. I spent the year learning as much as I could about everything related to Original Practices, reading broadly rather than picking and choosing which practices or viewpoints I wanted to focus on.

I also elected to take all three of my major tutorials for the year in Shakespeare. They were: "Shakespeare's Plays," "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries," and "Adaptations of Shakespeare." I chose these tutorials to keep me thinking about the literary and performative value of the texts, even as I was studying the historical context and technology surrounding the period. The tutorials on "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries" helped me put my research into the literary context of the time and determine how much of an outlier Shakespeare was. "Adaptations of Shakespeare" focused on dramatic rewritings and other creative interpretations of Shakespeare's plays; in fact, the only script I studied was Nahum Tate's adapted *King Lear*. We examined woodcuts, arias, and pre-Raphaelite paintings inspired by Shakespeare's work, and drew connections between storytelling through other types of media and the storytelling provided by Shakespeare's plays.

During this time, I applied to thesis in the English department, got the support of my advisers in the Theatre Studies and English departments, and proposed myself as the director for the Shakespeare Society's fall production. I was elected the director, and picked *Twelfth Night* from a list of five plays chosen by a majority vote. I chose *Twelfth Night* for several reasons, including the small cast, the variance between prose and verse in the text, and the multiple storylines. *Twelfth Night* is also a very sophisticated and beautiful play, and the challenge of incorporating music into the performance piqued my interest.

Over the summer, I began focusing my research to narrow in specifically on the effects of different theatrical techniques on the actors' performances. While the technological gadgetry of



early modern theatre was interesting, it became less germane to the project that developed. The research became only about early modern performance conditions, and the twenty-first century attempts to recreate Shakespeare's stage. I focused on first-hand accounts of different Original Practices productions, what their research methods were, and what they were trying to achieve. I read about their shortfalls and successes, and reactions from the cast and crew as well as the audience. I then further focused my research to highlight the experiences of the cast and crew, as audience reactions are a fickle barometer and not necessarily reflective of the quality or effectiveness of a production.

I then began to synthesize this research, and draft workshop plans for the rehearsal process. The workshops were based on my research, and were intended to expose the cast to theoretical techniques in a hands-on manner. The workshops were structured like scientific experiments: the goal was to take my research and test it to see if it held up in practice. For this reason, I structured each workshop to explore and develop an individual technique, and each workshop was designed to build upon the previous one, with the end goal being to incorporate all of the workshops into the final production.

The rehearsal process was designed to adapt the process followed by Shakespeare's companies. Though the Shakespeare Society is as close as we can get on Wellesley's campus to a repertory company, it does not quite reach the level of comfort and intimacy that Shakespeare's companies had. I tried my best to recreate a similarly close-knit climate using the early modern techniques, but throughout the process we were all aware that this was a learning process for everyone involved.

We cannot recreate Shakespeare as Shakespeare and his actors would have experienced it. We must take that into account. Therefore, my production of *Twelfth Night* became a

transposition instead of a recreation. It took three steps to workshop each technique for the production: first, the cast and I tried (as best we could) to recreate the technique. Then, we discussed what the purpose of the technique might have been. We asked each other whether or not the technique achieved its purpose with our group. If not, we then adapted the technique so that it accomplished its purpose with our cast. Whatever we settled on, early modern or adapted, was used in the final production of the play.

I focused on the word “transposition” for the entire process. In music, a transposition takes a complete line of music and puts it into a different key. This preserves the structural integrity of the line, but changes the feeling slightly and adapts it to the musician's needs. Shakespeare was a master transposer. He used old folk tales and histories as the bases for his plots, drew heavily from poetry and scripture, and built the structures of his plays to fit his acting company and his theatres. He was immensely attuned to the world around him, and for that reason his work deserves the same attention. In my production of *Twelfth Night*, I tried to be just as attentive to the needs and conditions of my cast, my environment, and my audience.

Ultimately, the rehearsal process was far more important than the final production. The workshops and the discussions between the cast and me ultimately defined the course of the production and the thesis. Whether or not the show was “successful” (and whose definition of “success” we are following) does not affect the outcome of my thesis. After months of research at Oxford and at Wellesley, putting the techniques into practice using human (and often fallible) actors was an end in and of itself.

## CHAPTER I: RESEARCH

**“Wherefore, sweetheart, what’s your metaphor?”**

—*Twelfth Night*, I.3.71<sup>3</sup>

### **Research Questions**

I have been asking myself many questions throughout this whole process, and with every new step I have had to start asking new ones. First, the questions were: what do Shakespeare’s texts tell us about early modern performance conditions? Can these conditions be recreated, or, if recreation is not possible, can new techniques be devised to bring about the same results? It quickly became clear that many of the theatrical techniques we were using in rehearsals were working well, and that devising new techniques was less effective than simply modifying the ones we were using.

During the rehearsals, we were constantly asking questions. I wanted to know how the techniques were working, and repeatedly asked the actors what they were thinking and feeling. I scheduled two mandatory check-in meetings with each actor. In the first meeting, we talked through the conceptual aspects of the show and abstract character questions. The second meeting came after they had had two or three weeks to look over and start learning their lines. Each actor and I went through their part-script word for word with a lexicon, and made sure that they knew exactly what they were saying. We discussed their cue-lines, and made inferences about what might be happening on the stage alongside them. At the end of every meeting, I asked for feedback: what helped, what didn’t, what should we do more of?

---

<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed 15 April 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

During the rehearsal process, the questions became: how does this technique work, and to what end did Shakespeare decide to use it here? That helped us answer questions not only of character and tone, but also of pacing and dramatic structure. Those questions guided myself and the actors through the rehearsal process, and I continued to ask the individual questions as well: understanding what helped the actors with their work and what didn't also helped me understand the mechanisms we were learning.

Once it was established that the workshops were interesting and helpful, and that the actors were slowly but steadily learning their parts with part-scripts, we had to develop better and more complex questions than "Is it working?" I began thinking critically about the development of theatrical techniques. How much were the techniques a response to the social and technological restrictions of early modern life, and how much were the plays shaped by the techniques? Additionally, how much do the techniques "belong" to Shakespeare plays, or can they transcend time and style to be useful in any theatrical tradition? Shakespeare clearly wrote his scripts to use these techniques to their best advantages, so the techniques certainly had an impact on the way the plays were written. But Shakespeare is the most enduring writer in the English language, even with the technological advances and shift in theatrical culture over the past four hundred years.

Once we arrived in the week of shows, the questions became: what endures and how does it develop? I mean "endures" in two senses. The immediate, which moments of surprise that were fresh in the first run-through endure throughout the run; and the long-term, what elements of part-scripts are still present in the way we talk about acting Shakespeare, even in trace amounts? I also wanted to know what developed in the short term with my cast over the course

of eight shows, and how part-scripts could have evolved to fit the changing time and technologies of the theatre.

Of course, these questions vary from technique to technique, and they are all interrelated, which makes it hard to ascertain which technique contributed to which effect in the final production. The ones I am specifically addressing in this thesis are: the use of part-scripts in rehearsals, the rehearsal schedule that emphasized the individual actor and her<sup>4</sup> lines over group scene work, the use of the Original Pronunciation accent and dialect, early modern costuming, and the bare set.

### **Part-scripts**

Since *Shakespeare in Parts* was the catalyst for the project, I framed most of my research and rehearsal questions around part-scripts. As Stern and Palfrey point out, part-scripts were certainly a response to the technological and practical restrictions of the time: paper was not accessible enough for each actor to have a full printed book. Additionally, part-scripts usually came in scrolls that an actor could tuck into his costume and carry with him onstage in case of an emergency. During his day-to-day life, the actor could also carry around his scroll and learn his lines on the go, rather than only being able to memorize from a book which is harder to carry. A lightweight scroll, with the minimum amount of writing on it, was practical both for the actor and for the company manager, not to mention the scribe.

---

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will use “her” to refer to modern actors generally or the group of actors from my production of *Twelfth Night* and “him” to refer to Shakespeare’s actors. Not all of the actors in *Twelfth Night* used female pronouns, and when speaking about specific actors I will use their preferred pronouns.

In practice, the part-scripts originated from technological necessity, but Shakespeare used them as an opportunity for artistic growth. Each actor's scroll would contain all of his lines, and up to three cue words to prompt him to speak. An actor would go home and study his lines until he became "perfect," which meant to memorize their texts word perfectly. That meant that each actor only had his own character's first-hand opinions and information, with no outside context or reported speech to color their own interpretation of the characters. It also meant that each individual actor did not have a complete picture of the plot of the play. He could infer, from his lines and his cues, the general shape of the plot, but no specifics. Moreover, the richness of Shakespeare's language provides each actor with moments to experience shock and surprise, more often because of particular turns of phrase than big plot points that are more easily inferred from the text. Part of what makes Shakespeare's plays so ingenious is that he used the constraints of part-scripts to his advantage. Surprise is an important tool in the making of theatre, and in the arc of any written or performed story. Shakespeare treats his actors with as much care as he treats his characters: not disclosing the events of their lives before they happen onstage. Part-scripts help him do this, by creating built-in moments of surprise that happen onstage.

Part-scripts require an actor to be completely focused on her surroundings. Because of the unpredictability of the cues, the actor must also know her lines well enough to respond at a moment's notice. This requires both precise focus and great flexibility: the actor must listen to everything said around her, be able to understand and synthesize the events in character, and deliver each line as soon as she hears her cue, molding it to fit the climate of the play around her. This is, of course, what normal (non-character) people do in their day-to-day lives. The actor must be able to truly think like the character, and make decisions as that person comfortably and

quickly. In today's theatre, we perceive this kind of work to be only accessible after hours of study and hard work, as well as considerable talent. Konstantin Stanislavsky, originator of modern "method acting" advocated inhabiting a role through hours of rehearsal and study, as well as a technique called "emotional recall" by which an actor would associate his lived experiences with those of the character, and thus be emotionally moved. Though Shakespeare's actors were certainly the best available actors, they were not professional actors in the way that today's actors are. Only a few of them could make their living in the theatre, and none of them had the time to devote five hours each day to rehearsal. Rather than forcing his actors to become new people, Shakespeare instead makes each character more accessible to his actor, enough so that an actor can respond realistically and spontaneously with his own instincts onstage, in a way that replicates the life of the character he is playing.

The technology of part-scripts enables this, by only giving the actor first-person speech to learn from. She never hears opinions voiced about her by the other characters, and she develops an intimate relationship with her lines: they are the only opinions she can view the show through. All other discoveries during the course of a performance happen to her in real time, simulating the effects of real-life events. It also requires clear communication between the actors. I surmise that there was less "stage business" in the early modern theatre (for example: elaborate blocking, wordless acting between characters to fill time between lines, and so on), because they would have needed to focus on listening to the other actors.

Shakespeare understood actors. As an actor himself, he treats his characters like real people: fallible, unpredictable, and sometimes messy. His scripts, though they are beautiful poetry on the page, are meant to be read aloud. In his scripts, he employs techniques for the actor that guide her through the story without the outside help of a director or even stage

directions. In-line directions like “here I lift this one hand up to heaven, and bow this feeble ruin to the earth” (*Titus Andronicus* III.1.209-210), or “O, I die, Horatio” (*Hamlet* V.2.389), give the actor physical directions while also providing the reader and audience with the plot. But Shakespeare does even better than this: through the mechanism of part-scripts, he creates moments of real surprise onstage for the actors. One of the ways that he does this is by playing with the actor's preconceptions: her cues. The actor playing Polonius might only have, as his cue line, the word “words.” When he enters the scene with Hamlet, and asks, “what do you read, my lord?” he expects the answer “words.” However, Hamlet's line is “words, words, words” (II.2.209). Polonius, not expecting anything, continues speaking after he has heard the first “words.” Hamlet then has two more chances to interrupt Polonius, giving the Hamlet-actor ample space to play around with the scene. The Polonius-actor, on the other hand, only knows that he has been given his cue and must continue until the end of his line, so he barrels through. The exchange could go something like this:

POLONIUS: What do you read, my lord?  
 HAMLET: Words,  
 POLONIUS: What is —  
 HAMLET: — *Words*  
 POLONIUS: — the matter —  
 HAMLET: — *WORDS.*  
 POLONIUS: — my lord?  
 HAMLET: Between who? (*Hamlet* II.2.208-212)<sup>5</sup>

Polonius continues on, absolutely confused, but since the Hamlet-actor has continued to provide him with cues, the dialogue continues. Hamlet has enough space to characterize himself as mad

---

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed 10 February 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>



(or feigning madness), and the actor playing Polonius doesn't even have to pretend to be surprised at Hamlet's extraordinary behavior.

But this example is taken from a tragedy. Repeated cues can be used to great effect in comedies as well. One of the greatest challenges of Shakespearean scripts are the repeated lines: many characters repeat a word or a phrase three times in a row for emphasis. When this repetition is at the end of the line, it is a cue for the next actor to speak over the repeated words. This overlapping creates a sense of conversational realism, and the cacophony of voices adds a realistic air to comedic scenes. Commands like "peace, peace, peace" are not intended to be honored: the actor whose cue is "peace" will immediately start speaking over the hushing actor, giving the actor a reason to repeat himself twice before giving up. The audience is then both told and shown the contrast in personalities.

This technique also works well in crowd scenes. Marc Antony's "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" scene in *Julius Caesar* is a very good example of this. The word "will" is repeated dozens of times throughout Act III, Scene 2, and is a cue for many different actors. As expounded in *Henry V*, Shakespeare charges the audience to "Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts. Into a thousand parts divide one man, and make imaginary puissance" (*Henry V* Prologue 24-26).<sup>6</sup> Since there cannot be a thousand actors onstage, Shakespeare imitates this by orchestrating a scene in which the actors' lines overlap each other and catalyze each other into a roar capable of implying the presence of multitudes. From lines 148 to 153, Antony's only cue is the word "will." Take, for example, this passage:

ANTONY: [...] Bequeathing it as a rich legacy  
Unto their issue.

FOURTH CITIZEN: We'll hear the **will**: read it, Mark Antony.

---

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed February 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

ALL: The **will!** The **will!** We **will** hear Caesar's **will**.

ANTONY: Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it:

It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you. (*Julius Caesar* III.2 148-153)<sup>7</sup>

Mark Antony is cued five times with the word “will,” (and once again as a homophone in “we’ll”) but each time he is shouted down. By the time the crowd lets him speak, he has a very good reason to say “Have patience!” The citizens, on the other hand, are not cued with the word “will,” so they are not distracted by this repetition. Marc Antony is completely isolated onstage, barraged with cues from the shouting plebians he cannot respond to quickly enough.

In *Shakespeare in Parts*, the authors note that “the plebians are scripted to speak not at indiscriminate angles, but rather at exact moments of maximum incendiary impact.”<sup>8</sup> The precision required for part-scripts does not allow for improvisation in scenes like this, and the quick, short lines might slow down the necessary pacing to keep a scene like this alive and present. By adding in repeated cues, Shakespeare measures the pacing like a composer, and coaches his actors through their emotions better than any director.

This incendiary part-scripts technique is extremely intimidating, both for the character onstage and from the point of view of the audience. In *King Lear*, Regan and Cornwall interrogate Gloucester about where he has sent the king. The cue line Gloucester has written in his part-script could be “to Dover,” or even “wherefore to Dover.” The exchange goes as follows:

CORNWALL: Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOUCESTER: To Dover.

REGAN: **Wherefore to Dover?** Wast thou not charged at peril--

CORNWALL: **Wherefore to Dover?** Let him first answer that.

---

<sup>7</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed February 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

<sup>8</sup> Simon Palfrey & Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 167.

GLOUCESTER: I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.

REGAN: **Wherefore to Dover?**

GLOUCESTER: Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes; (*King Lear* III.7.55-70)<sup>9</sup>

Though Gloucester knows he has a line after he says “to Dover” and before “Because I would not...” the actor is repeatedly inundated with “wherefore to Dover?” from both sides. The repetition of “wherefore to Dover” would understandably confuse the actor as much as it confuses the character of Gloucester, so he might think he should skip his line “I am tied to the stake...” until he was cued to say it. In the Quarto, his actual cue is differentiated from the rest of the shouting by adding “sir” to the end, making it “Wherefore to Dover, sir?” but nevertheless the actor would be forgiven for mistaking the earlier lines for his cue. When he is finally cued “let him answer that,” his helplessness would not have to be feigned while he said “I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.” However, at this point he may already have tried to defend himself. The scene might go as follows:<sup>10</sup>

CORNWALL: Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOUCESTER: To Dover.

REGAN: Wherefore to Dover?

GLOUCESTER: Because—

REGAN: Wast thou not charged at peril--

CORNWALL: Wherefore to Dover?

GLOUCESTER: Because I—

CORNWALL: Let him first answer that.

GLOUCESTER: I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.

REGAN: Wherefore to Dover?

GLOUCESTER: Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes;

---

<sup>9</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed February 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

<sup>10</sup> Stern and Palfrey also imagine this scene in *Shakespeare in Parts*, pp 244-46.

This repetition is doubly disorienting because Gloucester's cue line comes from two different people, who are probably standing on two sides of him. This causes him to turn back and forth in anxiety as he hears his cue repeated over and over. Thus, Shakespeare builds in the necessary blocking and genuine emotional response from the actor, even as he creates dialogue with impeccable pacing and speed.

### **Part-Scripts in *Twelfth Night***

*Twelfth Night*, as a comedy with great crowd scenes (most notably the gulling of Malvolio in II.3) was well-suited to examine with part-scripts. However, *Twelfth Night* also has its share of darkness. The desperation that Malvolio experiences when he is trapped in the dark room comes out in his cue lines, as does Viola's heartsick longing for Orsino. Most importantly, I was very excited to examine the surprise and wonderment that appears in the final reunion at the end of the play, as all the plots fall together and each character finds an unexpected partner.

I found many similarities between the gulling of Malvolio and Marc Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen." The central figure has what is essentially a monologue, which is mostly self-motivated rather than spurred on by a dialogue partner. The surrounding characters interject, respond, and argue with each other, but do very little genuine conversing with the central character. The main difference is in the situation: whereas the plebians in *Julius Caesar* are shouting over one another to be heard, the comedians in *Twelfth Night* are huddled together, trying to keep each other quiet. I thought that the actors playing both Malvolio and the comedians would be able to derive a lot of organic fun from this scene, since the actors would have free rein to play tricks on one another: Malvolio could suddenly "hear" a sound and look

towards the box-tree, causing the comedians to cower in fear, or the comedians could climb into the audience, thereby disrupting Malvolio's moment of breaking the fourth wall.

Another core difference is the style of cacophony in the gulling of Malvolio. Whereas the actors in *Julius Caesar* generate energy from yelling over each other, the actors in *Twelfth Night* are constantly hushing one another. The repeated cues appear in words like "peace," or "soft," allowing the comedians to talk over one another, even as they are also talking over Malvolio. This effect does not allow the Malvolio actor to stop for ambient noise, as he is not supposed to notice it.<sup>11</sup>

Malvolio gets his chance to yell over a fellow actor later in the play, when he is trapped in "a dark room" and tormented by the Fool, disguised as Sir Topaz. The scene reads:

MALVOLIO: I think nobly of the soul, and in no way approve his opinion.

FOOL: **Fare thee well.** Remain thou still in darkness.

Thou shalt hold th' opinion of Pythagoras ere I will  
allow of thy wits, and fear to kill a woodcock lest  
thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. **Fare thee  
well.**

MALVOLIO: Sir Topas! Sir Topas! (*Twelfth Night* IV.2.57-64)<sup>12</sup>

As soon as Malvolio hears his cue, "fare thee well," he should start shouting "Sir Topas!" and is given free rein to repeat himself more than twice, as he would notice that Sir Topas was paying no attention to his pleas. This is Sir Topas' exit, and as Malvolio realizes that, he pleads him to stay. In practice, the scene reads more like this:

MALVOLIO: I think nobly of the soul, and in no way approve his opinion.

FOOL: Fare thee well.

MALVOLIO: Sir Topas!

---

<sup>11</sup> Since we addressed this scene in our production of *Twelfth Night*, I will go more into the effects of this scene in performance in Chapters Two and Three. Please also see *Shakespeare in Parts* pp 177-184 for more exploration of Malvolio's repeated cues.

<sup>12</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts).

FOOL:                               Remain thou still in darkness.  
MALVOLIO:   Sir Topas?  
FOOL: Thou shalt hold th' opinion of Pythagoras ere I will  
          allow of thy wits —  
MALVOLIO:                       Sir—  
FOOL:                               —and fear to kill a woodcock lest  
          thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. Fare thee well.  
MALVOLIO: Sir Topas! Sir Topas!

This allows Malvolio to be a truly empathetic character to the audience, as they can plainly see him in distress. Malvolio's part-script helps him on his trajectory from comedic buffoon to almost a tragic hero. His scenes in the dark room are more similar to "wherefore to Dover" in *King Lear* than to his previous scenes with the comedians. Malvolio uses part-scripts to achieve different emotional depths, allowing the actor to use the same technique in different ways.

This example in the dark-room is an equally good example to showcase the Fool's comedic prowess. Feste, seeing that his lines both begin and end in "fare thee well," knows that Malvolio is cued to speak after the first "fare thee well" of his line. This puts him in a powerful position, able to manipulate Malvolio's final lines as he chooses. Of course, he has been in this position for the entire scene. Malvolio has been tied up and placed in a "dark room," presumably either blindfolded or otherwise incapacitated. Feste, disguised as "Sir Topas," a minister or exorcist, visits the terrified Malvolio and tries to persuade him that he has gone mad. Blind and incapacitated, Malvolio is completely at the mercy of the words being hurled at him by Sir Topas. Assuming that the Malvolio-actor has never heard the text before, his first experience with the dark-room scene would be just as terrifying and disorienting as it is for the character. Feste/Sir Topas hurls nonsense at him, pelts him with obscure questions which Malvolio tries to answer honestly, and constantly rebuffs him at every turn, denying Malvolio's every observation:

FOOL: Sayst thou that house is dark?  
MALVOLIO: As hell, Sir Topas.

FOOL: Why, it hath bay windows transparent as barricadoes,  
 and the clerestories toward the south-north  
 are as lustrous as ebony; and yet complainest  
 thou of obstruction?

MALVOLIO: I am not mad, Sir Topas. I say to you this  
 house is dark.

FOOL: Madman, thou errest. I say there is no darkness  
 but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than  
 the Egyptians in their fog. (IV.2.35-46)<sup>13</sup>

The language, reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition (though not directly enough to be a strong political commentary), is designed to throw the character off-guard. While reading his part-script in individual study, Malvolio's lines would cue the actor in to understand that his character is confused, angry, and being contradicted; but without the complete context of the scene the Malvolio-actor would not understand the depth of fear and confusion he experiences in this scene. His lines are often cut off or interrupted, and Feste sometimes redirects the topic of conversation entirely, throwing the actor into bewilderment. The Malvolio-actor, like the character himself, who is at the mercy of the scene, must simply surrender to the hubbub of being interrupted and talked over: he can only wait for his next cue (which he knows could come at any moment).

Malvolio, always the butt of the joke, does not get to experience the more wonderful side of part-scripts as they manifest themselves in *Twelfth Night*. *Twelfth Night* is a play about surprise and wonder, which was why I chose to direct this play using part-scripts and Original Practices. The characters spend most of the play feeling confused, melancholic, lethargic, and adrift. As the pieces of their stories fall together, they experience wonder, joy, and euphoria. It is no coincidence that these sensations are the same as the feeling of falling in love, and *Twelfth*

---

<sup>13</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts).

*Night* ties these two experiences together. Olivia, who spends the first half of the play in a lachrymose limbo, has sworn off “the sight and company of men” (*Twelfth Night* I.2.41-42) while she mourns the death of her brother and father. Though the Duke Orsino woos her incessantly, she constantly rebuffs his love. Despite knowing that he is in all ways a very suitable match for a woman of her social station, and in all respects quite a catch, she cannot shake her melancholia enough to give in to his entreaties. However, when the beautiful and boyish Cesario (Viola in disguise) walks in the door, she is utterly thunderstruck. Completely out of the blue, she falls madly in love with this unknown boy and proceeds to woo him, even as he attempts to woo her on Orsino's behalf. The actor playing Olivia would have no idea of the lines that would be delivered by Viola, who is delivering lines “conned,” or memorized, from a pre-written speech designed to win Olivia's heart. The actor might not even know beforehand that the lines would come from the actor playing Viola: part-scripts did not usually have character names assigned to the cue lines, and Olivia only speaks to Cesario by the false name he gives her. Since she does not respond to his advances immediately, her lines do not warn the actor of what is to come. Olivia's part-script might look something like this:

OLIVIA: Is 't not well done?

(did all.)

OLIVIA: 'Tis in grain, sir; 'twill endure wind and weather.

(no copy.)

OLIVIA: O, sir, I will not be so hard-hearted! I will give out divers schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried and every particle and utensil labeled to my will: as, *item*, two lips indifferent red; *item*, two gray eyes with lids to them; *item*, one neck, one chin, and so forth. Were you sent hither to praise me?

(of beauty.)

OLIVIA: How does he love me?

(of fire.)

OLIVIA: Your lord does know my mind. I cannot love him.



Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,  
 Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;  
 In voices well divulged, free, learned, and valiant,  
 And in dimension and the shape of nature  
 A gracious person. But yet I cannot love him.  
 He might have took his answer long ago.  
 (understand it.)

OLIVIA: Why, what would you?  
 (pity me.)

OLIVIA: You might do much.  
 What is your parentage?  
 (a gentleman.)

OLIVIA: Get you to your lord.  
 I cannot love him. Let him send no more—  
 Unless perchance you come to me again  
 To tell me how he takes it. Fare you well.<sup>14</sup>

As we see from the script above, Olivia does not respond to Cesario's overtures until the end of the scene. So the actor, knowing that he has to play the standoffish lines he has been provided with, must keep a straight face and demeanor while Viola delivers her gorgeous "willow cabin" speech. As he does that, he must also be listening to the words spoken to him by the Viola-actor, while waiting for his cue. So, with the words washing over him as he attempts to play it cool, is there any surprise that as soon as Viola leaves the stage, Olivia explodes with:

OLIVIA: "What is your parentage?"  
 "Above my fortunes, yet my state is well.  
 I am a gentleman." I'll be sworn thou art.  
 Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit  
 Do give thee fivefold blazon. Not too fast! Soft, soft!  
 Unless the master were the man. How now?  
 Even so quickly may one catch the plague?  
 Methinks I feel this youth's perfections  
 With an invisible and subtle stealth  
 To creep in at mine eyes. (I.5.294-305)<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> See *Twelfth Night* I.5 for the full script.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The actor playing Olivia most likely experiences the exact same sensations that the character is facing in the moment: struggling between keeping a straight face and wanting desperately to respond to these artful protestations of love. When she asks “unless perchance you come to me again / To tell me how he takes it,” this is the first indication to the audience that Olivia might feel affection for Cesario. Olivia also switches from prose to verse between “how does he love me” and “your lord does know my mind, I cannot love him,” indicating a shift in tone both to the actor and the audience. Additionally, it may come as a surprise to both Olivia and the audience when Olivia says “unless perchance you come to me again,” as the actor playing Olivia might not have known that Cesario was Viola in disguise if there had not been a read-through, and thus is surprised by this new revelation: that his character loves an unlovable person. Olivia gets her moment later in the play, where she gets to use the part-scripts to her advantage as she declares her love for Cesario.

Viola, meanwhile, thinks she has the script in her control. She is the only one (besides the audience, of course) who knows about her masculine disguise. She has “conned” her wooing script from Orsino, and she travels to Olivia's house, knowing full well that she is acting the part of a messenger, able to woo passionately with no emotional investment. Her emotional investment is directed elsewhere, toward her employer Orsino, whom she loves passionately and silently. So, her thoughts understandably elsewhere, she goes to Olivia's house. In Act 3, Scene 1, Viola's part-script looks like this:

VIOLA: Cesario is your servant's name, fair princess.

(Orsino, youth.)

VIOLA: And he is yours, and his must needs be yours.

Your servant's servant is your servant, madam.

(with me.)

VIOLA: Madam, I come to whet your gentle thoughts  
On his behalf.

(the spheres.)

VIOLA: Dear lady—

(you speak.)

VIOLA: I pity you.

(to love.)

VIOLA: No, not a grize, for 'tis a vulgar proof  
That very oft we pity enemies.

(due west.)

VIOLA: Then westward ho!

Grace and good disposition attend your Ladyship.

You'll nothing, madam, to my lord by me?

(of me.)

VIOLA: That you do think you are not what you are.

(of you.)

VIOLA: Then think you right. I am not what I am.

(you be.)

VIOLA: Would it be better, madam, than I am?

I wish it might, for now I am your fool.

(is better.)

VIOLA: By innocence I swear, and by my youth,

I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,

And that no woman has, nor never none

Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.

And so adieu, good madam. Nevermore

Will I my master's tears to you deplore.<sup>16</sup>

Similar to Olivia's part-script from the previous scene, the final line comes almost out of nowhere, with no previous clues as to what the scene contains. Viola's lines are mostly polite, often on the surface seeming like playful banter or turns of wit to please the audience ("Your servant's servant is your servant," "I am not what I am"). But in the scene, Viola is inundated with deeply felt and passionately delivered declarations of love from Olivia, and the actor must stay in control until the final lines of the scene. Moreover, Olivia's lines are quite long

---

<sup>16</sup> See *Twelfth Night* III.1 for the full text.

monologues, giving that actor the freedom to walk, push Cesario around, or make him wait for her next clause, knowing that he is completely at the mercy of his own part-script. There are no doubled cues in these scenes, no opportunity for the text to lead the actors astray. They remain captive to their own parts, able only to say the right thing at the right time.

In a way, Shakespeare offers a meditation on the nature of love through these missed-connection scenes: like cues in part-scripts, lovers must wait for exactly the right thing to appear at the right moment. It is unexpected, and the actors spend every moment of their stage time waiting for the cue to appear, but they are unable to fall in love until everything falls into place.

Viola also experiences unrequited love, when she falls head over heels for Orsino. However, she cannot tell him about her feelings, because she is masquerading as his servant boy and using the name Cesario. She ferries his messages of love back and forth to Olivia, whom Orsino adores despite her protestations. Viola, meanwhile, harbors a secret desire for Orsino, which she must keep secret or risk unveiling her identity. Viola redirects her feelings into asides delivered to the audience, while sighing over Orsino. Arguably, Orsino also falls a bit in love with "Cesario's" youthful good looks:

ORSINO: They shall yet belie thy happy years  
That say thou art a man. Diana's lip  
Is not more smooth and rubious, thy small pipe  
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,  
And all is semblative a woman's part. (I.4.34-37)<sup>17</sup>

Viola, not knowing that Orsino's character is supposed to comment on her gender, would understandably be shocked and surprised to hear that. (Add to that humor, of course, the layer of metatheatricality added by the Elizabethan tradition of boy actors playing women's roles).

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Because only the audience knows about Viola's true identity, as well as her love for Orsino, the Viola-actor will invariably incorporate a lot of silent acting into her scenes, cueing the audience in to her desire without revealing it to Orsino onstage. However, the Orsino-actor might respond naturally to her physical movements, for example, catching Viola staring at him ardently across the room during the song "Come Away Death." Confused, he would look around: have I missed my cue? Why are you looking at me like that? Viola would hide, and the audience would laugh.

But Viola's most important surprise comes at the end of the play, when she rediscovers her twin brother Sebastian, whom she assumed to be dead in a shipwreck. The two appear onstage together for the first time, and surprise the other characters. Discovering one another, they question each other:

SEBASTIAN: Do I stand there? I never had a brother,  
 Nor can there be that deity in my nature  
 Of here and everywhere. I had a sister  
 Whom the blind waves and surges have devoured.  
 Of charity, what kin are you to me?  
 What countryman? What name? What parentage?

VIOLA: Of Messaline. Sebastian was my father.  
 Such a Sebastian was my brother too.  
 So went he suited to his watery tomb.  
 If spirits can assume both form and suit,  
 You come to fright us.

SEBASTIAN: A spirit I am indeed,  
 But am in that dimension grossly clad  
 Which from the womb I did participate.  
 Were you a woman, as the rest goes even,  
 I should my tears let fall upon your cheek  
 And say "Thrice welcome, drownèd Viola."

VIOLA: My father had a mole upon his brow.

SEBASTIAN: And so had mine.

VIOLA: And died that day when Viola from her birth  
 Had numbered thirteen years.

SEBASTIAN: O, that record is lively in my soul!

He finishèd indeed his mortal act  
That day that made my sister thirteen years.  
VIOLA: If nothing lets to make us happy both  
But this my masculine usurped attire,  
Do not embrace me till each circumstance  
Of place, time, fortune, do cohere and jump  
That I am Viola. (*Twelfth Night* V.1.237-267)<sup>18</sup>

We can see in the text that the twins are wonder-struck by this new development. Imagining the actors reading from their part-scripts, we see the two of them paralyzed with joy, staring at each other as they exchange questions and exclamations. Sebastian asks Viola four questions before she can answer even one, and she must stand on stage, speechless in response to his inquiries, until she hears “parentage,” at which point she answers. Viola’s next line has two parts: the first is to answer Sebastian’s question, the second is a new thought: perhaps he is an evil spirit! This allows the actor to round out her first thought and share a quiet moment with Sebastian before her next realization. After the first round of short speeches, Viola and Sebastian exchange a few quick lines, which draws the actors forward, increasing the tempo and intensity of their dialogue, and forcing them to breathe more quickly. We see from these pauses and rhythmic shifts that Shakespeare is orchestrating the emotional tone of this exchange, just as he is expanding the plotline. The repeated “ands” allow the actors to build upon each other’s lines, and presumably they are taking this opportunity to move across the stage towards one another. The sense of wonder and surprise is palpable as the two siblings reunite.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Character

As I've already hinted at, the part-scripts technique allows an actor to develop his or her character without using information from the rest of the script. The lack of context requires that the actor develop her character only from her own lines, without the influence of reported speech or the opinions of other characters. In fact, the style of acting necessitated by part-scripts takes the focus away from individual character-building and places more emphasis on the characters as players in their situations; rather than creating a character, an actor creates an interaction. I will suggest that, among actors accustomed to this style of performance, it serves to create a form of acting that more genuinely reflects life.

It is a maxim in theatre classes that to be sarcastic, you must simply say your line as if you believe it very strongly. Using vocal inflection to denote: "I am being sarcastic right now" is often less effective. The same goes for surprise, happiness, and anger: consider how often young actors are criticized for "overacting." Of course, the early modern stage was a bigger place: "realism" in the theatre is a very recent convention made for smaller theatre spaces than even the early modern indoor theatres. Nevertheless, forced acting is ineffective, regardless of the setting in which it is displayed.

Stern and Palfrey, in *Shakespeare in Parts*, present an excellent example of Olivia's character development as indicated through her part-script, by juxtaposing her lines with the Fool and with Viola. In her confessional scene with Viola, Olivia's dialogue is usually a-metrical and arrhythmic. It is not until her monologue "Cesario, by the roses of the spring..." that she dives into full iambic pentameter. Stern and Palfrey suggest: "this curious metrical mix of abruptness and hesitancy shows a character reaching for decisiveness, or for some releasing response."<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Palfrey & Stern 420.

Rather than making this a character judgment, however, I would argue that the text is putting Olivia and her actor in an uncomfortable situation; it is not a characterological trait but an acting technique which creates this choppiness in the dialogue. Of course Olivia seems to be reaching for decisiveness: the actor *is* reaching. She must read the Viola-actor with her eyes to keep certain that she hasn't caught onto Olivia's love too soon, and she must listen intently to Viola's responses, as she knows the lines are short and rhythmically unpredictable.

I argue that the part-scripts technique builds character only as a byproduct of the acting style it necessitates: it places real people (the actors) in high-stakes situations (the scenes onstage, as well as their public position before an audience) and forces them to sink or swim with only their lines and cues. The actors have time before the performances to learn their lines, and by studying the structure of their parts they can infer many things about their character and their part in the plot, but ultimately the decisions and discoveries they make in the moment onstage are the crucial and telling ones.

The act of suppression until release controls the movement of the play. An actor must suppress any discovery they make, until the time comes to release it. However, most discoveries happen mid-dialogue, so the actor must also process that discovery while still remembering her lines. The step-by-step revelatory process of "character"-building is nothing more than a series of momentary onstage discoveries. The actor is captive to her part in that she is unable to impose her outside ideas onto the text, because that would restrict her from being flexible and responsive in the moment onstage.

Shakespeare appears on the theatrical stage at an interesting moment in time, predating the full movement toward psychological realism on the stage. Shakespeare himself shifted between a large outdoor theatre in the first part of his career (The Globe Theatre) and a smaller,



more intimate indoor theatre in the later years (Blackfriars Theatre). Though *Twelfth Night* was not produced in Blackfriars, it would have appeared indoors in the great halls of manor houses, or other indoor venues which housed touring performances of music and theatre. The venue in which a play was performed has a tremendous effect on the style of that play: indoor theatres, free from the noisy bustle of daily life rushing by just outside the theatre, cut down on the volume needed to communicate the play. A smaller venue put more focus on each actor's face, and not just their body. The arrangement of the seats allowed the actors to act among the audience rather than in front of them.

But Shakespeare's actors had to contend with the social pressures of the entertainment world at that time. Actors were competing for money and attention with such spectacles as bearbaiting, which audiences were drawn to for its immediacy and unpredictability. I am not suggesting that Shakespeare strove to emulate bearbaiting in his plays, rather that the confluence of the unpredictable and the intimate is what drives the action of his plays forward.

Stanislavsky's "psychological realism" did not come into vogue for another three hundred years, but we can find the precursors of his ideas here in Shakespeare's texts. There is psychological realism in Shakespeare's plays in that his characters are universally experienced as being relatable, understandable, and realistic in their emotions and desires; they speak to the humanity of the audience and come across as real, believable people with real emotional depth. But where Stanislavsky's actors studied their lines for weeks to develop a system of "emotional recall" based on personal past experiences, Shakespeare builds *current* experiences into the text. Rather than associating falling in love in his personal life with falling in love onstage as Romeo, Shakespeare's actor must simply find the momentary joy in co-authoring a sonnet, which appears to be much the same thing.

I am not suggesting that Shakespeare's acting style is simply method acting by another name. Rather than developing a character arc, Shakespeare's actors get snapshots of a character's life, which change based on their interactions and shift with the circumstances of the play. This is a more reasonable challenge for an actor to tackle: drawing together an arc that leads to a definite end point with a resolution at the end is both tricky and unrealistic for most characters. People, of course, don't have character arcs, and neither do Shakespeare's actors; rather, they experience scenes in different ways according to the context of the scene, and the audience is left to piece together the plot of the play and the way each character's scenes fit into a cohesive arc: usually we have more information than the actors (certainly than the characters) do.

I think Shakespeare's acting style is more akin to our modern-day improv than to our modern-day stage acting. Viola Spolin, grandmother of improvisation, speaks of "going into the unknown," which is exactly what Shakespeare's plays force upon actors. The play sends them into the unknown with a few tools to help them struggle through, and the most exciting discoveries and stage experiences are the ones that are not pre-planned by the actors. "I think that the creative act must transform the one who is in it. Not what he produces, but what happens to him or her," she says in an interview.<sup>20</sup> Her philosophies were engendered as games for shy children who needed to connect with one another; they seek to take the actor "out of her head," as many theatre teachers now say, or in other words, stop them from overthinking and react naturally. The aim is a sort of transcendence, whereby the actor releases control and lets instinct take over. This is the most honest form of acting, because there are the fewest barriers

---

<sup>20</sup> ImprovLegends, "Into the Unknown with Viola Spolin." YouTube Video, posted September 2012, 13:57. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HavVR2SC\\_bg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HavVR2SC_bg). Accessed March 2016.

between the audience and the individual humans onstage. In improv games, the actors are not pretending, they're really playing the game. This is what's interesting: the mechanics of the game support the actors by providing them structure to surprise themselves and the audience.

Improv comedians often work in teams: the people on the teams support each other, provide backup, work collectively toward the creation of a scene or game. They strive, often, for a "feeling of oneness." Viola Spolin says, "Now, what's nicer than having a feeling of oneness, when you're all alone in a crowd, right? [...] and this does produce a unity and a union," between actors. The two actors with their parts, unknown to each other, pay attention to supporting one another and search for a feeling of oneness and connection.

Michael Davies, in his book *Hamlet: Character Studies*, suggests,

Ethical 'character' emerges on the Renaissance stage not simply from 'within', as a 'substance' or from an essential self that pre-existed the action or plot. Rather, 'character' is something that happens on stage, through the actions and language of a play's persons, and so emerges from 'without': character is thus inscribed upon a role not just by the playwright but also by audiences, as they observe and judge the actions and the behavior, the language used and the choices made by any character.<sup>21</sup>

The word "character" derives partly from Old French and partly from Latin, and in its earliest meanings it is purely superficial: the Oxford English Dictionary cites "*caractere*...imprint made by a seal (1372), distinctive sign or mark (1392), symbol used in writing," letter (1422), outward sign (1560)."<sup>22</sup> It does not appear as a "moral or mental qualities developed or strikingly displayed" until 1675. In ancient Greek, "*χαρακτήρ*" meant "die, stamp...characteristic mark, distinctive feature." The closest we can come is post-classical Latin "*caracter*: (of a person) distinctive nature (4<sup>th</sup> cent)," but even describing a person as

<sup>21</sup> Michael Davies, *Hamlet: Character Studies* (New York: Continuum Books, 2008), 7.

<sup>22</sup> "Character," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. Accessed 1 March 2016.

having a distinctive nature does not come close to the interior sense of "character" as we now describe it. The Latin "*caracter*" was also used to describe a spiritual wholeness, or the imprint that holy baptism marks upon the soul of a person, which continues to see "character" as being marked upon a person rather than developed by a person.

This is not to say that the early moderns didn't have a concept of characters or of fictionalized, yet fully developed, people in art. The crucial change depends on whose job it is to determine the character. Stanislavsky, in *Creating a Role*, writes, "we called our *minds* into play. In other words we went through the text carefully, analyzed it, and decided that we wished to look into the past of this classic Shakespearean villain."<sup>23</sup> Imagine the early modern actor examining his part-script. Where could he find enough context to imagine a past and develop a personal history for the character? The only time the early modern actor would be able to piece together an internal story would be onstage in the moment of performance, as the world around him is exposed through other characters' lines.

It was, then, not the actor's job to create character, but the playwright's and the audience's. This is part of why Shakespeare has endured through so much theatrical change in the past four hundred years: his characters are so fully formed that they can respond to any style of performance and keep their integrity. This is because all of the information the actor needs is available in each character's lines. Stanislavsky took the extra effort to develop a backstory for his character, but the early modern actor would simply have needed to understand each of his lines and deliver them clearly, in response to the action onstage. Stanislavsky, after completing his superobjective exercise, writes, "It is also a great satisfaction to speak phrases and thoughts

---

<sup>23</sup> Konstantin Stanislavsky, "Improvisations on Othello," in *Creating a Role*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, ed. Hermine I. Popper (New York, Theatre Arts Books, 1983), 264.

which cover a multitude, an unbroken line, of inner visualizations unrolling like a moving picture.”<sup>24</sup> He is speaking of the moment-to-moment realizations that are arising from his unwavering attention to the scene and to his lines. The play unrolls before him, only as fast as he himself can speak, and the realizations drop into place.

However, Stanislavsky’s objective and superobjective exercises can be done without examining the psychological background of the character. In situations where a Shakespearean character has a strong desire, they speak it: there is very little subtext, or at least there is very little subtext from the actor’s perspective. The onus is on the audience to process the action of the play and understand the subtext that arises from missed connections and misunderstandings. Each character has objectives marked for him, for instance, Orsino’s first monologue contains two explicit objectives:

1. Give me music. Why? To overburden my lovesick appetite.
2. Stop playing. Why? Because it is no longer sweet, and I can’t understand why I’m feeling so overwhelmed.

The actor, reading his part-script, would be able to pick out his directives and try to deduce what is going on in the scene around him. Additionally, if a character has a repeated objective, it implies that his attempts to succeed are being thwarted or that he feels he is not being heard. The actor can see this even more clearly in a part-script, because of the physical proximity of the lines: even the longest part-scripts for *Twelfth Night* were not more than fifteen pages in 12-point font, so the actor was able to look broadly at the words that she was saying over the course of the play in one glance, without getting distracted from her goals by the other characters’ plotlines.

---

<sup>24</sup> Stanislavsky 266.

But Stanislavsky devalues the objectives of the actor in favor of prioritizing the objectives of the character. He speaks rapturously of falling into Othello's life with Desdemona, remembering their courtship, cherishing Cassio's loyalty, and so on. But he attempts to twist his own experiences and thoughts into the mind of another person, which, although an impressive creative feat, will always fall second-best to the real experiences of a person onstage. Shakespeare stimulated his actors' tactical minds onstage, as well as their creative impulses, with the built-in structure of overlapping cues. His actors did not need to fall into reminiscence in order to galvanize them to speak, for they "played the text"<sup>25</sup> and nothing else.

Stanislavsky's end result was to develop "objectives engendered by the text."<sup>26</sup> The imagination and emotional recall served as a way to relate to a set of experiences that Stanislavsky personally had never encountered. But he goes on: "Following it along through the play we came to other deeper lines, other proposed circumstances that came naturally, spontaneously, and inevitably arose from the text and the subtext. In this approach there can be none of that regrettable divergence between the text and subtext."<sup>27</sup> I argue that what he is finding – inseparable text and subtext – is in fact text without subtext; that is, text in which the subtext is so well-embedded that it ceases to be "sub-" at all.

Therefore, Davies' position, that character is imprinted (*caractere*) upon the body of the actor, is more applicable to the early modern theatre. Character, for Shakespeare's actors, is something that happens *to them* rather than something that *they* craft for performance. Like the day in the life of a real person, their character (*character*: the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a people...mental or moral constitution,

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 267.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid 270.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 270.

personality)<sup>28</sup> is composed of their *caractere*, or the impressions they make and those made upon them by others.

Improvisers often create characters, which they then use onstage and develop over time. Shakespeare's actors might have worked in a similar way, by developing their characters more and more with each successive performance. The audience played a huge role in developing the characters of the early modern stage, since the actors were basically trying out their jokes and lines on a live audience. Jokes that didn't land could easily be amended for the next night, and so the show developed. The surprises in the text would fade away, leaving behind the cues in the text as a reminder of that organic discovery. Simultaneously, the cast would discover new surprises every night by deepening their relationship with the audience, who arrived fresh each night and full of new ideas.

### **Staging and Technology**

The audience played a more direct role in early modern drama than it does in our modern theatre, partially due to the setup of the theatres of the day. In both indoor and outdoor theatres, the lack of lighting technology meant that the audience and the stage were both lit, and the audience and actors could easily see one another. In Blackfriars, an indoor theatre, the stage was lit with large chandeliers that hung over the stage. They could be lowered to change out the candles in the act breaks, ensuring a bright source of light for the whole play.<sup>29</sup> In indoor playhouses like Blackfriars, and in large indoor halls that housed touring players, the audience

---

<sup>28</sup> "Character" 9.a. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

<sup>29</sup> Martin White, "'When torchlight made an artificial noon': light and darkness in the indoor Jacobean theatre," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, ed. Andrew Gurr & Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014), 115-136.

would have been seated on benches that extended into the playing space,<sup>30</sup> unlike in the Globe Theatre where there was a defined stage (although the actors sometimes moved into the area where the groundlings stood<sup>31</sup>). The theatre was also laid out in traverse style, with a long, narrow playing space, surrounded on two opposite sides with benches, often with audience members seated in the playing space alongside the actors.<sup>32</sup> There was no “upstage” or “downstage” as we comprehend of it now, and this staging style means that there would always have been at least one actor with her back to the audience at any given moment. This gave the actors more freedom to move around as they chose, without having to worry about being seen. It also placed the audience in a more active role, as they could see each other through the play which was happening in front of them: the backdrop to a scene became the other half of the audience's dumbstruck or laughing faces, encouraging them to participate.

There was also minimal “theatre technology” as we conceive of it: no special effects, no canned sound, no artificial lighting. In short, nothing for which the play would have to sustain a controlled environment. In modern plays, the theatre must be dark (and, the same level of darkness every night) in order to ensure that the lighting design is effective. No such thing existed in the early modern theatre. We do know that they used visual effects such as trick tables to simulate magic, and that they sometimes shot off cannons (one incident leading to the burning down of the Globe Theatre in 1613), but neither of those rely on any other technical elements to make them noticeable. The music came from live, onstage musicians, and all sound effects came from the actors, either offstage or onstage.

---

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Gurr & Farah Karim-Cooper, *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014), 19.

<sup>31</sup> In her book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), Tiffany Stern cites a stage direction from Goffe's *he Careles Shepherdess*: “[the actor], being out, looks in his hat, at which an Actor plac't in the Pit laughs.” See *Rehearsal* 93.

<sup>32</sup> Gurr & Karim-Cooper 2, 7.



The staging and technology of early modern plays were flexible enough to accommodate different performance venues. Again like modern improvisers, early modern actors were trained to respond to each environment and audience that they performed for, and adjust their staging accordingly.<sup>33</sup> This was made easier for them by the clear relationship between the actors and the audience, the well-lit audience, and the close proximity of the audience to the stage.

Shakespeare wrote and structured his plays for the theatrical technology of the time. After researching the theatres, music, part-scripts, and rehearsal processes of the early modern period, it came time to put them into practice with my cast. Until we began rehearsal, all of this research was based on hypothetical guessing and best-case scenarios. The rehearsal period would determine which techniques still worked in practice, and what effects they produced.

---

<sup>33</sup> See Stern, *Rehearsal*; and Gurr & Karim-Cooper, *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* for various in-depth examples of this.

## CHAPTER II: REHEARSALS

**“I can say little more than I’ve studied, and that question’s out of my part.”**

—*Twelfth Night*, I.5.176-177<sup>34</sup>

### Introduction

Up to this point, all of the research that I had done had remained in the realm of the hypothetical. Much like the structure of a scientific experiment, I wanted to direct a production of a Shakespeare play, to see if any of this research held up in practice, with real and sometimes fallible human actors. I also wanted to know if theatrical technology has changed so much in the past 400 years that the early modern style of acting and rehearsing has been rendered obsolete, or if there was something innate to the text that could be accessed by any actor regardless of their background or training. I directed *Twelfth Night* for the Shakespeare Society in the Fall of 2015, and structured the rehearsal process of the show around a series of workshops that were designed to introduce the actors to the techniques I had studied. The final show was done with actors who had learned their lines using part-scripts, acting on a very bare set with the lights in the theatre on, and with live music performed onstage to supplement the play. Throughout this experience, I began to investigate which parts of the early modern dramatic process were innate to the text, and which parts were a product of the circumstances of Shakespeare and his actors. As I discovered over the six weeks of rehearsals, the two were not as easily separable as I had previously assumed. As Stern and Palfrey suggest in *Shakespeare in Parts*,

[Shakespeare's] play-texts display an immanent working knowledge of what is theatrically practicable. But the functions tend to be seen as effectively separate ones: there is a play-text, there are actors to give it life; someone, it is often anachronistically

---

<sup>34</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed 15 April 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

suggested, ‘directed’ the performance. What our book identifies, by contrast, is an actor’s part that in a sense concentrates all three, even the non-existent director.<sup>35</sup>

In the way that Stern and Palfrey found the different theatrical elements to be inseparable from the part-script itself, I found that our investigation of the rehearsal and performance process was deeply rooted in the history of the period and the lifestyles of the actors, as well as the mechanics of the text.

### **Workshops**

I held one two-hour workshop every Saturday afternoon, in addition to meetings and weekday rehearsals with the cast. The workshops were designed to build upon each previous week of rehearsal, adding new skills each week while incorporating and practicing the old ones. Each week, the cast would test out a new technique, discuss it, and then set about to implement it into their personal part-learning process.

The first all-cast meeting was both a read-through of the entire play, as is common in all modern productions, and a part-script making workshop. During a conversation I had with Tiffany Stern, she mentioned to me that the actors in early modern theatre companies often created their own part-scripts during one initial read-through. This makes practical sense, both to save time and the expense of hiring a scribe,<sup>36</sup> and also to give the actor complete ownership over his part. The one complete read-through also allows the actors to get a brief overview of the plot and a sense of how their lines fit into the general scheme of the story, without detracting from the jokes or the surprise of the part-scripts technique. The actors who were present at the

---

<sup>35</sup> Simon Palfrey & Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Palfrey & Stern 1.

first read-through would not be going into the process completely blind, but over the six weeks between the read-through and the first run through (which I will go into in more depth in Chapter 3) the details faded. The actors eventually forgot the specifics of the other characters' lines, and even some of the plot points. However, the read-through helped the actors understand how they fit into the play among the other members of the cast.

So, we sat on the ground together, with each actor on their laptop. I had sent out a master copy of my cut of the script earlier that day, and was going on trust that nobody was going to save a copy to refer to later. Then, each actor opened that script in a word document and began to edit as we went through the lines. When one of their lines came up, they would delete all the previous lines and stage directions, keeping only three cue words inside brackets. They would also keep in important stage directions for their character, but no adjectives describing their acting (sadly, excitedly, etc.). We went through the entire play like that, laughing at the jokes all together; then each actor sent me and my stage manager their individual part-script (the longest of which was only fifteen standard A4 pages), and we had them printed up and bound. We printed two copies of the master script, one for me and one for my stage manager Sophie, just in case of emergencies. But the actors would only use their part-scripts from that point onward.

The first technique workshop was on text analysis. I took monologues in verse and prose from many different Shakespeare plays, took out the characters' names, and gave them to the actors. As a group, we looked through each piece of text for clues to the character and situation surrounding the monologue. We considered verse and scansion, playing around with iambic pentameter and what any metrical variance could mean. Then we looked for key words in the text, or repeating phrases or ideas that are used to emphasize a point. We looked for words that complemented and contradicted each other. Then we tried delivering them to the group. Each

actor talked about what they thought their character was thinking or experiencing, and the audience also shared their thoughts. I found that most of the actors, although they did not know the plays, monologues, or characters they were reading for, could understand very well the character's *character*, if you will, as well as the situation they were experiencing and often the type of person they were talking to.

One of the more interesting conversations came while discussing Titus' monologue "O here I lift this one hand up to heaven" (*Titus Andronicus* III.1.209-238).<sup>37</sup> None of the actors in the room knew what the monologue came from, and they guessed such plays as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. However, they figured out that it was a man speaking to a woman who had been injured, and started delving into the nature imagery of the sea and the welkin to understand the waves of pain and anxiety he was feeling. After I told them the context surrounding the scene, they agreed that though it was interesting, the context would not have driven them to understand the text much differently, because the words perfectly encapsulated the feelings of sorrow and pain the actor needed in the moment. In addition to teaching the actors a set of valuable close-reading skills, this workshop proved to me that Shakespeare wrote his plays in such a way that the idea of an individual character's role was accessible outside of the context of the complete play. As Stern and Palfrey explain, Shakespeare was first and foremost an actor writing for actors.

As an actor, there was effectively no such thing as 'the play-text': or rather, his part *was* the play-text in so far as he ever got hold of it. Here is where the young Shakespeare learnt his trade; here is where his imagination, verbal and technical, learnt to roam. The part supplied the whole.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed 15 April 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

<sup>38</sup> Palfrey & Stern 3.

As part of that first workshop on text and verse, I had Rowan Winterwood (linguistics major and Shaker, class of 2016) come in and give a brief talk on Original Pronunciation. Rowan had done a capstone project on OP<sup>39</sup> for one of her linguistics seminars late last year, and prepared an interactive presentation for the cast. In her talk, she went through the basic sound groups in American English, British English, and OP, and how they were similar and different. She then broke it down (again by sound groups) into different sections of accent work. Rather than learning how to speak whole words in a different accent, she highlighted the specific sounds that differed from American English and OP, and let the actors choose how to implement them. OP is actually much more similar to American English than it is to the modern sound of British English, which was convenient for our actors. She spoke both about the sound of the accent and about the cadence of the accent, which elides more sounds than our current pronunciation of Shakespeare. This helped the actors with their delivery, as well as understanding the language better: using OP helped them to find hidden rhymes or puns that they wouldn't have had access to if they were just using American English. It beautified the language, for example in rhymes like Viola's, "Our shows are more than will, for still we *prove* / Much in our vows but little in our *love*" (*Twelfth Night* II.5.129-130),<sup>40</sup> and drew out hidden jokes in the text. In OP, the "ou" sound that we pronounce as "ow" is flattened to "uh," turning Malvolio's line "To be Count Malvolio" (II.5.34)<sup>41</sup> into a shocking and hilarious auditory pun.

At this time in the process, I was not planning on doing the whole show in OP, but the cast was so enamored with the possibilities that OP opened up that we decided as a group to

---

<sup>39</sup> For clarity, "OP" will always refer to Original Pronunciation.

<sup>40</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Folger Digital Texts.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

explore the whole show in OP. Rowan returned two weeks later to lead a more in-depth workshop on how to speak using OP to prepare them for the performance.

The second workshop was on part-scripts. I had done a workshop on part-scripts before, with the Oxford Experimental Theatre Club on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015, during my year abroad. I had never worked practically with part-scripts before, and I found it to be extremely effective and surprising. The ETC workshop was open to the public, and eight people came (one of whom was a student theatre critic writing a piece for the Cherwell newspaper). Some of them were familiar with Shakespeare, and some were not. Some were actors, and some were not. I had prepared the part-scripts, without the names of the plays attached, and gave them only their lines and their cues to read. Then, I gave each actor a part to read over, gave them a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the text (without telling the other actors what their part contained), then called on the first group and had them start the scene. The audience, who were also on edge because they knew they were next, were watching rapt with attention to see what was going to happen. The actors, whether they were experienced actors or not, did not pay attention to the audience at all because they had to be so attentive to the scene that was unfolding in front of and around them. The first scene to go up was *Romeo & Juliet* 2.4, with Romeo, Mercutio, Nurse, and Benvolio. It was a good place to start because the actress playing Mercutio, though she was an excellent actress, knew nothing about the play and so didn't know what was happening around her. She was hilariously deadpan, letting the jokes come to her in context and delivering them to her friends as they appeared. The Nurse was appropriately flustered, as she tried to figure out who Romeo was. In fact, nobody knew who Romeo was but the actor playing Romeo!

The next scene to be performed was the gulling of Malvolio from *Twelfth Night*. The divided scene was trickier to do blind, because Malvolio didn't know not to look at the

comedians behind him, and they didn't really know that they were supposed to be hiding.

Halfway through, an actor got lost and the scene fell apart. We sat down to discuss. I wrote in my thesis journal:

The first thing mentioned was "it takes more bravery than normal acting." Then came the complete uncertainty about who is speaking in the first place, who they are, and what they're thinking in the context of the story. [An actor] said maybe it would be easiest if you could learn your lines flat, and add emotion as the context arises. I think that's an interesting idea, but I like the idea of the actor/character being wrong sometimes. That might be too scary though. Then we got up and did them again. Things got smoother that time, and the discussion was more in depth. They felt like they had just been waiting for their cues the first time around, but this time they were actually listening to the lines and getting the jokes. I was really excited when someone said "you actually really have to listen to every single thing said." *YES! WE GOT THE POINT!*

(Thesis Journal, 27 May 2015)

After that discussion, we moved on to *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *King Lear*. I hadn't intended to separate the scenes by comedy and tragedy, but it ended up being a very interesting case study. The part-scripts technique worked extremely well for crowd scenes like the "Friends, Romans, countrymen" scene from *Julius Caesar*, as well as the "Wherefore to Dover" *King Lear* scene I explored in Chapter One. The actors discussed how tricky it is to orchestrate those kinds of scenes, and noted that the scenes came about organically when the actors followed their repeated cues. In the *King Lear* scene, the actors playing Regan and Cornwall had the same line, "wherefore to Dover," which came at different times in the scene. Every time they performed it, despite being cued in at different times, they would always say "wherefore to Dover" at the exact same time. It was chilling, and the actors were as surprised as I was that it kept happening so perfectly.

I gave the actors a few minutes to discuss their parts, and told them to come back with the scenes a bit more polished. They were less enthusiastic about the scenes when the surprise had



worn off. In the discussion afterward, one of the actors noted that this style of acting could never be done with a director: the actors can only ask one another what their lines are or what they mean. There's no omniscient mind at work, it's all very equal. I wrote, "It seems to foster a sense of serious ownership of their part, as well as respectful collaboration between the actors" (Thesis Journal, 27 May). While they were working together, it was a very equal situation because each actor had to ask the other two for their lines and therefore could only make independent decisions about his or her character. They would have to ask permission and ask for justification in order to get another actor to do something.

I varied the part-scripts workshop for the Shakespeare Society a little bit to accommodate the larger group and the rehearsal climate. I was careful not to use any texts from *Twelfth Night*, because I didn't want the actors to be exposed to the play before the first run-through. I used the same set of parts, however: *Romeo & Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Julius Caesar*. The cast had already been briefly exposed to part-scripts during the callbacks before casting: I ran auditions normally so as to give every actor a fair chance, but used part-scripts from *Twelfth Night* for callbacks to get a sense for each actor's aptitude for a certain part, as well as their flexibility and comfort with the concept of part-scripts. So this was not an entirely new concept for the actors, however, now they were under more pressure. They were learning their parts for the show, and learning each of these techniques in addition to the lines.

They were under a lot of pressure to not only learn the techniques, but also to be able to synthesize them and put them to use with their lines at the first run-through. So, although the cast had a great time in the part-scripts workshop, they were partially occupied trying to think of ways to apply the parts I had given them to their own lines and their role within the play. That ultimately caused them more confusion than enlightenment, because they couldn't see the whole

picture of the play the way that they could with the workshop texts. Nevertheless, they learned a lot of interesting ways that part-scripts could be used. In fact, most of the actors' responses aligned with those I had heard from the group I ran this rehearsal with at Oxford, which I found to be interesting. I cannot confidently say that this was due to the inherent accessibility of part-scripts, though that could be part of it; however, the repetition of phrases such as "surprise" and "honesty" also emphasized for me the similarities in my two trial groups.<sup>42</sup>

At this point, it was too early for my actors to be extremely familiar with their lines, and so they could not draw direct parallels between the scenes in the workshop and their own scenes. However, it helped them figure out what to look for as they began memorizing. I was hoping, as best I could, to create an atmosphere of comfort around part-scripts, to begin to approximate the ease with which Shakespeare's actors would have analyzed and performed their texts.

The third full workshop was devoted to OP. Rowan returned with a full instructional packet and a series of listening and speaking exercises that she put the actors through. They learned each of the sound groups in American English and in OP, and learned specific tongue twisters to assist them in transitioning their sound groups from one accent to another. An example was "whose new blue shoes do you wear on Tuesday," which ended up sounding more like "oose noo bloo shooz d'you wear on Toozdey." (See Appendix I.1). She also went over not only the sound of OP but the cadence of the accent, and its effect on the style of speaking. OP is a much quicker way of speaking, and sounds more conversational than Received Pronunciation, or than the way that American actors are taught to pronounce Shakespeare

---

<sup>42</sup> Both sets of actors were college students ages 18-22, who had a substantial amount of theatre experience up to this point, many of them also having taken acting classes or lessons. The vocabulary they used was part of a standardized set of shorthand terms to describe the experience of acting, which this thesis also uses. I make this digression not to devalue the language they used or the lessons they learned, but to place myself and this piece of work into the social and theatrical context it came from, just as I am looking to do with Shakespeare.

onstage. This was at first very tricky for the actors, to drop their h's and -ing endings, but some actors gradually came to incorporate the accent into their character's voice and style of acting. Isaac Zerkele, the actor playing Malvolio, really took the accent to heart. His OP had very sustained vowels and cut-off consonants, which helped him create the character of Malvolio the snobby steward, and aurally separated him from the rest of the characters. In a passage he speaks to Olivia, he scorns Feste:

I marvel your Ladyship takes delight in  
 such a barren rascal. I saw him put down the other  
 day with an ordinary fool that has no more brain  
 than a stone. Look you now, he's out of his guard  
 already. Unless you laugh and minister occasion to  
 him, he is gagged. I protest I take these wise men  
 that crow so at these set kind of Fools no better than  
 the Fools' zanies. (I.5.81-88)<sup>43</sup>

The lines contain strange-sounding words like “rascal” and “zanies,” which are brought out by the OP. OP emphasizes the “ay” sound in “zanies,” eliminating the diphthong and flattening it to make it more of an “ae” sound. It also emphasizes the “r” sounds in “barren rascal,” which makes the phrase sound like much more of an epithet than it would in American or British English. The line sounded more disdainful in OP than it did in Isaac’s normal voice, just because of the way the accent plays on certain sounds that Shakespeare chose to write his lines with. Thus, Malvolio’s character choice was drawn from the way his lines sounded in OP, which he would not have developed without the accent work.

Rowan also helped the actors discover their own voice in OP. She told them often that we don't know everything about exactly how OP sounded, and therefore we cannot perfectly recreate it: it comes to us now as a historical recreation from documents such as Shakespeare's

---

<sup>43</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Folger Digital Texts.

plays. Additionally, accents in England were plentiful and diverse, and each speaker of OP would also have had a regional accent. His or her speech would also have been impacted by their social class, and their lifestyle. So, small (or even large) variations in OP could easily be explained by differences in region or background. Katie Piner, the actress playing Viola, often slipped into a Scottish-esque accent during rehearsals, which ultimately became incorporated into the way that she used her OP. The kind of accent each actor developed was also impacted by the kind of lines her character had: since each actor only had her lines, their OP was molded around the kind of words they had available. Characters with more complicated, high-flown language had a more "posh" accent, and characters with simpler lines often had more consonants and therefore had more rustic-sounding interpretations of OP. This only furthered each character's individuality on the stage, and made it more interesting when they all ultimately converged during the first run-through.

For the actors who didn't take easily to OP or didn't work hard at it, it was very hard. Although Rowan held workshops and individual meetings with each member of the cast, and my stage manager and I were available for the actors to practice or run lines with, many actors found it hard to make time to work on the accent. Some actors didn't implement the accent until tech week, and because most of the work they were expected to do was individual, they were behind schedule. Those who didn't learn OP in time made it very hard for those who had worked on the accent but were just starting to implement it in rehearsals. But as a group, even those actors who didn't work on OP from the beginning helped each other reach an equilibrium. Those who were struggling with the accent could hear the other actors speaking in the accent and could more easily mimic the sound of their voices than they could while working on their own. They also

were able to hear more concretely how the accent impacted the voices of other characters, and understand the way the accent shaped the play in a larger context.

OP also helped the actors normalize their text. Since the part-scripts technique was designed in part to make the actors take “creating a role” in the Stanislavsky sense less seriously, I needed to back that up with their voices and movement as well. Madie Farris, a first-year in her first production with the Shakespeare Society, said, “This makes Shakespeare sound, like, so much more casual. Like, people are actually talking to each other. Most of the time, Shakespeare sounds like people are preaching, but this is more like normal people actually talking to each other” (Thesis Journal, 21 October 2015), which really encapsulated what I wanted the OP to do in *Twelfth Night*.

In the fourth workshop, the cast learned the jig at the end of the play. After having chosen the tune to which we would set “When that I was and a little tiny boy,” I went about this part of the research in a very un-academic way: I watched as many videos of jigs as were available, read a little bit about dance steps from the early modern period, and then just made one up. I wanted the jig to combine both the essence of the end-of-play jig from Shakespeare's time, as well as our modern-day idea of a curtain call, while still tying up the last threads of the story. Since the play ends with most of the characters paired off into their couples, I chose to make part of the dance a partner dance that let these couples share a moment onstage together. Then, all the actors entered and danced in pairs, and then turned to face front. After a few steps, they took turns bowing in pairs and letting the audience clap for them. They acknowledged the musicians who were playing, as well as the stage manager in the tech room, then bowed as a group and exited.

It was important to me to have the jig be a strong end to the play, because some parts of the production were technically shaky or unpleasing to the audience, and I wanted both the actors and audience to go home with a good last moment in their minds. The jig was a great way to do that, with the live music and drumming and the cast singing and dancing joyfully together. Since *Twelfth Night* was a comedic play, the jig also helped further the storyline a bit and wrap it up with that sort of "happily ever after" feeling we all love.

The week of the fifth workshop, the cast was starting to get very jittery about the blocking of their scenes, and many people were coming to me with anxieties about where to stand onstage. Up to this point, we had not done any "blocking" in the modern sense that most of these actors were accustomed to. In Shakes (as in most theatre companies), it is common for the director to spend a couple of weeks working with the actors on text work and character development as well as some improv exercises, but eventually zeroing in on the final product of the show and finalizing the blocking, that is, the movement and placement of the characters and set pieces on the stage. We had done none of this, although we had done many improv exercises designed to acquaint the actors with their bodies on stage and help them think about how they moved in space. My hope was to help them develop a stronger sense of their own movement, so that they could use that instinct during the show to influence other characters and correct any errors that they made in the moment. But four weeks is not enough time to instill that intuition in a group of people, and so people were understandably getting anxious. The actors were battling anxiety about the uncertainty of the other characters' lines, as well as the plot, and they wanted to have some blocking to anchor them into the play.

So, for our fifth Saturday rehearsal in late October, I decided to do a cue-lines run of the whole play. That meant that the actors were still only speaking their cue lines aloud, but they

could take some time to walk around the stage and think their lines to themselves, move where they wanted to move and get a sense of the other actors in the space. I decided that it was most important for me to keep the integrity of the part-scripts and cue-lines surprise, so I prioritized the surprises hidden in the text over the surprises that the actors could deliver with their bodies. The blocking gave a slight indication of the intentions behind a line, so in that way it took out part of the surprise, but I found that it helped the actors to relax enough that they were open to listening to the lines that were said, instead of being frightened of what was coming or trying to think ahead and outsmart the system, which ultimately crippled them.

So, we went through the entire play marking each character's entrances and exits, making sure that everyone had the same cue-lines written in their scripts (it so happened that a few people had script errors, so it was a good idea to go through the whole play with cue lines to catch those mistakes which could have thrown off an entire scene). We took enough time for each actor to pace out his or her lines on the stage, before delivering the last three words of their line to their fellow actors. A few actors chose to skip the pacing and instead just jump to their cue lines. This was for a couple reasons: one actor had notably only memorized the last three words of her lines in preparation for the rehearsal, which served two purposes: firstly, that she didn't take the opportunity to think through her whole line to get the blocking in order but rather rushed through the idea in order to just get through the rehearsal, which tripped her up later in the process when she had to remember the whole line in the context of the scene. However, it also served a second purpose of ensuring that she could always remember her last few words, and thus her fellow actors were always cued in correctly.

There were other actors who chose to eschew the blocking rehearsals for other reasons. A couple of actors who were very comfortable with part-scripts decided to engineer their process

so that they would be as surprised as possible, doing only a modicum of blocking and delivering their cue lines quickly so as to give their fellow actors no indication of what the full line was.

These actors were, for the most part, people who were already extremely comfortable with improv games as well as Shakespeare, and they felt confident enough in their position to shake up their own performances and follow the experiment to the letter.

Ultimately, those actors' performances paid off in spades, but that was the product of their own theatrical backgrounds and hard work rather than any natural talent. Shakespeare's companies trained their actors in the use of part-scripts and this method of performing theatre for years, with most actors starting off as boy actors and apprentices and learning for years before getting lead roles.<sup>44</sup> So it stands to reason that actors who are the most comfortable and practiced onstage with Shakespearean text and with the specific kind of improvisation-like style would be the most ready to try something new and be comfortable with it. The actors who were uncomfortable with part-scripts and uncertainty would not have performed well had I forced them into the conditions I set for the show, and they would have either frozen onstage or been so focused on their own performances that they would have been unable to respond to the actors around them and participate in the play to their fullest extent. By choosing to adapt other parts of the process to keep the actors comfortable, I helped the actors be better prepared to respond to the part-scripts technique, which was my first priority.

After the blocking and cue-lines run through, we started running selected scenes in the same manner to get the show blocked to the actors' comfort level. My stage manager Sophie and I also created a master list of entrances and exits, which we put up backstage in two different

---

<sup>44</sup> David Kathman, "Players, Livery Companies, and Apprentices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009). 413.



places and gave the actors access to if they wanted to print out their own personal copy to keep with their part-scripts. I got this idea from Tiffany Stern, who spoke about the prompt book-holder having (in addition to the complete script) a complete “plot”<sup>45</sup> of all stage business and goings-on, in order to assist and correct any actors who might get lost. This, combined with selective blocking rehearsals, helped the cast to become performance-ready.

But it isn't all about the hard work that goes into a rehearsal process, it is also important to keep the cast and crew happy and healthy so that they can do their best job. On the day of the cue-lines run through, I put the cast through a few common character movement exercises. For actors who had participated in Shakes shows before, these were commonplace and expected as a part of the rehearsal process, which put some actors at ease. These exercises focus on controlling the body and understanding how posture contributes to character, and vice versa. For example, I would use a variation on the following set of statements:

*Walk around the room. As you walk, let your body fall into a neutral state. Relax any tensions or strains you have built up over the course of the day. As you relax, breathe. Pay attention to the way your body moves. How does the motion of your feet impact the movement of your hips? Feel each action produce a corresponding reaction throughout your body. Now, imagine that there is a string attached to your forehead and it is pulling you forward, slightly harder than the pace you are walking at. This is called “leading from your forehead.” You are letting your forehead lead the rest of your body as you move around the room. Now, try leading from your hips. How does that feel different from leading from your forehead? How does leading from your forehead feel different from your neutral walk?*

This helps the actors understand the basic principle of leading from a part of the body. Next, they have to learn how to use the leading part of the body to determine their character's onstage presence:

---

<sup>45</sup> Stern, *Rehearsal* 98. Stern does mention that the “plot” was probably not for the actors' direct use, but as we did not have “call-boys” in our *Twelfth Night* the actors used the plot to keep track of their entrances and exits.

*If you think your character feels powerful, experiment leading with your chest, chin, or forehead. How does each one of those change your power? Which one feels more open? Which one feels more angry? Play around with different ways to lead from these parts of your body. Now, try to lead powerfully from your knees. Did it work? What did you have to do? Try leading powerfully from your hips. Was that too sexual for your character? If so, note that you can't lead strongly from your hips. Pick one specific part of your body to lead from and focus on it. Feel how it impacts the rest of your body. Start to feel this out as your "character walk." This is how your character should move when he or she is onstage.*

Once the actors had developed a walk for their characters, they had to practice the walk in the context of the play. I had them walk around and acknowledge the other characters, or deliver their favorite lines to the other actors out of context in order to spark improvised conversation.

I struggled a bit with my ideas of character throughout the rehearsal process, and this exercise felt particularly contentious to me. Because I understood "character" (as enacted by actors using part-scripts) to be something that happened in the moment of performance, this pre-determination of character by the individual actor was hard for me to reconcile with the rest of the teaching I had done throughout the process. However, these rehearsals put the actors at ease, for several reasons. First, it was a task they could accomplish by themselves and take ownership of, in a way that not all of them were able to do with their parts (especially those actors with fewer lines who were feeling a bit left out), and secondly, it was a familiar exercise that the actors had done in previous shows. I asked the actors to base this kind of movement on the words they found in their part-scripts, to create a synchrony between the text in the parts and the character development process the actors were undergoing.

Finally, the whole cast and I took our theatrical exercises outside and walked all the way around the lake, while in character. This gave the actors an unprecedented opportunity to practice their movement, and also an extended time to practice improvising in character.

Usually, improv exercises are short, a few minutes at most. This gave the actors the opportunity to make things up in a more relaxed setting and experiment away from the constraints of time and the pressure of an audience. It also let us all take a much-needed break and go outside to get some fresh air and sunshine. As the actors rediscovered how to have fun with their characters, we all remembered to find joy in the process we were undertaking.

### **Individual Rehearsals**

Between the weekly workshops on Saturday afternoons, I was rehearsing individually with each actor and with actors in the small groups they appeared onstage with. I had mandatory check-in meetings with each actor at the beginning of the process, and together we went through their part-scripts with my lexicons and made sure that they understood the meanings of all the words in their scripts. These meetings were an attempt to guide the actors through the deeply individual process of “studying” their parts that Tiffany Stern refers to in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*: “the stages of rehearsal were skewed quite differently [from modern rehearsal practices]: the emphasis of preparation was on ‘private’ or ‘individual’ rehearsal (also called ‘study’), during which the actor worked on his or her own ‘part’ for performance.”<sup>46</sup> However, these actors were trained in the art of private study, which has been displaced by group rehearsals in the modern theatre.<sup>47</sup>

The individual text-study meetings were especially important for the comedians, as they had jokes for which they needed to understand every word in their parts. During these individual

---

<sup>46</sup> Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>47</sup> Stern elegantly describes the modern rehearsal process in *Rehearsal*, pages 5-10. For readers who are not theatrical practitioners or otherwise want an overview of rehearsal and its effects today, please see her books.

meetings, I was shocked to find that the actors seemed to disproportionately misunderstand the words they were saying as we went through. I realized, over time, that it was because of the part-scripts. Without the rest of the play to contextualize their lines or outdated language, they didn't know the words as they stood on their own. As I wrote in my thesis journal that day, "Note to self: remember to be patient with the actors. I figured the problem out. Part of what's tough about part-scripts is that you have to know the language really well because you don't have anything to infer from. It's like learning Spanish by going to Spain vs. learning Spanish by reading Harry Potter, where you already know the story and can just fit the words in" (Thesis Journal, 3 November 2015). So I prioritized this kind of learning, focusing on a deep textual familiarity with their parts.

Rather than coaching them through how to act their lines, I decided that I needed to teach them the language of early modern England. I used my *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*<sup>48</sup> to define all of the words in their parts, then found citations for how each word or phrase was used in context. The actors and I would discuss how each line could possibly be read or interpreted, and we spent time trying to intuit what the cue-lines in their parts might be suggesting. Often, I would offer the actor two or three possible interpretations for their cue-lines in the context of the scene, and the rehearsal would finish before she had settled decisively on one or the other. In fact, I don't think that many of the actors went into the first run-through with a complete set of solidly decided ideas about what their cue-lines could mean, except for the two actors who were already familiar with *Twelfth Night* (the other members of the cast had never

---

<sup>48</sup> Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1902). 2 Volumes.

read or performed the play before, and in keeping with the early modern practices I asked them not to read the play before auditions).

After the first meeting with the actors when we went through the specific words, I asked every actor to fill out a text questionnaire (Appendix II.1), to facilitate their close reading. In it, I hoped to take the text analysis skills that every Wellesley student develops, and apply them to the process of character development. This was in keeping with the ethos of this project: to reframe the early modern way of working as applicable to the modern. I wanted the actors to empathize with their early modern counterparts, to understand that acting, like critical reading, is a skill that can be developed by anyone, if it's presented clearly. In the text questionnaire, I began by asking the actors to notice different elements of their part-script. This was partially to lead into the development of character, but I hoped that it would also help the actors see their part-script as a complete text, rather than a fragment of a mysterious whole. By answering questions based only on their parts, the actors came to view it as its own text with internal clues, rather than a series of gaps to be filled with external information.

The first questions on the text questionnaire were similar to the questions I posed in the first all-cast workshop. They were basic questions intended to lay the groundwork for more intense close reading, for example: "do you speak more often in verse or prose," "do you have a repeated image, phrase, or concept that occurs in your lines," and "do you like to rhyme, or speak in assonance?"<sup>49</sup> However, each question was paired with a qualifying "why?" or "what does this indicate?" to prompt the actors to bridge the gap between close reading and character development. The next questions were more interpretive: "what are five adjectives you would

---

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix II.1, "Text Questionnaire" for the full set of questions and an example of a completed questionnaire.

use to describe the way you speak” and “what tone of voice do you hear your words in,” helped the actor imagine her words not just as text on the page, but as enacted lines. “Do you often use gesture or movement to punctuate your words” helped the actor take the third step, into imagining the movement of her body along with the text. I also asked the actors to read their lines out loud while looking for assonance or rhyme, in order to get them to hear the lines aloud as a complete unit and thereby be able to find the overarching themes or throughlines.

All of this text work was done to simulate the natural processes I think early modern actors would have developed over time. Since the part-script was originally a self-contained document, Shakespeare's actors would have been able to approach it the way that modern actors now approach a complete text. However, the intervening centuries have taught actors to see their lines as a part of a whole, rather than an entity unto itself, and so I had to do some extra work to reverse that way of thinking. The familiar activity of text analysis also helped to mitigate the fear of part-scripts that the actors were experiencing, and translate their existing skills to fit their new environments.

Shakespeare's actors would have learned how to parse a part-script early on. They were given a shorter text than modern actors receive, and no external assistance or information. They had to develop a method of understanding their parts that today's actors do not need to have. I posit that Shakespeare's actors would have been able to look through a part-script for both thematic clues and structural clues, which would help them understand how they should be presenting their characters, as well as what might befall the characters over the course of the play. This would have combined with an actor's finely-honed set of skills in the delivery of a specific kind of part to help him be comfortable with every part-script that he received.

Most early modern actors would have attended the first read-through, something akin to what my actors did as they created their part-scripts at the beginning of the rehearsal process. This was an opportunity for each actor to see his part in context, and get a feeling for the general plot arc of the play. However, since each play was new to the actors, it is not clear if much information remained with them through the rehearsal process and into the final production of the play. In my production, most of the actors did not remember much, if anything, from the first read-through. This could be for several reasons: firstly, they were busy creating their own part-scripts as the play was being read around them; secondly, they were not experienced enough with this style of learning to know what to look for and how to remember it; and thirdly, what they did remember of the plot did not always fit into the context of their part-script, and it became confusing to try to fit the two together later on.

I attribute this confusion to a lack of familiarity with the process. My actors, who were learning all of these techniques on the fly, were by nature less attentive than Shakespeare's actors, as they did not know specifically what to be looking for and what was not germane to them at that time. Since many of my actors had not read or seen *Twelfth Night* prior to our production, they were in the same position as Shakespeare's actors would have been. However, that also made them more disposed to listen to the read-through as if it were a performance, rather than as an acting tool to be interrogated and synthesized for later use. I think that early modern actors would have developed a system of note-taking and would have recorded important facts during the first read-through that would have aided them in their text analysis processes for the rest of the rehearsal process.

Upon first reading his part-script, an actor would look for repeated cue lines that he delivers,<sup>50</sup> as well as shifts between verse and prose. He would look for repeated phrases and words, and identify thematic threads that run through his lines. He would try, as best he could, to piece together the trajectory of his character's storyline, and identify where the big gaps in his knowledge are. Then, knowing all of those things, he would begin to memorize his lines until he was "perfect." While memorizing his lines, he would practice his delivery, which would be informed by the judgments he made based on the language and any plot points he would have been given in his part.

The rest of his characterization would be more akin to what we today call "actor neutral," which is the simplest possible version of an actor's self, no acting or character development added. In actor neutral, an actor is best prepared to shift her body or voice to any situation that calls for it, and can adapt her character accordingly. Actor neutral is also neutral in terms of character, because to simply deliver the lines with no affect does not distract the audience from the actor's original character choices by negating them with contrary choices (interestingly, this ties in well with the Oxford actor suggesting that it might be easiest to "learn your lines flat," as described on page 47 in this chapter). So the tools available to the early modern actor were: their part-script, through which they received clues about their character and clues about their plot; their pre-rehearsed set of techniques for the kind of character they were trained to play, which often were recycled from script to script; and their body, which was (as all bodies are) ready to respond and adapt to any new situation. Shakespeare's actors had to be more aware of their surroundings than modern actors are, more ready to step into the unknown, but the

---

<sup>50</sup> See Stern & Palfrey, *Shakespeare in Parts* Part III "Repeated Cues," p. 155.



preparation they would have done before ever stepping on the stage helped them to be adaptable and flexible.

Young people, in the early modern period, were taught rhetoric as part of their formal education. Though not all of the actors on Shakespeare's stage would have been formally educated, they all had enough schooling to learn how to read and probably also picked up some tools of rhetoric along the way.<sup>51</sup> As each actor studied his part-script, he would have been looking for rhetorical features in the text, whether that included poetic devices or the structure of the speech itself. This method of text analysis was much more pervasive then than it is now, and thus the text questionnaire served to assist my actors as they learned how to find rhetorical devices in their script and interpret them.

Early modern actors, equipped with all their acting and rhetorical tools, also had to make more individual decisions about their role in the play than modern actors are allowed to. Shakespeare's actors would have seen their characters, like their part-scripts, as self-contained complete entities rather than as parts of a larger whole. I think that because an actor's primary contact was with his part-script, he would have felt a stronger individual impulse toward his character, rather than the impulse modern actors have to regularize their acting and fit their roles into a cohesive plotline. By virtue of the information they had, all of which was contained in the part-script, early modern actors would have had to make more definitive decisions from that text alone, thus creating a stronger bond between the actor and his part than between modern actors and their characters.

This lack of regularization is also what contributes to the surprise of part-scripts. Once the actors arrived together on the stage, the natural dissonances between unknown people are

---

<sup>51</sup> Stern, *Rehearsal* 72.

what cause the surprise and honesty that are so delicious to watch onstage. It also means that the actors would either be able to react to problems that arose “in character” or simply as actors onstage solving a problem (i.e. correcting blocking issues for clarity) rather than attempting to keep an eye on the larger picture of the play. In our modern day, keeping an eye to the larger picture has become such a large task that we have created an entirely new job for it, the “director.”

The “director” is an invention of the modern theatre. If an actor is not the sole authority on his part, there must be someone there to tell him what to do. In the modern theatre, the director is there to provide an external eye and help the actors mold their individual impulses into a seamless whole, often under the title of “the director’s vision.” In the early modern theatre, there was no director. There was a prompter, who was the keeper of the prompt-book, or sole complete script, who kept an eye on the lines to see that the actors were on track and hadn’t jumped a scene. Presumably, the prompter also helped the actors with some preliminary blocking during the few rehearsals that the whole company had together.<sup>52</sup> However, he probably did not ask the actors to amend their speech or gesture to fit an artistic theme, focusing instead on clear blocking and seamless scene transitions. The actors, seasoned veterans that they were, probably also did some group direction with each other and worked out their places on stage as a collective.

So my position as the “director” of *Twelfth Night* was a bit contentious: I was trying, as best I could, to keep my personal ideas out of the play and focus instead on cultivating the actors’ impulses. At the same time, I was still in a position of power within the play, because I was the person developing and running the workshops, and the idea to do the play in this way

---

<sup>52</sup> See Stern, *Rehearsal* 121.

was mine. Ideally, I had wanted to function as a teacher to the group and a resource that they could consult as they made their own individual decisions, but this did not work for a few reasons. Firstly, the new style of rehearsals was too shocking for them to be comfortable without an authority figure to answer their questions. Secondly, the additional pressure of my thesis project caused the team to worry that anything they did wrong would negatively impact the outcome of my thesis, and this worry manifested itself in two ways: that an individual person on the cast would be responsible for tanking the project and the English Department would consequently deny me academic Honors at Commencement, or that I, as a single student and member of the Shakespeare Society, was abusing my place within the group for my own academic ends and coercing my fellow peers into doing my work for me. Neither of these was true, and these opinions were fairly isolated and appeared only among cast members who were already nervous and struggling with the challenges set before them. The third problem with the cast-director setup in *Twelfth Night* is that there was no clear precedent to go follow: we do not have enough information to know definitively how early modern actors and prompt-book holders would have cooperated, and thus I had no “director,” nobody to ask for answers when I had questions. The cast and I were both flying blind, attempting to work through our questions together.

### **Group Rehearsals**

When I was not meeting individually with the actors and working one-on-one with them, I was holding small group and pair rehearsals. These rehearsals, which took different forms as the rehearsal process progressed, were designed to help the actors bond with each other in their small groups, while also practicing the necessary skills for their eventual performances. The first

round of small group rehearsals I did were not at all related to the text of *Twelfth Night*, or even related to Shakespeare. I called them in groups of “lovers” (Viola, Orsino, Sebastian, Olivia) “comedians” (Feste, Malvolio, Andrew, Toby, Fabian, Maria), and “others,” who were the music ensemble and actors with smaller parts. Within these group rehearsals, I paired the actors off with their partners (Viola and Orsino, Andrew and Toby, and so on) and did a series of physical exercises with them. In the “lovers” group, I wanted to build physical intimacy and awareness in the pairs, so I had them do a little bit of adapted Meisner technique to get them to be comfortable staring into each others’ eyes. I knew that once they got past the discomfort of looking deeply into another person’s eyes, they would be better able to transmit nonverbal cues between each other onstage. This was especially important because the actors playing Orsino and Fabian were new to the Shakespeare Society, and therefore not yet comfortable with the other actors in the cast.

The comedians did a couple weeks’ worth of improv in rehearsals. We started off with simple improv games like Bench, Freeze, and Party Quirks, then moved on to more complicated roleplay scenarios. In these scenarios, I hoped to extend the actors’ comfort levels with improvisation onstage. I wanted them to learn how to work as a team, make decisions as a unit, and learn each others’ comedic styles well enough to support one another in onstage improvisations.

In the second rehearsal, I split them into two groups, gave them a minute to confer, and then directed them to play or set up a practical joke on the other group. One group established a set of gestures that they taught to the unaware group, finally leading up to a meeting with the leader of the joke-playing group. Upon performing the set of gestures to the leader, the leader was deeply offended, since the object of the practical joke was to trick the unaware actor into

presenting a series of rude gestures that she had been taught were deferent greetings. The other group decided that their practical joke was to exit the room, presumably to re-enter, but then instead walked downstairs and didn't return to rehearsal. The group who chose to set up the practical joke did, ultimately, find it funny; the group who chose to leave were ultimately dissatisfied with the rehearsal. The practical joke included all of the skills I wanted the actors to develop: cooperation, surprise, playfulness, adaptability, and persistence, to name but a few. I hoped this would translate into the final show, allowing this team of actors to play around onstage and incorporate that playfulness into their scenes.

While working individually with the actors and their parts, I found it challenging to remain neutral, because both the actors and I were fighting our immediate inclinations. They wanted me to give them guidance, answers, and clues to what might lie ahead; I wanted to tell them what I hoped would happen with the part-scripts. But of course, if I did that, the whole process would be null. Even when the actors came to conclusions I didn't agree with, I let them explain their processes to me. For me, the integrity of the process was most important, and I decided that supporting the actors in their own choices would ultimately empower them to give more enthusiastic performances, no matter what their choices were.

A shortfall of this process was that the jokes were challenging to work through using only part-scripts. Feste's lines especially, which are a mixture of made-up phrases and obscure jokes, were not immediately comprehensible to the audience, or even the other actors onstage. Lily, the actor playing Feste, and I went through all of her lines with the lexicon and a set of footnoted editions of *Twelfth Night*, and compared all the possible interpretations of the jokes. Despite that, it was still challenging to land the jokes, because the recipients of the jokes didn't always understand the double entendres or references. For Feste, I decided to amend the part-scripts

practice a little bit, because she was struggling to remember the lines due to their outdated language. That was one of the only times I “directed,” in the usual sense of giving advice and answers to an actor. I didn’t do the same thing for Malvolio or the other comedians, so the surprise was intact for them. Throughout the process, I realized why Shakespeare’s clowns were known for being master improvisers: the parts are tricky to begin with, and a clown would be more successful onstage if he could amend the words and phrasing to fit the crowd and get the laugh.<sup>53</sup> Lily ultimately did end up improvising a portion of her lines, but her part was by far the most challenging one in the play: the skills that Shakespeare’s clowns used had been developed over years of practice and thousands of performances.

Another challenge of part-scripts was the use of asides. The discrepancy between when a character was listening to the other characters onstage or not is a challenge with part-scripts, because nothing is clearly delineated. In the gulling of Malvolio scene, it is hard to manage the times when the comedians (Toby, Andrew, and Fabian) are hiding and whispering in secret, and when they are visible to the audience, and thus also visible to Malvolio. The actor playing Malvolio, also, must listen to their lines to pick up his cues, and so must find a balance between listening intently to the other voices around him and pretending not to notice them, while also maintaining the throughline of his rapturous monologue. In his lines, he will see that he offers repeated cues to his scene partners, for example “let me see, let me see, let me see” (II.5.113),<sup>54</sup> which tells him he will be interrupted by the actors cued with “let me see.” This could indicate that he thinks he is alone, and from his other cues it is clear that he is not responding to any of the lines being spoken around him.<sup>55</sup> For a group of actors who are comfortable with each other

---

<sup>53</sup> Stern, *Rehearsal* 63.

<sup>54</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts).

<sup>55</sup> Stern & Palfrey 177-178.

and very familiar with their lines, there is an opportunity in this scene to play with the physical comedy of hiding and being seen, as the Malvolio-actor can turn around at any moment as if searching for the sound coming inexplicably from the background. Conversely, the comedians can push the limits of their hiding in the box-tree to get closer and closer to the unaware Malvolio, and thereby make a joke of his obliviousness.

However, in practice, the actors in our production were too unused to the practice of part-scripts to be comfortable pushing the boundaries in that way. The cacophony of overlapping parts in the gulling scene was challenging enough to keep the actors entirely occupied without adding improvised blocking into the scene. It also required a group of actors who were so physically attuned to one another that they could effectively move as a group and communicate with each other nonverbally, while also juggling the responsibilities of their individual lines.

Ideally, the box-tree scene could have been as much fun for the actors onstage as it was for the audience. The actors, aware only that Malvolio was not supposed to see the comedians, could have taken that free rein to play tricks on each other. Malvolio, hearing “a sound” from the bushes, could turn around and surprise the comedians at any moment, forcing them to hide behind whatever was nearby. The repeated cues from the comedians forced them to speak over each other, hushing each other even as they try to get a better view. Rather than delivering the text one line at a time, it could have been a hilarious cacophony as the actors vied for attention. Additionally, the comedians had free rein to impersonate, mock, or otherwise make fun of the unsuspecting Malvolio, as he daydreamed of love and high stature. For all of this to work, however, you need a set of comedians who are not only in tune with one another as actors, but also very skilled and confident in their own improvisational abilities.

What I hope I am demonstrating, through all of these anecdotes, is that Shakespeare's actors were trained in a way so as to be completely adept at a set of technical skills, which they could then implement with any part they were given to learn. We often say now that Shakespeare's actors were all "typecast," which is a modern term that associates an actor's physical appearance with the kind of parts they will be offered: beautiful pale young women are typecast as ingénues, broad-shouldered bearded men are cast as fathers, African-American women are cast as sassy best friends, and so on. But Shakespeare's actors were not typecast in the way that we conceive of it now. Rather, they honed their natural abilities in certain theatrical areas, and practiced a set of skills that were transferable to any similar role. This had very little to do with their external appearance, and much more to do with their skill set. Tiffany Stern supports this in her book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, when she writes:

Actors working from cued parts, who were also typecast because of their heavy acting-schedule, seem often to have had an across-play acting personality. That is to say, they performed more-or-less the same role from play to play; they tended not to see each play as an individual whole, but rather to treat their own stretch of text as one long, continuous, consistent acting part.<sup>56</sup>

Each type of Shakespearean role requires a different set of skills. For example, clowns *must* be comfortable improvising. Comedians (similar to clowns, comedic characters cast in non-fool and non-clown roles) must be able to work in small groups and utilize physical comedy. Lovers need to be comfortable being intimate, close, and constantly aware of the body of their partner, in order to respond to minute shifts in physicality and inflection. All of these are aspects of the larger goal of interpersonal closeness, helping the actors to see the connections between them and showing them how to utilize these connections to create a story. The actors, although they

---

<sup>56</sup> Stern, *Rehearsal*, 15.



didn't necessarily see their part-scripts as pieces of a larger whole, did see themselves as part of a collective of actors. In Shakespeare's time, this was assisted by the repertory nature of the theatres and companies; for us, the Shakespeare Society does the same thing in miniature.

However, we had less experience than Shakespeare's companies did. A repertory company functions on its group-developed skills and collective memory; we didn't have enough time in only six weeks to develop the skills that Shakespeare's companies had. The members of the Shakespeare Society, as with all other college organizations, have a term of four years at most, so the turnover is fast. Thus, the actors are all relatively new to one another and inexperienced, regardless of their inherent talent. In a talk-back with the cast after our first read-through, the cast agreed that the part-scripts technique, while very interesting, was still too new to them for them to use to the full potential they were imagining it could have. Several shows down the line, they said, they would be ready to use it full-force.

### **Couplets**

Shakespeare's companies had an apprentice system, in which new members to the company (usually boy actors) would be paired with an older actor to help them acclimate to the company and the process of making theatre.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the new actor would have a go-to person to ask for advice, and he would be taught the ropes by a working actor whom he could observe on the job. Often, they would be "apprentices" to the older actor under the guise of his trade, and they would learn the craft and trade of theatre just as other apprentices would learn the craft and trade of shoemaking or blacksmithing. This is a particularly useful system in a world

---

<sup>57</sup> Tiffany Stern, "The theatre of Shakespeare's London," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta De Grazia, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010,) 46. Ebook, Accessed 30 March 2016.

that had no formal theatre training, and it helped the apprentices to develop and practice the extremely fine-tuned skills that they would need to be good craftspeople of the early modern theatre.

In the Shakespeare Society, we have a system called “sonnet families,” in which new members are placed into a smaller group within the society, to help foster friendships and make the social aspect of the Society more immediately personal. However, we did not have a similar system for our theatrical work, which is equally as important as our social interactions. I was inspired by the apprentice system, suggested to me in a conversation with Tiffany Stern in Oxford in the spring of 2015, and decided to implement it for my production of *Twelfth Night*. Dr. Stern writes in her book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, “Parts were often practiced in the presence of an ‘instructor’ who was either author, prompter, manager, or friend to the actor, and who helped further to prescribe the rules that limited physical and gestural range.”<sup>58</sup> The presence of an instructor served the actor as a sort of precursor to a director, while also helping build community amongst the members of the theatre company. While in conversation with Dr. Stern, she mentioned that it might have been probable for the boy actors playing women's roles to be apprenticed to their male counterpart. For example, the boy playing Viola might be paired with the actor playing Orsino, not only to help the boy actor find his place in the company but also to create a rapport between the two actors before they went onstage together. It also offered an opportunity to run lines from the same scenes together, or to discuss plot points that they otherwise would not have had access to with just their own part-scripts.

I decided, however, to prioritize the integrity of the part-script, and I tried not to pair actors with their scene partners. I did make a concerted effort to pair new actors with

---

<sup>58</sup> Stern, *Rehearsal*, 11.

experienced ones, and I tried to pair actors together who had a similar number of lines, so that the burden of helping each other would be distributed equally. I gave the pairs the cutesy Shakespearean name of “couplets,” and the ultimate assignments for the pairings were as follows:

Katie Piner (Viola) + Rainier Pearl-Styles (Fabian)  
 Vanessa Willoughby (Orsino) + Kristen Huizenga (Toby)  
 Grace Owen (Antonio, Music) + Isaac Zerkele (Malvolio)  
 Lara Brennan (Priest, Music) + Madie Farris (Curio, Music)  
 Fani Ntavelou-Baum (Officer, Music) + Marley Forrest (Officer, Valentine, Music)  
 Cordelia Zhong (Captain, Music) + Brigitte Demelo (Sebastian)  
 Lily Odekirk (Feste) + Caroline Kelley (Maria)  
 Maya Martin-Udry (Olivia) + Ramona Head (Andrew)

In the introductory email I wrote to the actors, I described couplet buddies as “your first point of call for bits of day-to-day theatrical business like running lines or bouncing around character questions.” I asked the actors to do their take-home text work, including the text questionnaire, with their couplet buddy. They also eventually ended up having OP meetings together, to learn how to help each other work on OP. At the beginning of the rehearsal process, I had each couplet buddy come in for a meeting with me in which I taught them some helpful ways to coach each other through learning their part-scripts. We discussed helpful methods for drilling lines, and how to “sidecoach” another actor as he or she is developing a character or working on blocking. With those essential skills transferred, I sent them off to work with each other.

As I’ve already discussed, Shakespeare’s companies did not have directors. I do not argue that apprentices and actors helped to direct each other, but there must have been a more group-oriented method of developing the play, as well as the aforementioned focus on the singular actor and his individual work. So, the early modern companies had both an intensely individual focus and a sense of an equal group mentality, which they used to orchestrate and

organize the action onstage. There are companies now that do devised or group-directed theatre, but the Shakespeare Society is not one of them. With that in mind, the couplets were a halfway point between the complete anarchy of group direction and the singular voice of the modern director.

Some couplet buddies did go on to be very good friends, some of them spending time with each other outside of rehearsal, or becoming each other's confidante within Shakes broadly as well as in the context of the play. In the instances where this happened, it did organically enrich the play and keep up the group morale. I noticed, over time, that couplets tended to progress at similar speeds. I posit that this is because couplets who had at least one member who was motivated to seek out the other person to do independent work also, by nature, forced the other person to develop their own character and acting skills alongside them. There were couplets that notably did not engage with one another, and these actors were the ones who ultimately struggled the most. I also noticed that the people who seemed to be getting the most help from the couplet system were the new members. This makes sense, of course, because the couplet system was derived from the apprentice system, which was built to facilitate the inclusion of newcomers; however, in *Twelfth Night*, the new actors received not only personalized tutoring with their acting, but also a new friend and a guaranteed buddy with whom to approach new types of work. Regardless of the skill levels of the newcomers or senior actors who mentored them, this social structure greatly improved the morale of the cast and facilitated learning for all members.

### **Tech and the actor**

While rehearsals were going on, there was also a tremendous amount of technical work and research going on behind the stage. Each member of the Shakespeare Society is required to do eight hours of technical work for each show, whether or not they are acting. That meant that the actors were also handling the physical artifacts of performance. The most intense work went into costuming, and many costume pieces had to be made from scratch or restored. Actors were often given research tasks as well as handiwork: for example, Madie Farris, a first-year playing Curio and participating in the music ensemble, became the society milliner. She researched different styles of hats, then made a hat for each character based on their role in the play world. Because of that, she learned a lot about the vocational and socioeconomic setup of early modern England, and brought that to bear on her performance work. As each member of the cast learned more about the world surrounding the play, it became commonplace to talk about tech research and share interesting anecdotes or questions. In this way, the cast helped each other understand their parts more fully, while still doing most of the work through independent research and exploration.

### **Costumes**

Katie Piner, who also played the part of Viola, was the costumes designer for *Twelfth Night*. She had been one of my earliest team members and supporters when I pitched the early modern rehearsal process to the Society, and even helped me with some research while we were both abroad. She and I worked extensively on the costuming research, which we tried to keep as accurate as possible to the time period. While discussing what it meant to “transpose” early modern Shakespeare to the current age, we debated the merits of having Elizabethan clothing on

the actors. We thought it might put the audience on edge, and distance them from the play-world which we hoped they would be able to jump into headfirst. However, we ultimately decided on the Elizabethan costuming, both for the visual effect and for the physical effect that clothes have on the body of the actors. The tightness of a corset, the structure of a shoe, the laces of a doublet – all of these things impact the way an actor stands, the way he moves, and the way he delivers his lines. Since the rehearsals for *Twelfth Night* were so much more important than the final product, I ultimately decided to give my actors a new experience rather than making certain that the audience would be comfortable.

In her dramaturgical notes, Katie Piner wrote about her process for developing the costumes for *Twelfth Night*:

The ultimate goal of the costumes for this production was not to recreate authentic Elizabethan garments for the audience's enjoyment, but rather to allow the actors to descend into the feeling of Elizabethan clothing. We wanted actors to feel how it would have felt to dress for the stage in this period and perform wearing the many layers that the Elizabethans did.

She outlined some of the historical inaccuracies in the costuming, which I thought was a deft way of allowing the audience to engage with the modernization of early modern Shakespeare, effectively counteracting the “museum theatre” aspect of early modern costuming. She mentioned the boning in the corsets (steel boning, not reeds), which makes them more durable, though less flexible; elastic in the waistbands of pants and threaded through the stockings (“though elastic was not patented until 1820, the tightness of the cottons and wools of the period created a feeling similar to that of the elastic our actors are wearing”); and finally, a stylistic choice that we made about the costuming of the officers:

Our officers are wearing matching outfits, what should appear like a uniform. The concept of a uniform, for positions such as officer, had not appeared in the early 1600s, so it would not have appeared on stage. However, since we are modern viewers (used to

uniforms) watching this show, and acting in this show, creating an officer uniform was necessary to communicate a unification between these two actors.

This note exemplifies how the costuming worked in *Twelfth Night*: Piner's artistry struck a perfect balance between creating an authentic physical experience for the actors and communicating the right images to the audience.

### **Music**

Shakespeare's plays would have had live music played at every show. Because the music and songs are so intrinsic to both the plot and the ambiance of *Twelfth Night*, it was always very important to me to have live music onstage. Combining this with the early modern style gave the cast and me a great opportunity to delve into the world of early modern music and performance. It also gave me a great opportunity to work with the actors who had smaller parts in the show. Our *Twelfth Night* had five small roles with negligible stage time, and though those actors participated in the workshops and were given equally strenuous training, they didn't have the same amount of stage time as the actors with larger roles. I gave them the option to be part of the "music ensemble," who cooperated with the actors onstage to produce live music that underscored the whole show.

This was not early modern practice; actors and musicians occupied different areas of the stage in early modern performance, but it seemed to me to be appropriate for our *Twelfth Night*, as the music is so deeply tied to the plot and the characters. So I assembled five musicians, along with a non-acting music director, who was supposed to organize the musicians, pick and edit the music, and organize rehearsals with the music team before the show opened. I personally worked with the actor playing Feste to incorporate her study of the music into her study of the part-scripts. However, at the end of October, only two weeks before the show

opened, my music director dropped out, without having done any of the work with the actors. I enlisted Madie Farris, a first year who was new to Shakes, and a couple of other generous musically-trained actors, and together we put together arrangements of the music. Due to the short notice, I didn't have as much time to research the music as I would have liked, but after consulting *Shakespeare's Songbook*<sup>59</sup> and my adviser Professor Ko, I chose the songs. I arranged the music for the very untraditional musical group of guitar, ukulele, clarinet, Irish drum, and spoons, which gave every musician a way to participate to her own skill level. We rehearsed the songs quickly and got the whole score together just in time for opening night.

I chose to seat the musicians on the stage with the actors for two reasons: firstly, because I wanted to highlight the important role that the music plays in *Twelfth Night*; secondly, because early modern theatres would have had the musicians visible to the audience (though not on the stage in the same realm as the actors); thirdly, because I wanted the characters onstage to be able to interact with the musicians as they were singing the songs; and lastly, because I wanted to blur the boundaries between the stage and the audience. The music ensemble's presence onstage helped guide the audience through the play, as well as making them feel like they were part of the story being told onstage. As the actors in the music ensemble were called onstage from their parts, they seamlessly put aside their instruments and stepped onto the stage, permeating the "fourth wall" between actors and audience.

## **Conclusion**

The rehearsal process was an immersive experience for the actors, both physically and mentally. Pairing the tactile sensations of the technical process with the intense mental

---

<sup>59</sup> Ross W. Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook* (New York, W. W. Norton & Co, 2004).



gymnastics required for the use of part-scripts paid off; the actors experienced a crash course in the inner workings of the early modern theatre, exploring the many facets of production even more deeply and conscientiously than even the early moderns might have. Additionally, these actors accomplished so much learning in only six weeks; though Shakespeare's actors had a much shorter rehearsal process for each show,<sup>60</sup> they supplemented that quick turnaround with years of experience and practice. Throughout the rehearsal process, my focus was on learning and exploring the possibilities of each theatrical technique. I wanted the actors to discuss what the technique did, how it worked, and how it fit into the text it was part of. Through workshops and rigorous individual work, the cast of *Twelfth Night* gradually came to understand the techniques that drove the early modern theatrical machine.

We also often discussed the ways in which Shakespeare's performance is similar and dissimilar to the ways it is performed today. The actors were surprised at how much easier (in theory) techniques like part-scripts and Original Pronunciation made it to act their parts. In many ways, paring a play down to a set of learnable, practicable techniques seemed to make the text more approachable, even though the techniques themselves were challenging and unfamiliar. But the next test came when we took the techniques out of the rehearsal room and brought them onto the stage, in front of an audience.

---

<sup>60</sup> Tiffany Stern writes in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, 54-55: "Neil Carson [...] suggests that the normal preparation time for a new play was two weeks, but also offers clear examples of plays that were put into performance with what he calls 'exceptional haste', after nine, six, and three days' preparation. [...] Even when analyzing the same accounts, scholars cannot reach compatible conclusions about the length of time set aside for the company's 'rehearsal', largely because of their tendency to favour examples suggesting that preparation took up many days over those that suggest that preparation took up only a few days. In fact, to calculate averages in such a situation makes no sense: the number of days during which the actors *could* have rehearsed is not the same as the number of days they *did* rehearse." Stern continues in this section by discussing the amount of time allotted to group rehearsal versus the amount of time allotted to individual "study," and concludes that there was also not a regularized ratio of individual work to group work.

## CHAPTER III: PERFORMANCE &amp; CONCLUSIONS

**“And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus, yet 'tis not madness”**

—*Twelfth Night*,<sup>61</sup>

### **Introduction**

Until November third, the cast had not heard the whole play from beginning to end. All their work had either been instructional (in the workshops), abstracted (small group rehearsals with scene partners), or individual. All the work they had done inside and out of rehearsals was all leading up to the moment of truth: the first dress rehearsal.

But, as was true for every other element of this performance, the first dress rehearsal was a contentious space for our modern actors. In Shakespeare's time, the actors would arrive for the first dress rehearsal “perfect,” with all of their lines learned and their parts perfectly conned. Tiffany Stern emphasizes this in her book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, writing: “As actors brought to group rehearsal a finished performance, the occasion thus functioned like dress rehearsals today, happening after the important decisions had been made. Collective rehearsals were thus the most dispensable part of play preparation: each age has examples of plays put into performance without any group rehearsal at all.”<sup>62</sup> This is because they only had one or two rehearsals prior to opening the show for a paying audience, so time was of the essence and everyone had to be as economical as possible with their efforts in group rehearsals.

Similarly, in modern professional theatres, a dress rehearsal is also a time where the actors are “perfectly” well-prepared with their lines and blocking, and the dress rehearsal serves

---

<sup>61</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts). Ebook, accessed 15 April 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

<sup>62</sup> Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

mostly to work out technical errors and visual anomalies. At a dress rehearsal, the actors (already prepared with their parts) have all of their props, costumes, and technical effects for the first time. It is always a time of great discovery, wonder, and confusion; all of the disparate elements of the show fall into place, and everyone has a series of “eureka!” moments as all the independent work done by actors and designers collides.

However, in modern theatres, there is always a stage manager present for rehearsals and dress rehearsals. The stage manager, among her many other responsibilities, is “on book” for the actors as they learn their parts. Even during the dress runs, the actors can “call for line” and the stage manager will give them the line, or redirect them if they veer from the script. In Shakes, it is common practice for the actors to still be shaky with their lines, even up until the final dress rehearsals. Due to the busy lives we lead as students, as well as the non-professional nature of our company, we do not tend to expect that students will be completely off-book for dress rehearsals. Also because students design, build, and implement all of the technical elements for each show, we do not always have a complete “dress rehearsal” until the few nights before the opening performance.

I wanted our first dress rehearsal to happen with ample time for the actors to synthesize the lessons they would inevitably learn, and also to give myself enough time to troubleshoot any problems that would arise and solve them respectfully and healthily. So I scheduled the first dress rehearsal for November 3<sup>rd</sup>, nine days before the show opened. Although I emphasized that being line-perfect was of the utmost importance by November 3<sup>rd</sup>, not everyone was able to do it, for numerous valid reasons. Many actors struggled to memorize lines perfectly from part-scripts, because they had never learned how to rote memorize in that way with no other context to support or jog their memories. Some were frustrated by the addition of Original

Pronunciation, and found it hard to remember lines in the accent. Others simply hadn't taken the time.

### **The First Dress Rehearsal**

Suddenly, and seemingly without warning, November 3<sup>rd</sup> arrived. I invited a few of my faculty advisers to the run-through: Professor Yu Jin Ko, my thesis adviser and professor in the English Department; David Towlun, my boss and production manager of the Wellesley Theatre Studies Department; and Diego Arciniegas, professor in the Theatre Studies Department.

Professor Ko and Mr. Towlun were able to come for part of the run-through, and both of them took notes to give to me after the run-through was over. I also invited other non-acting members of the Shakespeare Society to observe, so that the cast would have a supportive audience of friends to cheer them on and laugh at the jokes.

The actors were mostly (though not entirely) in costume, and the stage was set up the way it would be for the final production. The musicians were not yet finished rehearsing their music, so we let that go for the time being. Backstage, the actors clutched their part-scripts and whispered lines to each other, repeated tongue-twisters in OP and rifled through their notes to find their entrances and exits.

The first moment of the play is indistinct. With no curtain speech or lighting shift to delineate end of the audience's entrance and the beginning of the play, the actors were held in a moment of limbo before going onstage. Even the pre-show music, played by the music ensemble, was supposed to continue until Orsino's entrance. Both the actors and the audience waited, breathless, trying to guess when the play began. Finally, on some arbitrary cue, Vanessa (the actor playing Orsino) stepped out onto the stage, and the play began.

I had run a few cue-lines rehearsals intended to drill entrances and exits, but the cast still seemed surprised as the other actors entered the scene. This was partially because the actors had no concept of the way the story fit together around them, and partially because everything that happened onstage was a brand new experience. I had underestimated the power of the unknown in this rehearsal; though the actors had learned their lines perfectly, rehearsed their entrances and exits, and had a few solid guesses as to the trajectory of their plotlines, all of this went out the window when they were thrown into this completely new environment.

I say “completely new,” because although it was composed of familiar elements, the visual picture of the stage and the timbre of the actors’ experiences was brand new. In the closest approximation to this rehearsal, I worked one-on-one with individual actors, reading the cue-lines from their part-scripts and allowing them to rehearse their full lines. But in this kind of rehearsal, they were still “screaming into the void,” as one actor described it. They were alone on the stage, with only me for company; they still had no context to place their lines in; and they had no other characters around them to respond to nonverbally. They had no audience to respond to their lines, to laugh or sigh at their exploits, nobody to make eye contact with to make a point. This kind of rehearsal, while technically useful to drill and memorize lines, was still miles away from the kind of rehearsal these actors were used to, not to mention a paltry approximation of the excitement of performance.

So, as the actors stepped onstage, “perfect” and prepared, they found themselves alone in a completely foreign world. Armed only with their part-scripts, they had to fight their way through the melee of other actors’ storylines. However, not only were they dealing with the new elements that they had been prepared to expect, but the things they thought were familiar now proved to be not what they had seemed. Their lines took on a completely new context when they

spoke them face-to-face with other characters; so too did their moment-to-moment reactions. They couldn't just react to the lines at face value from the script, they also had to synthesize the other characters' nonverbal reactions and incorporate them into their responses. These actors were used to developing and practicing these responses through an extensive trial and error rehearsal process, deciding both which responses were appropriate and which were aesthetically appealing. This new immediate response process was a complete shock to the system.

Predictably, the actors who had worked extra hard to memorize their lines perfectly responded best to this new environment. The struggle to recall words was too much to process with all the other distractions onstage, and the actors who hadn't prepared were completely lost and confused. They then started flailing, trying to make up their lines, but without the correct words at the end of their lines, they wouldn't be able to cue in the next actors, and the scene dissolved into chaos and painful silence. In a traditional rehearsal process, if an actor "goes up on a line," or forgets the line, the other actors who have rehearsed with her will be able to improvise the information conveyed in that line, save the floundering actor, and continue to move the scene forward without the audience noticing. But for this show, nobody knew how to save the scene, or even that something had gone wrong at all. Everyone was much more vulnerable.

This, understandably, made the actors even more nervous, and some of them (especially those who were still shaky on their lines) reacted by focusing all their energy on remembering exactly what their lines were. However, this backfired for them, as they were not always able to devote enough attention to the equally important job of paying attention to their surroundings, in order to catch their cue lines and know what the context for their lines should be. It became painfully obvious which actors had come to the rehearsal prepared, and which had not. There

seemed to be no shortcut to rehearsing with the part-scripts: those who prepared were buoyed along on the mechanics of the technique, and those who were not prepared fell short.

In the box-tree scene, arguably the most challenging scene of the play, the actors struggled to talk over each other in the way that their part-scripts demanded. They were used to waiting politely until their fellow actors were finished, and then beginning their lines; in situations when they would be asked to talk over one another, they were used to having the group rehearsal time to orchestrate it and time it out perfectly. So, as Toby, Fabian, and Andrew's lines overlapped, they would timidly stop speaking as soon as another actor began; the actor, thinking she had misunderstood her cue, would also stop and wait for her cue to finish the line. Then, in the awkward silence, they would both panic, not knowing who had made the mistake.

Simultaneously, the actor playing Malvolio, alone onstage, had trouble pretending to be caught up in his own world. When the comedians stopped speaking, for whatever reason, he would think he had missed his next cue to speak. However, having not actually heard his cue, he didn't begin a line, so he simply froze onstage, unable to keep up the self-absorbed façade his part required. So, the first attempt at the box-tree scene was fairly uncomfortable, full of stops and starts, and completely lacking in the kind of urgent comedic timing the scene relied on. In trying to stay aware and on top of their cues, the actors lost control of their part-scripts and the interactions that drove the scene forward.

It was also a challenge for the actors to be aware at all times while backstage. In a modern rehearsal process, the actors are aware enough of the pacing of the show that they know when their natural breaks appear, and can take time off to get a drink of water or go to the bathroom during those breaks. These actors did not know how fast the play went, and therefore they missed many of their entrances during the first read-through. To help fix that, my stage

manager and I made a master chart of all the entrances and exits in the play, and the cue-lines that they needed to enter on. We hung a copy of the chart backstage, as well as sharing it with all the actors so that anybody who wanted one could have a copy for their own personal use during the performance.

It is common that actors who are good improvisers are often a bit *laissez-faire* about learning their lines and blocking word-perfectly, because they are able to make do by improvising the lines seamlessly in performance. The kind of improvisation required to do well with part-scripts is a completely different sort of improv, more akin to the “one-word” improv game. Two actors stand onstage. Each actor has only one word, for example “banana” for Actor 1 and “confusion” for Actor 2. They are given a scenario in which they take part, and must act out their parts in this scene—but instead of improvising lines, Actor 1 can only say “banana” and Actor 2 can only say “confusion.” The actors must instead communicate their intentions through their vocal inflection, timing, facial expressions, and body language. Similarly, an early-modern actor would have been bound to his part-script, unable to speak any other words but those in his text, and would have to improvise his extra-textual acting from the context around him as the scene unfolded. This is, arguably, the inverse of modern improvisation, where the improviser knows what kind of trajectory the scene might take and must manipulate the language to reach her end-goal.

So, the practiced improvisers in my cast were surprised to find that their usual method of acting wasn't working out. A few of them did understand, as the show developed, that they could improvise the middle parts of their line as long as they successfully delivered the last few words to cue in the next actor, but once that was discovered they would often take the shortest possible path to the cue in order to avoid embarrassment. This technique would have worked



well for Shakespeare's clowns, who were known for heading off on their own tangents. However, those clowns must have possessed both kinds of improvisational skills: not only modern storytelling improvisation, but also the early modern improvisation required to adapt to each scene.

The actors who flourished during the first run-through were those who were extremely confident in their lines. These actors were prepared, and more importantly, relaxed, as they stood onstage. While waiting for their next cue to arrive, they were calm enough to listen carefully and respond to the cue when it came. But it was not important enough to just be listening for the cue; the actors had to also be able to pay attention to the story unfolding around them. They did not yet know how the threads of the story wove together, and since they were only onstage for their scenes, they were even more in the dark. The actors, in order to respond accurately to the scene around them, had to be able to listen and synthesize the situation around them. This required the actor to have deep confidence in her lines, as well as comfort onstage: no attention could be wasted feeling self-conscious or worrying about the upcoming scene. The actors who were able to remain calm and collected were also able to follow along and continue to be in control of their scenes. The actors who stumbled at the beginning rarely got back on track, because of the contextual information that had passed them by while they were floundering.

Katie Piner, the actress playing Viola, was probably the actor who was most confident in her lines going into the first run-through. With a long track record of Shakespeare and non-Shakespeare shows behind her, she was calm and confident onstage, and understood her limits as an actor well enough to prepare herself rigorously in advance. She requested one-on-one meetings with me throughout the semester to check in on her progress, and continued to drill her

lines with me and with Rainier, her couplet buddy. She also had the most lines and the most dynamic part, which put the pressure on her to perform well. In individual meetings with me she had expressed concern, feeling personally detached from her character and repeatedly failing to understand Viola's motivations for the things she did. She told me she had no sympathy for the speed at which Viola vacillated between feelings: she mourns for her dead father and brother only in the first scene of the play, and after that she has moved on. Katie had trouble empathizing with that, and though we tried to work through it, she went into the first run-through still a little bit lacking in confidence with her character.

As the first read-through began in earnest, the speed at which Viola seemed to be changing emotions was slowed down by the action of the play. Katie's part-script, though the longest of the cast, was still only fifteen type-written pages, and it became clear that what had been bothering her was not entirely the fault of the character but her condensed reading of the part-script.

Over the course of the run-through, Katie Piner's understanding of the character broadened in every sense of the word. Not only did it become more richly contrasted with the other characters around her, but the time and scope of her performance broadened from her fifteen pages to fit the two-hour play. Katie proved herself to be a model part-script actor, in that she was both perfectly rehearsed and ready to adapt to change as the show went on. There were three important moments in the run-through when the part-scripts technique had a profound impact on her understanding of the character.

The first moment of impact was at Viola's monologue "I left no ring with her, what means this lady?" Previously, Katie had been approaching the monologue as if it were something to be learned for an acting class or an audition; that is to say, a self-contained whole.

This monologue is often used out of context for situations like these, because it tells a complete story. However, when placed in context, with the condescending Malvolio throwing the ring to her and stalking offstage, the monologue blossomed from clear linear storytelling into an avalanche of revelations, each coming one after the next.

During this run-through, she shouted the first line after Malvolio's retreating back -- "I left no ring with her! What means this lady?"-- imploring him to turn around and provide some insight. She then turned to the audience to continue, with a casual scoff, "fortune forbid my outside hath not charmed her!" Then, when nobody laughed at her joke, she looked at the audience, and realized the truth on her in-breath: "she loves me!" Immediately, embarrassment set in. She hid her face from the crowd, and tried to explain herself. The presence of the audience sent her into a spiral, as she tried to save face in front of the strangers, while also thinking through her problem aloud and making new discoveries. This tension spurred her onward through the monologue and gave her the necessary energy to push the scene forward. Katie told me afterward that she drew inspiration from being able to look into the audience's faces, as they were fully illuminated by the house lights. The connection between the actor and the audience helped her keep the monologue from becoming static; she was accountable directly to someone, and the monologue was taken out of the realm of the theatrical "suspension of disbelief" that people just talk to themselves.

The next time Katie was very surprised in the run-through was in III.1, the scene between Olivia and Viola where Olivia confesses her love for Viola. Viola's part-script, as I described in Chapter One, is very vague on the surrounding context of the scene. After her attempted exit at "Then westward ho!" her part-script looks contained and polite, as all of Viola's lines to Olivia have been up to this point:

VIOLA: That you do think you are not what you are.

(of you.)

VIOLA: Then think you right. I am not what I am.

(you be.)

VIOLA: Would it be better, madam, than I am?

I wish it might, for now I am your fool.

(is better.)

VIOLA: By innocence I swear, and by my youth,

I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,

And that no woman has, nor never none

Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.

And so adieu, good madam. Nevermore

Will I my master's tears to you deplore.<sup>63</sup>

Katie and I discussed the possibility of Viola's last line being a response to a rude remark about

her wooing abilities, rather than a romantic overture. I think Katie Piner was expecting coy

flirtation from Maya when she went into this scene, but the passionate language of Olivia's

ardent monologue comes so far out of left field that she was certainly shocked. Additionally,

Olivia's speech is a very long one, with ample opportunity for motion or meaningful pauses.

Viola must wait until her cue, "is better," which could come at any time. It also gave Katie a lot

of time to react and process the things that were being said, amplifying her response far beyond

what would have been possible if she had only had a couple lines of dialogue to respond to.

Katie Piner<sup>64</sup> wrote in a response survey after the show had ended, "[the Viola & Olivia scene]

worked so well because I had no clue what Olivia was saying to me in her monologue before that

moment and after the momentum from the rest of the play it really struck home."

---

<sup>63</sup> See *Twelfth Night* III.1.146-170 (Folger Digital Texts) for the full scene.

<sup>64</sup> Katie was one of two people who identified themselves by name in the anonymous response survey I sent out to the cast after *Twelfth Night* closed. The other actor who identified herself by name did not have a large enough role to quantify the effects of part-scripts in a substantive way, so Katie Piner became the de facto case study for the purposes of this thesis. I have chosen to focus on her experiences because she offered her first-hand experience to supplement the observations that I made while watching from the outside.

Olivia's monologue is also split into two parts, one which is delivered to the audience and one which is delivered to Viola. I worked with Maya Martin-Udry, the actor playing Olivia, to give her some blocking before we got to the first run-through, so she knew what she was doing although Viola did not. For the first part of the monologue, "O what a deal of scorn looks beautiful," I had Olivia completely leave the stage (and Viola) to go into the audience and speak directly to them. She spoke a bit more quietly, causing Viola, alone and awkward onstage, to have to really strain to listen. This also helped the audience feel implicated in the way that Olivia was speaking. I didn't mind that Olivia's "aside" didn't quite end up playing the way that asides are now expected to be done: the current convention is that the other actors onstage are supposed to pretend that they can't hear what's going on when someone is speaking loudly five feet away from them, and they ought to conveniently busy themselves with other activities while pretending not to be interested until the aside is over.

Because of this blocking, Katie Piner only had to respond honestly, as an actor who had been left alone onstage in the middle of her scene in which she knew she had more lines. When Olivia walked away from her after she delivered the line "I wish it might, for now I am your fool," she looked indignant, then uncomfortable to be left out of Olivia's conversation with the audience, then curious about what Olivia might be doing in the center aisle. Right at that moment, Olivia turned around to face Viola and began the second half of her line. She started by directly addressing Viola: "Cesario, by the roses of the spring / By maidenhood, honor, truth, and everything." At this point, Maya was at the back of the center aisle, while Katie was still upstage center. This gave Maya almost twenty feet to cross up to Katie, while Katie could do nothing but wait for her to arrive. Katie, listening for her cue, had to hear the completely unexpected and (arguably) unsolicited declaration of love that was being offered her. She was facing directly out

towards the audience, and Maya was walking up the center aisle. The audience couldn't see Maya's face very well, and was instead looking at Katie's reactions.

Katie was completely frozen in place, every fiber of her attention having been completely absorbed by the task of understanding what was being said to her. As the audience watched her, we understood how completely sudden this was to the character of Viola. There was real fear in her eyes, possibly because Katie thought Maya had gone off-script or had jumped to a different part in the text. Then came the realization that this was the course that the play took, and that Viola had been right when she guessed "she loves me, sure!" Katie wrote to me, describing the experience:

After the ring monologue I feel bad for her, "I pity" her. And then she is like, but don't you worry I'm not interested in you, but your wife sure will be lucky. When I heard that I was like, wow, this is awkward. I feel really bad about this, I want to get out of here. So off I try to go but then she detains me and then comes that monologue. I felt so bad for her. I wanted her to stop. I wanted to confess, almost did, didn't manage it, and then just tried to get out.

Katie Piner, both as the actor and the character she was playing, was overcome with the situation. Her mouth fell open and her eyes teared up, but she could not leave the room until Maya finished her proclamation and delivered Viola's cue to continue.

This response from Katie also caused Maya to intensify her delivery of her declaration of love in an attempt to elicit a more favorable response. In turn, this scared Viola more and more, perpetuating the cycle. As Katie Piner fought to keep herself under control, she was held in the scene by her part-script, which offered her no doubled cues or opportunities to get out before the very end.

The key terms I developed while in conversation with my adviser Diego Arciniegas were "kinesthetic response" and "cerebral analysis." Theatre requires both: actors must be able to

analyze and contextualize their lines, as well as understand the linguistic nuances of the things they are saying (cerebral analysis). They must also be able to respond physically, automatically, and sometimes subconsciously to the environment around them as they progress through the story (kinesthetic response).

The part-scripts technique requires more kinesthetic response than cerebral analysis, to the point at which the actors are getting most of their information from the results of kinesthetic response rather than the mental work and research they had done prior to the first run-through. Many of the actors told me that the first run-through was the first time that a lot of their character-related questions finally fell together and the pieces of the puzzle became a cohesive whole. Kinesthetic response was also the catalyst for not only character questions in the modern sense, but the portrayal of character and plot onstage through language. Using these two terms to define the methods that were appearing onstage helped me to understand how the early modern theatre differed in style and in effect from the modern theatre. It was most clear in the first run-through, before actors had the opportunity to do outside work to cover for their perceived faults or mistakes.

The third time that the part-scripts technique worked exceptionally well was in the final scene of the play, when Sebastian and Viola meet for the first time. Katie Piner wrote to me, “[the final scene surprised me because] I legit never saw Brigitte before that – it felt like we never met in rehearsals.” This was true: Brigitte Demelo (the actress playing Sebastian) and Katie had never had rehearsal together. They knew each other’s roles, and understood from their part-scripts that they would be meeting their counterparts at the end of the play, but that did not prepare them for the experience of this scene. In our production, Viola was standing far stage right, with at least six other bodies onstage between her and Sebastian when he entered. When

he came onstage, she didn't actually notice him right away, as she was occupied with Toby, Fabian, and Andrew as they exited. Sebastian also stayed upstage left with Antonio for the first few moments of his time onstage, so Viola didn't notice Sebastian until the other characters onstage started to notice the twins.

When Sebastian and Viola saw each other, they were standing at opposite sides of the stage. In one of our cue-lines rehearsals, we had blocked the bare bones of the scene: I told each actor where to enter and told them to meet in the middle, and left it up to them to pull the scene together. I knew that the stage would be full of other actors, but we didn't choreograph the motion of the scene before the run-through. Viola noticed Sebastian first, and stared at him in shock and wonder. In other productions I had seen of this show, the realization was something that happened quickly; in our play, the realization was slow, gradual, and a little awkward, but all the more tender for that awkwardness. It also meant that, instead of the movie-magic instantaneous realization, the audience got to watch each character have their "eureka" moment. From the actors' point of view, the momentous realization was in the convergence of their plotlines, rather than the discovery of a long-lost sibling. They noticed that the other actor was onstage, wearing the same costume as their own, and they realized suddenly what was happening in the story, rather than feeling an emotional attachment to the character's experience.

By the time the twins reached each other in the middle of the stage, they were breathless and wide-eyed with wonder. Viola was openly weeping, struck by the intensity of the situation as well as the beauty of the language. Having to negotiate their blocking around the other bodies onstage also made the scene more realistic. Instead of having everyone conveniently back away from the twins, the actors didn't know where they were supposed to stand. Consequently, Sebastian and Viola had to fight their way through a crowd to get a good look at each other,



alternately noticing the people who they were disrupting and completely disregarding them in favor of the excitement at hand. This kept the scene a little bit down-to-earth, even as it is the emotional climax of the play.

I had anticipated this scene, like the box-tree scene, to pose a huge logistical problem in our first run-through. Instead, it became a remarkable example of the beautiful honesty of part-script acting. Stern and Palfrey wrote in *Shakespeare in Parts*: “two or more actors engaging with each other—each emerging from his own ‘solipsistic’ process of possessing his part—will help to produce the electric reactivity of living drama [and] ensures that the event of performance will retain its own urgent immediacy.”<sup>65</sup> This scene was full of urgent immediacy, sprung from the actors’ desperation to pull together the pieces of their storylines. It is possible that this scene was more immediately effective than the box-tree scene because it did not rely on comedic timing, but thrived on the “electric reactivity” that was shared by the actors.

### **Stage Picture**

As I’m beginning to touch on, the first run-through was the first time I began to understand the effect of part-scripts on the more crowded scenes in the play. Blocking *Twelfth Night* was very challenging because we didn’t have any rehearsals with all the actors speaking all their lines, both of which are absolutely necessary to block a scene in the modern way. Although I had the cue-lines rehearsals, there was not enough information available to block smaller moments within the scenes. So the first run-through was really the first attempt we had at managing multiple bodies onstage. At one point in the final scene, there were seventeen people onstage.

---

<sup>65</sup> Palfrey & Stern 93.

This created a little bit of discomfort among the actors, especially those actors who were less experienced and were accustomed to being specifically placed by a director for their entire time onstage. The discomfort onstage was directly related to the amount of theatre experience each actor had, because those who had been in plays before were more accustomed to unconsciously adjusting their positions onstage to cater to the audience and their fellow cast members. The actors who were newer were less comfortable adjusting of their own volition, and thus chose to stay in whatever spot they arrived in onstage.

So, what happened onstage was very honest, though not very aesthetically pleasing. The actors often had to battle their way through clumps of people, straining to make eye contact or stay visible to the audience. The actors who did this successfully were the ones who embraced the challenge as part of their character's environment, rather than attempting to bluff it off as part of the suspended disbelief of the theatre. Watching characters really struggle to get through a large group of people was very interesting; much like the way the part-scripts technique works for timing out the lines in big crowd scenes, this is something that is hard for a director to block successfully.

A scene in which this crowd ethos worked really well was in the fight scene between Viola/Cesario and Andrew. We had done a very spare amount of blocking of this scene, because I felt we had to do some fight choreography to protect the physical safety of the actors.<sup>66</sup> But what turned out to be the most exciting part of the scene was not the fight at all, but rather the precursor to the fight in which both characters are trying desperately to get away. Kristin, the actress playing Toby, knew from her part-script to deliver her lines in the most overdramatic way

---

<sup>66</sup> Fight choreography, as well as "songs, dances, and slapstick" was probably part of the group rehearsal that the early modern companies had. See Stern, *Rehearsal* 77.

possible. She and Katie had also worked together for three years on different shows, and so they were very comfortable taking risks with each other. So, as Toby menaced Viola, telling her of the fearsome Andrew, Viola hardly had to work hard to cower in fear. As soon as she was allowed out of the scene, though Katie Piner knew that her blocking was to stay in the middle of the center aisle and wait for her next cue, she decided that Viola was too scared and that she would make a genuine attempt to get as far away from Andrew as possible. So she took off, and started running away down the center aisle. Rainier Pearl-Styles, who was playing Fabian, knew that she was supposed to be keeping an eye on Viola, so she grabbed her and kept her in place for the next few lines. When she finally looked away, Viola made a break for it again, this time trying to escape into the audience seating. She was quickly fished back out and held in place until her next cue came.

Meanwhile, Toby and Andrew were onstage having the same problem. This might have been motivated by Katie's genuine attempt to get out, but Ramona Head, the actress playing Andrew, also decided that stage fighting wasn't going to work well enough for the scene. Toby held her by the arm and dragged her across the stage, much to Ramona's chagrin when she realized she was wearing shoes without any traction. Ramona then tried to hide behind the musicians, using the large flat drum as a shield between her and Toby. The musicians, not having been informed of this part of the show, were extremely amused. Some of them tried to help her, and some of them just sat and laughed. When the actors were finally brought face-to-face with each other, they were both trying hard to get away. We barely had to do any stage combat choreography because so much had been built up in the preceding lines. The audience was extremely amused, and the actors were too busy trying to physically apprehend their costars to get caught up in the humor of the scene and start laughing.

### **Week One of Performances**

This scene was one that got better with time. The crowd effect of part-scripts, already useful with just the actors onstage, worked so much better with an audience involved. I realized, during the first weekend of shows, that each fresh audience member brings a blank mentality to the performance, much like the actors did on the day of the first run-through. So, in essence, if you involve the audience, the part-scripts technique will never go stale. There will always be a participant for whom the experience is brand new, revelatory, and full of wonder. This was what galvanized the cast forward in the first week of performances.

Although there is no documentation that the early moderns did audience participation in this exact way, they certainly were more involved than modern theatrical audiences.<sup>67</sup> At every structural level — text, theatre technology, even theatrical style — the plays are built to involve the audience. They are engineered to keep the actors engaged and informed, and most importantly surprised; considering that the actors only have a little bit more information than the audience, it does the same for them. Since in our *Twelfth Night* audience participation was really the catalyst of the show that held all the pieces together and brought it to life night after night, the play is clearly built to sustain itself on energy from the audience, as well as the explosiveness of part-scripts in performance.

Each night was completely new and different, as the cast tested out new things with the audience to see how they responded. In a way, the cast really did most of their rehearsing in front of the audience: over the first four shows, they experimented with new styles of delivery

---

<sup>67</sup> Stern offers accounts of audiences giving verbal feedback on the show, as well as giving an “aye” or “nay” to determine whether or not the show continued performing. *Rehearsal* 120.

and new blocking, and chose them based on the audience's response. This is in keeping with the early modern audience's power to decide which plays were deemed worthy to continue their runs, and even to prompt the playwright to make revisions based on audience reaction.<sup>68</sup> Our *Twelfth Night*, like Shakespeare's plays, became tailor-made to please the audience, while also helping the cast push their boundaries. They were able to do this because they were not yet committed to a specific set of blocking rules, nor had they practiced any piece of blocking enough times for it to have become automatic muscle memory. This also allowed for variation in the lines, because they were not tied to any specific blocking. The actors were free to direct their lines to whichever character they chose, in any style, because they did not have to be worried about throwing off someone else's pre-rehearsed performance. This became the perfect environment to test out new ideas. The audience was a wonderfully honest adjudicator. They laughed when things worked, and didn't laugh when things went amiss or didn't land. They also provided the actors with energy and enthusiasm to drive them forward and encourage them to make new decisions, as well as providing them with a fresh perspective every night as a new audience came to see the show.

In my thesis journal, I wrote:

Monday 16 November, post-first-weekend reflection:

We've had four shows so far, and it's settling in. Opening night was great: rough at times, and frustrating that people still don't know their lines, but having an audience there really made them shine.

Some things I've been noticing:

- Their lines are getting snappier, but not necessarily more accurate: is it just a comfort thing?! That would be frustrating.
- Some people still don't seem to know what they're saying all the time.
- They're getting more bold with the audience, now that they know they're there, and as they try new things with good responses to them.

Some things I've been wondering about:

---

<sup>68</sup> *Rehearsal* 113.

- What the change is in “acting” and “creativity/pushing the boundaries” between now and the first read-through: which one is pre-meditated and which is spur-of-the-moment?

The audience really seemed to be the catalyst, throughout the whole process from first run-through to closing night. It was so integral for the actors to have a sounding board, and since they couldn't have that in a rehearsal setting they got it from the audience during the performances.

The first performance that the actors had in front of an audience was not, in fact, opening night. As part of a new accessibility scheme, the Shakespeare Society decided to offer a Wednesday pay-what-you-can preview to students who were unable to pay full ticket prices. The informal nature of the preview offered the cast their first attempt to perform the show for a fresh audience, while still having a little leeway to make mistakes. During this show, though the actors had become more comfortable with their parts over the week since the run-through, they were still shaky on the structure of the play. Thinking intermission was earlier than it was, the actress playing Maria left the backstage area and went downstairs to relax before her entrance with Andrew and Toby in Act 2, Scene 3. This left Toby and Andrew to enter alone. Once Kristin, playing Toby, realized what had gone wrong, she sent Andrew to go get Maria and then turned to the audience. She took a breath, laughed, and began to improvise to the audience, in character, about Andrew and Maria, ending raucously on “...and what's life without wine?” just as Andrew and Maria scrambled onstage. The actors picked up their lines from the part-scripts and continued the show.

The surprise of the part-scripts endured even past the first run-through and the preview. On opening night, the shock of the fight choreography had worn off a bit and the actors were starting to really synthesize the thoughts behind the words they heard around them onstage.

Katie Piner's Viola, confronted by Antonio (played by Grace Owen) in Act 3, Scene 4, was simply exhausted by the night's adventures. She offered Antonio half her money to bail him out, and he replied with "Will you deny me now?" In the previous two shows, the audience had sided with Antonio, seeing him as a casualty of the mixed-up twins' adventures. His selflessness in trying to save "Sebastian" ended him up in such trouble that his heartbroken indignation always earned him a sympathetic response. This night, he got a particularly loud "oh no" from the audience. Viola, publicly shamed by the audience, turned defensive. "I know of none!" she burst out. Scrambling to defend herself to Antonio and save face with the audience, she began to cry. When Antonio finally called her by her brother's name, she was already distraught from the humiliation she had received from the audience, and her tears turned to tears of hope. The changing responses from the audience helped the actors understand different aspects of the show every night.

The first four performances served to work out the kinks of the show, testing out different jokes and styles of delivery. By the end of the first week, the actors were feeling much more comfortable with their lines. Though the initial surprise from the part-scripts had worn off, the cast kept the performances fresh and new throughout the first week as they experimented with different jokes, while also solidifying their lines and practicing the jokes and blocking that worked.

### **Week Two of Performances**

In the second week of performances, the show became much more of a polished whole. I suspect that many of the actors found time to run their lines with their scene partners during our three days off, and came into the second week with a much more modern approach to their acting

methods. I kept coming back to the lingering thought I had written in my journal after the first weekend: "What [is] the change in 'acting' and 'creativity/pushing the boundaries' between now and the first read-through: which one is pre-meditated and which is spur-of-the-moment?" Now, in retrospect, the repeated point of this thesis is that they are the same thing. Part-scripts acting is driven by kinesthetic response, momentary inspiration, and "pushing the boundaries" at any opportunity, whether premeditated or not.

This became true as the part-scripts acting changed gradually into a more traditional style of performance: as the actors figured out what worked best for them, they started practicing the same things, until finally, the show settled into an agreed-upon whole. The time for surprise was over, although the actors still drew inspiration from their time being surprised by the part-scripts.

However, on Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup>, the actor playing Orsino was delayed out of town and couldn't make it back in time for the show. With only a few hours to prepare, I memorized the lines and prepared to go onstage as Orsino. While I was preparing, I discussed with the actors what I should do. Many of them encouraged me to just make things up as I went along, and so I decided that I would not necessarily stick to the pre-ordained blocking that Vanessa, the actress cast as Orsino, had developed.

As I stepped onstage, I was confident that I knew most of my lines, but felt immediately afraid that I was intruding on the show that the actors had so carefully curated over the past two weeks. However, once I started speaking, I got lost in the fun of rehearsing a new show, and was re-reminded of all the surprise and wonderment in *Twelfth Night*. Though I knew my lines and the surrounding cues from being in rehearsal, I had tried to practice that day only from Orsino's part-script in an attempt to test out the technique myself. I also kept that part-script backstage to look at between scenes.



I was surprised at how aware I was of what was going on around me – because I had not had enough time to grow complacent with my part, I was hypersensitive to any shift in blocking or language, as well as extremely aware of the audience at all times. After the show, I was completely exhausted, although very buzzed from all the endorphins of performance. That style of performance was, I now know first-hand, much more taxing than performing after a long rehearsal process. However, I think it made me a better performer for the stress. I never felt separated from the other people onstage, and I felt engaged with my lines and the storyline at all times. Sometimes I became distracted by trying to remember my lines, but because the other cast members were so rehearsed at that point it was not hard for me to get back into the scene. I found it particularly fun to change up the blocking on actors who were willing: a notable moment came in the final scene, when Orsino thinks Cesario has betrayed him by marrying Olivia. Vanessa had always delivered the line from all the way across the stage, creating distance between herself and Katie Piner that Katie tried to cross to apologize. I anticipated this, and when Katie Piner tried to cross the stage to look me in the eyes, I decided to move toward her, walking her back into the wall on the line “away and take her, but direct thy feet where thou and I henceforth shall never meet.” Surprised and confused, Viola barely squeaked out her line “my lord, I do protest—” from a much lower status than she had taken before, when she was authoritatively demanding to be heard.

I wrote of the experience, “It was both fun and really informative [...] I’m glad it was joyful, and not stressful.” Being able to experience the show from the inside was an unexpected and very interesting experience for me. It helped me understand what the actors were going through and empathize with their concerns much better than I had been able to before. It also helped me understand the effects of part-scripts firsthand, rather than from the external position

of the researcher and director. Ultimately, that experience was integral to the way I shaped this thesis and the conclusions that I drew.

### **Audience Reactions**

The audience was very receptive to the early modern aspects of *Twelfth Night*. I made a specific effort to have an extensive dramaturgical exhibit available for them in the meeting room, for them to peruse at their leisure before and after the show, as well as during the fifteen-minute intermission. Many people did take advantage of the dramaturgy boards, and made an effort to read the information that was available. Some people who recognized me as the director also came up to me afterwards to ask me about the process and my experience with the play, which I appreciated.

I had short audience surveys available that I gave to every audience member and encouraged them to fill out. The surveys asked if the audience member had looked at the dramaturgical research in the music room, and if they had found it useful while they were watching the play. It also asked which parts of the play they had found most interesting and most clear, as well as which things read most distinctly as “early modern” to the modern viewer. Many people felt positively about the accent and the costumes, indicating that they helped create the ambiance of the show and thus helping them adjust to the other early modern techniques. Most of the audience did not note the set, but spoke favorably of the live music as being a fun and engaging part of the performance. Predictably, nobody noticed the part-scripts, because they were a technique for learning rather than a technique to be showcased for the audience.

## Conclusions

Ultimately, what the audience found to be interesting were the things that were visually attractive and pleasing to the senses. What the actors found to be most interesting (though not always most pleasant) were the experiences of trial-and-error with the audience and the uncertainty involved in the part-scripts. In response to the anonymous survey question “what delighted you?” the actors wrote such things as:

- “The chaos and joy of the part-scripts. They really let you feel if you gave it the right chance.”
- “As an actor, I really enjoyed seeing people discover something new about their character every night.”
- “The audience’s reaction was pretty rad. They liked us! Who knew? It was delightful to inspire delight. It made me so proud of my castmates – because I hadn’t seen them, I didn’t know how they were doing — spoiler, they were doing great.”

Many actors also spoke about being delighted by “the spontaneity that we got,” and “feeling free and encouraged to try new things.” They were excited to grow and change onstage and pleased by how much they improved onstage every night. They seemed to be more excited about the idea that they improved onstage rather than in rehearsal because the reward from the audience was bigger than the reward they would have gotten from an empty room in rehearsal.

In response to the question “what surprised you,” the actors offered: “[I was surprised by] how much the OP impacted my characterization and physicality as an actor,” “how much I loved the part-scripts. It was really hard to learn this way [...] but when you do it, what a difference it makes,” and “how well the OP ended up working out as well as the part-script rehearsal style.”

One of my favorite responses was this one:

I learned so much every time I was onstage, simply by listening to my fellow actors. There is a sort of humility in cue-script theatre: by not having the entire show to

deliberate over, we were forced to depend on one another and, in the process, create a true ensemble.

They spoke about feeling “accountable” to their fellow actors and there being “a lot of trust,” and that “the level of professionalism and a lack of competitiveness felt good.” Some of them mentioned wanting to try part-scripts again, and others would have rather done the show in the usual rehearsal style, but their feedback was focused in the direction that I had hoped it would be: filled with wonder and joy at the new experiences they had had, and fully understanding the complexity and rigor of the process they had undergone.

## EPILOGUE

**“A great while ago the world begun,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
But that’s all one, our play is done,  
And we’ll strive to please you every day.”**

—*Twelfth Night* V.1.428-431.<sup>69</sup>

The process of producing this *Twelfth Night* has taught me, more than anything else, the value of putting into practice the lessons of scholarship. By trying to enact, with live people before a live audience, the wonderful speculations that delighted my imagination in books by Tiffany Stern, Farah Karim-Cooper, and Andrew Gurr, I gained insight into the mechanisms that drive Shakespeare’s plays as well as a broader understanding of the possibilities open to actors then and now. Living vicariously through the actors, I experienced feelings of truly inspirational surprise, moments of shock and terror, and most importantly, wonder.

As I stood in the back row of a full house, with too many patrons crowded into the chairs for me to find a seat, I watched my actors playfully trying to outsmart each other onstage. Rainier Pearl-Styles, a brand new Shaker playing Fabian, began walking one step behind Kristin Huizenga, playing Toby. As Kristin threatened the quaking Katie Piner (Viola), “satisfaction can be none but by pangs of death and sepulcher!” (III.4.248)<sup>70</sup> Rainier began to mimic Kristin’s movements, unbeknownst to Kristin. The audience howled with laughter. As Rainier was trying to lead Katie away, Katie decided to make a break for it. She climbed through the audience, handing her dagger to an unsuspecting audience member, and crawling under the legs of a whole row of patrons. She ended up sprawled across three audience members, one of whom was my

---

<sup>69</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (Folger Digital Texts).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

adviser, Professor Yu Jin Ko. In response to Katie's prompting, Professor Ko shielded Katie from view using his program, and pretended not to see Rainier and Kristin trying to bring her back onto the stage.

This kind of audience participation was what I was hoping to get from my *Twelfth Night*. The actors were clearly making things up as they went along, pulling the audience into the joke along with them. This, to me, revolutionizes the way that audiences can interact with theatre. If they understand that they go into the performance with about as much information as the actors, there is an equality that cannot be fabricated in pre-rehearsed performances.

After two years of research, six weeks of rehearsals, and finally two weeks of performance, my experience with *Twelfth Night* only emphasized my desire to put into practice, experiment with, and challenge our preconceptions about theatre. This is even more imperative when we talk about Shakespeare, because although Shakespeare's plays are widely read, studied, and critically interrogated, they are fundamentally theatrical entities, which rely on real and fallible people to perform and watch them.

While writing this thesis over the past six months, it gradually became clear to me how complicated and demanding these early modern techniques are, especially to a group of modern actors. The extent to which my cast learned and implemented these techniques in only six weeks is, if I may say so, absolutely remarkable. They had experienced firsthand the depth of possibility these techniques could open up, but all of the actors felt as though they hadn't yet exhausted the potential of the techniques they had learned. Our short rehearsal period meant that many lessons were condensed and conflated, and not fully synthesized until after the performance. I, too, after researching for eighteen months and preparing for the process, forgot to stop to wonder at the mechanical power of Shakespeare's texts, and the strength and flexibility

of my cast. Shakespeare's actors were highly skilled craftspeople, and I am very proud of my actors who learned those skills firsthand.

Throughout the rehearsal process, the actors were preoccupied with becoming "perfect," in the sense that they had to know every word of their part-scripts. However, the most beautiful aspects of this production arose from its imperfections. In my dramaturgy notes that were displayed in the Shakespeare House for audiences to read during intermission, I wrote:

I have always been fascinated with the inner workings of things. I love half-finished paintings scratched with pencil marks, exposed steel frames in construction, model airplanes half-finished and put aside. Theatrical production is no different. It is a convention to make theatre seem as effortless as possible, but I think that doing so deprives the audience of the details that make theatre so rich.

Part of what made *Twelfth Night* so interesting was that nothing was hidden from the audience. There was no "stage magic" in the form of lighting, special effects, or even particularly crafty blocking. When the actors made mistakes, they shared those moments with each other and with the audience. They learned, over the course of two weeks of performances, to turn those mistakes into moments of joy and surprise, and the audience responded eagerly and supportively. In *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern write, "for early modern playgoers, attending theatre performances was a fully embodied, sensuous experience, its emotions arising as much from the physical environment as from inscribed textual moments."<sup>71</sup> For me, part of this embodiment stems from the rapport between all the people in the theatre. There was no suspension of disbelief between the actors or from the audience, which grounded each performance in the wonder of each moment onstage. The actors, reacting spontaneously at every new discovery, shared the surprise they felt with the audience,

---

<sup>71</sup> Farah Karim-Cooper & Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance* (London, Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 2.

unashamed of this vulnerability. In return, the audience gave them unequivocal support, informed by the structure of the play that they were experiencing alongside the actors. The real, fallible people onstage spoke to each other and to the real, fallible people in the audience, and for two hours, the suspension of disbelief became unnecessary.

Part-scripts live in the space between the mystical and the mechanical, the magical and the contrivable. The part-scripts themselves are crafted so that each word fits into the next, piecing the dozens of separate parts together; but part-scripts have an unpredictable effect on the people onstage and in the audience. The technical structure that the part-scripts maintain creates space in the production to cultivate the human elements that make live theatre the exciting, surprising, and wonder-full experience that it is.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carson, Christie, and Farah Karim-Cooper. *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- "character, n." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. December 2015. Web. 1 March 2016.
- Davies, Michael. *Hamlet: Character Studies*. New York: Continuum Books, 2008.
- Duffin, Ross W. *Shakespeare's Songbook*. New York, W. W. Norton & Co, 2004.
- Dutton, Richard, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Gurr, Andrew, and Farah Karim-Cooper. *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: performance and repertoire in the Jacobean playhouse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Gurr, Andrew, "Shakespeare's Globe: A History of Reconstructions and Some Reasons for Trying," in *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*.
- Gross, Kenneth. *The Dream of the Moving Statue*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- ImprovLegends, "Into the Unknown with Viola Spolin." YouTube Video, posted September 2012, 13:57. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HavVR2SC\\_bg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HavVR2SC_bg). Accessed March 2016.
- Johnstone, Keith. *Impro for Storytellers*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Karim-Cooper, Farah, and Tiffany Stern, ed. *Shakespeare's theatres and the effects of performance*. London: Bloomsbury Press, 2014.
- Kathman, David. "Players, Livery Companies, and Apprentices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. 413-428.
- Ko, Yu Jin, and Michael W. Shurgot, ed. *Shakespeare's Sense of Character: on the page and from the stage*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2012.
- Palfrey, Simon, and Tiffany Stern. *Shakespeare in Parts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1902). Volumes I & II.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Folger Digital Texts, Ebook, accessed February 2016. <http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>

- Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Folger Digital Texts, Ebook, accessed February 2016.  
<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>
- Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Folger Digital Texts, Ebook, accessed February 2016.  
<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Folger Digital Texts, Ebook, accessed February 2016.  
<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>
- Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*. Folger Digital Texts, Ebook, accessed February 2016.  
<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>
- Smith, Bruce. *Attending to the O-factor: The acoustic world of early modern England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Smith, Bruce. *Phenomenal Shakespeare*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theatre: a handbook of teaching and directing techniques*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999.
- Stanislavsky, Konstantin. "Improvisations on Othello," in *Creating a Role*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, ed. Hermine I. Popper. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1983.
- Stern, Tiffany. *Documents of performance in early modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Stern, Tiffany. *Making Shakespeare: from stage to page*. London: Routledge Press, 2004.
- Stern, Tiffany. *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Stern, Tiffany. "The theatre of Shakespeare's London" in *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta De Grazia. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Web. Accessed 30 March 2016.
- White, Martin. "'When torchlight made an artificial noon': light and darkness in the indoor Jacobean theatre," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, ed. Andrew Gurr & Farah Karim-Cooper. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014. 115-136.

## APPENDICES

### SECTION ONE: DOCUMENTS OF PERFORMANCE

I.1 A Guide to Original Pronunciation, by Rowan Winterwood

I.1a OP Notes for the Dramaturgy Board, by Rowan Winterwood

### SECTION TWO: DOCUMENTS OF REHEARSAL

II.1 Text Questionnaire, by Kate Bussert

II.2 Actor's Exit Questionnaire, by Kate Bussert

Appendix I.1: Original Pronunciation, Rowan Winterwood (NB: original formatting preserved)**A GUIDE TO ORIGINAL PRONUNCIATION**

[SOUND CHANGES](#) (p. 2) | [TONGUE TWISTERS](#) (p. 6) | [PHONETIC CHART](#) (p. 7)

**Before You Start**

1. For a more complete resource (with embedded audio!) see [Paul Meier's guide](#). His rules are in a different order than mine, since I organized this guide based on what changes from American English to OP, while he was using British English as a starting point.
2. You don't need to sound just like Paul Meier or Ben Crystal or me (please don't try to sound like me). You're still going to have your own voice's quality, tone, etc. – this is just a different way to *pronounce* things, and a lot of it is subjective and depends on your character and your own personal accent. Think about everyone you know who has a “standard American accent” and how different they all sound. There's no one right way to speak OP.
3. “Lexical set” is just a fancy way of saying “group of words that have the same vowel.” For example, the *bath* lexical set includes words like *staff*, *brass*, *basket* and *demand*. It's an easy way to categorize words so you can apply a rule to a bunch of words, instead of learning each one individually.

**General Notes**

1. OP is much faster and more casual than what we're used to seeing on stage – never over-enunciated, even for upper class folks. If a word isn't accented, then...
  - a. Drop initial *h* (*here* → 'ere, *he* → 'a, *have* → 'ave)
  - b. Drop final *g*'s (*talking* → talkin', *running* → runnin')
  - c. Drop middle *v*'s and *th*'s (*heaven* → he'en, *thither* → thi'er)
  - d. Elide (smush) vowels (*the assassination* → th'assass'nation)
  - e. Use the unstressed “schwa” [ə] vowel (*and* → 'n, *the* → thuh, *I* → uh)
2. [Aspirate your wh's](#) (*where* → hwhere, *which* → hwhich)
3. *-tion* and *-sion* could be pronounced “ee un” or “un” depending on scansion. Older or more proper characters might pronounce the *t* or *s* as “s”, while younger or lower-class characters might use “sh.” Example: *ambition* may be pronounced “am bih see un,” “am bih shee un” or “am bih shun.”
4. In words like *creature* where you would use *ch*, OP uses *t*.

**SOUND CHANGES BETWEEN AMERICAN ENGLISH & OP****Sounds that are the same between Am/OP**

1. The *kit*, *dress*, *cloth*, *palm*, *foot*, *lettER* and *commA* lexical sets.

- Do not change between Am, OP or British English. Not addressed by Paul Meier.
  - KIT:** Am [ɪ], OP [ɪ] *ship, rib, dim, milk, slither, myth, pretty, build, women, busy.*
  - DRESS:** Am [ɛ], OP [ɛ] *step, hem, shelf, effort, threat, bread, ready, any, friend.*
  - CLOTH:** Am [a], OP [a] *off, cross, often, gone, accost, horrid, sorrow, quarrel.*
  - PALM:** Am [a], OP [a] *calm, bra, hurrah, spa, bravado, khaki, almond.<sup>1</sup>*
  - FOOT:** Am [ʊ], OP [ʊ] *put, full, cuckoo, good, woman, could.*
  - NORTH:** Am [ɔə], OP [a] *for, distort, orb, form, porpoise, orbit, normal, quart.*
  - FORCE:** Am [ɔə], OP [a] *floor, oral, deport, afford, borne, portent, court, glorious.*
  - letter:** Am [ə], OP [ə] *father, center, tower, sugar, liar, survivor, measure, failure.*
  - commA:** Am [ə], OP [ə] *pajama, drama, sofa, quota, vodka, panda, saga.*

## 2. The *trap* lexical set. PM7

- Does not change between Am/OP. Included by Paul Meier because it is different in British English.
  - TRAP:** Am [æ], OP [æ] *tap, cab, ham, scalp, arrow, plaid.*  
*Clarence married Anne and had a happy family.*

## Sounds that are pretty much the same between Am/OP

### 3. The *goat, near, square, face* and *cure* lexical sets. PM4, 10

**Difference:** You use a diphthong, or *two-vowel* pronunciation. OP uses *one* vowel.

- TIP: Try saying *face* slowly and stopping halfway through. Pay attention to the shape of your mouth and position of your tongue – it changes from a back vowel to a front vowel. Now try holding out that first vowel, keeping your mouth/jaw in check while you finish the word. Now try with *goat, near, square, cure* and *bath*. How does the vowel change? Try to say them without changing the vowel.

**GOAT:** Am [oʊ], OP [o] *soap, road, note, robe, hole, so, noble, bowl, roll, dough.*

**NEAR:** Am [iə], OP [i] *beer, real, fear, beard, serious, eerie, idea, Orsino, museum.*

**SQUARE:** Am [ɛə], OP [ɛ] *care, air, bear, their, there, prayer, scarce, vary, canary.*

**FACE:** Am [ei], OP [e] *babe, name, change, April, gauge,, wait, day, they, great.*

**CURE:** Am [ʊə], OP [ʊ] *poor, your, allure, gourd, tourist, mural, curious, during.*

*No fear where faint heart endures.*

*The master started asking his heart to dance.*

### 4. The *strut* lexical set. PM6

- NOTE: The vowel that OP uses is very similar to the Am vowel. It's still an "uh" sound, but it's a little bit *higher* in your mouth. Try saying the tongue twister in your normal

voice, opening your mouth wide on each vowel. Then try it with your jaw more stable, your mouth a bit more closed.

**STRUT:** Am [ʌ], OP [ɜ] *cup, rub, hum, pulse, butter, done, monk, touch, blood.*

*Much luck becomes the one who loves.*

5. The *lot* and *thought* lexical sets. PM8

- NOTE: Say *cot* and *caught*. Are these words different, or the same? If they're different for you, use the vowel you use for *cot*.

**LOT:** Am [a], OP [ɑ] *stop, rob, Tom, solve, profit, honest, swan, waffle, knowledge.*

**THOUGHT:** Am [a] or [ɔ], OP [ɑ] *naughty, ought, applaud, jaw, chalk, all, fault.*

*I thought I'd stop at lots of naughty chocolate shops.*

6. The *goose* lexical set. PM9

- NOTE: Usually exactly the same as Am, but sometimes like *foot*; think Am *toMAto*/*toMAHto*. Try the *foot* version for a rhyme or pun. See [Paul Meier](http://www.paulmeier.com/OP.pdf) (<http://www.paulmeier.com/OP.pdf> p. 7).

**GOOSE:** Am [u], OP [u] or [ʊ] *loop, fool, tomb, funeral, duty, fruit, view, beauty.*

*Whose new blue shoes do you view on Tuesday.*

## Sounds that are different between Am/OP

6. The *mouth* lexical set. PM2

- For OP, swap the first half of the diphthong for 'uh.'

Am: [aʊ] "ow"

OP: [əʊ] "uh-o"

**MOUTH:** Am [aʊ], OP [əʊ] *out, loud, noun, count, flour, crowd, dowry, bough.*

*How now? Down in the mouth?*

7. The *price* and *choice* lexical sets. PM3

- For OP, swap the first half of the diphthong for 'uh.'

Am: *price* [aɪ], *choice* [ɔɪ]

OP: [əɪ] "uh-ih"

**PRICE:** Am [aɪ], OP [əɪ] *price, tribe, time, Friday, indict, isle, type, eider, fight.*

**CHOICE:** Am [ɔɪ], OP [əɪ] *boy, noise, void, coin, poison, buoy, employ, hoist.*

*Annoying flies might fly noisily at night.*

8. The *happY* lexical set. PM5

- In OP, make it a diphthong so it's pronounced just like the vowel above in (7).

Am: [i] "ee"

OP: [əɪ] "uh-ih"

**happY:** Am [i], OP [əɪ] *happy, lovely, city, baby, taxi, movie, coffee, money, valley.*

*Silly Wally dallied near happy Sally.*

9. The *bath* and *start* lexical sets. PM10

- In OP, the vowel is lower in the mouth than in Am.

Am: *start* [æ] as in 'cat'

OP: [a] as in 'father'

**BATH:** Am [æ], OP [a] *staff, path, brass, after, master, laugh, dance, example.*

**START:** Am [æ], OP [a] *far, sharp, card, farm, snarl, party, heart, sergeant.*

*The master started asking his heart to dance.*

10. The *nurse* lexical set. PM11

- In OP, nurse rhymes with farce.

Am: [ɜ] as in 'nurse'

OP: [e~] as in 'farce'

**NURSE:** Am [ɜ], OP [a~] *usurp, turn, burnt, shirt, firm, term, certain, heard, worst.*

*Wordy Bert burned the dirty shirts on purpose.*

11. The *fleece* lexical set. PM12

- In OP, fleece rhymes with face after you take out face's diphthong.

Am: [i] "ee"

OP: [e] "ayy"

**FLEECE:** Am [i], OP [e] *creep, seem, see, these, be, bead, team, feast, complete.*

*He seemed deceived by brief dreams at sea.*

## TONGUE TWISTERS

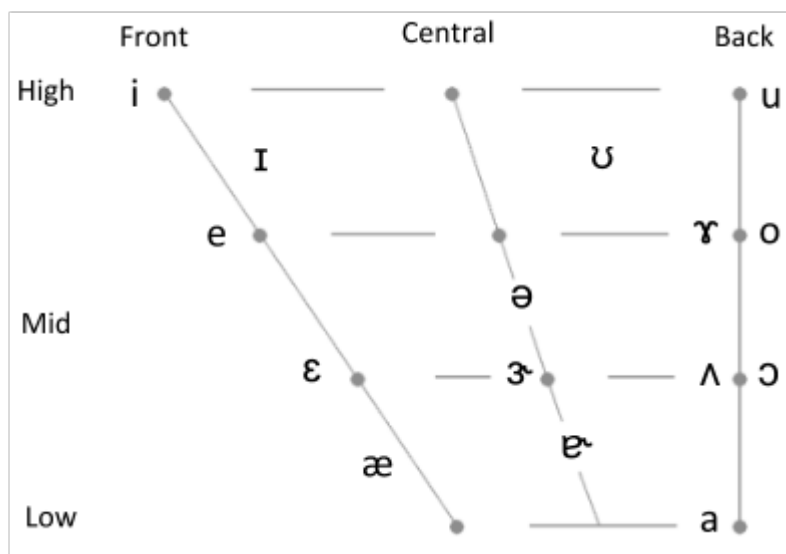
([click for audio](#))

(<http://www.paulmeier.com/OPtrack3.mp3>)

1. Her father burned the letters in the barn on Saturday.
2. How now? Down in the mouth?
3. Annoying flies might fly noisily at night.
4. No fear where faint heart endures.
5. Silly Wally dallied near happy Sally.
6. Much luck becomes the one who loves.
7. Clarence married Anne and had a happy family.
8. I thought I'd stop at lots of naughty chocolate shops.
9. Whose new blue shoes do you view on Tuesday.
10. The master started asking his heart to dance.
11. Wordy Bert burned the dirty shirts on purpose.
12. He seemed deceived by brief dreams at sea.

## INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (IPA)

### Vowel Chart





**Front**

- [i] "ee" as in *see*
- [ɪ] "ih" as in *if*  
*cut*
- [e] "ayy" as in *hey*
- [ɛ] "eh" as in *bet*
- [æ] "a" as in *cat*

**Central**

- [ʊ] "eu" as in *foot*
- [ə] "uh" as in *sofa*
- [ɜ] "er" as in *nurse*
- [ɝ] "ar" as in *farce*

**Back**

- [u] "oo" as in *moon*
- [ɹ] "uh" as in
- [o] "oh" as in *toe*
- [ʌ] "uh" as in *cut*
- [ɔ] "ah" as in *cot*
- [ɑ] "ah" as in *father*

### Appendix I.1a: OP Note for Dramaturgy Boards, Rowan Winterwood

Along with traditional costuming, scripts and rehearsal tactics, this semester's production of *Twelfth Night* has an added Elizabethan auditory element – an accent, commonly referred to as Original Pronunciation (OP), which is based on how we believe Shakespeare's own actors would have spoken when they originally performed *Twelfth Night* at the Globe Theatre.

#### How do we know what OP sounds like?

Shakespeare's text itself gives us a lot of clues to how his actors would have spoken. During the 16th and 17th centuries, spelling varied wildly and was often semi-phonetic, leading to spellings like "a" for *he*, or "ore" for *over*. Such changes suggest dropped letters or compressed syllables, and hint at how they may have been commonly pronounced. Rhymes are a further aid in reconstructing Shakespeare's speech. The following lines, from Sonnet 116, are clearly meant to rhyme:

If this be error, and upon me proved  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Assuming that Shakespeare was not sloppy in his sonnet-writing, it is evident that a sound change occurred sometime in the past 400 years. Looking at a comprehensive list of rotten rhymes and variable spellings alongside helpful contemporary grammars, linguist father-son team David and Ben Crystal reconstructed a historically plausible Shakespearean accent for the Globe's 2005 production of *Romeo & Juliet*.

For our production of *Twelfth Night*, we utilized these incredible resources, along with a guide assembled by dialectologist Paul Meier, and created our own guidelines for learning the accent from an American perspective.

#### What does OP sound like?

The accent has lots of elements that may sound familiar, and several that will sound entirely foreign. It has been alternately described as Scottish, Appalachian, Australian, American, pirate – the list goes on. Chances are, you'll hear bits of your own voice in these actors. Shakespeare's own actors travelled from all over the United Kingdom to perform at the Globe Theater, bringing bits of their native idiosyncrasies to the melting-pot dialectal diversity of 16th century London. From there, their descendants spread all across the world, thoroughly disseminating the accent you'll hear tonight, and eventually affecting the dialects that you now hear spoken every day.

Appendix II.1: Text Questionnaire, Kate Bussert

Blank Questionnaire:

TEXT QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you speak more often in verse or prose? What does this indicate?

Is there ever a time when you switch from verse to prose midway through a scene? What could that mean?

Is there ever a time when your verse loses its rhythm? When does it happen, and what causes it?

Do you have a repeated image, phrase, or concept that occurs in your lines? What does this image/phrase/concept mean for you? When you use it, what does it indicate?

Do you use a lot of puns? (For this, read your lines out loud. Puns are mostly an auditory medium and they're easy to miss on the page.) How do you use the puns?

Do you like to rhyme, or speak in assonance? (Again, read your lines out loud.) How do you use rhymes or assonance?

What are five adjectives you would use to describe the way you speak?

What tone of voice do you hear your words in? (slow, quick, sharply enunciated, affected...pick and choose as many as you want.)

Do you often use gesture or movement to punctuate your words? When? Why or why not?

And for reference, a sample of a filled-out questionnaire (Viola/Cesario):

**Do you speak more often in verse or prose? What does this indicate?**

I'd say I'm happily 50-50 between verse and prose. My speech patterns seem to rely almost entirely on those that I speak with. It indicates an adaptability that I think is representative of my situation. When I'm alone I speak in verse- my asides, likewise, all seem to be verse- reflective of my my proper, higher class upbringing. At the beginning I also speak in verse- or appear to, it is quite imperfect- either showing that my lines are split with whomever I am speaking to, or they are imperfect because I was just in a shipwreck. I think that I speak in verse with the captain and sailors here because I am not yet in my "adaptive" state.

For clarification:

Verse speakers:

Alone

Olivia (when we are alone- if Maria's around it is prose, probably because I'm being a messenger)

Orsino

Prose Speakers:

Toby

Feste

Malvolio (Act.II.ii- start off in prose but then switch to verse- I don't think much of him at first but my switch into verse indicates that I am drawn into my own world of verse)

**Is there ever a time when you switch from verse to prose midway through a scene? What could that mean?**

I don't seem to ever go from verse to prose, more often prose to verse- because a character has left that I was speaking prose with and alone I speak in verse (discussed above more thoroughly).

Also a lot of my verse endings with Olivia are short- like the last line is short (ex. Almost all my verse in I.v has a short last line- leaving room for her to respond quickly I suppose).

**Is there ever a time when your verse loses its rhythm? When does it happen, and what causes it?**

Last couplet of the "ring" monologue- I'm hoping the accent helps with this.

Act III.iv- the last chunk that Viola says is incredibly clunky- perhaps from confusion about her brother's potential life?

Also V.i. "all the occurrence of my fortune since/ hath been between this lady and this lord" should be couplet ending, or it feels that way but isn't. So goes the ultimate unlikeability of this last act- failing away, not meeting auditory expectations.

**Do you have a repeated image, phrase, or concept that occurs in your lines? What does this image/phrase/concept mean for you? When you use it, what does it indicate?**

With Olivia there is a lot of pregnant/maindenhead imagery. It is on the mind afterall...

A little bit of dream/imagery relating to uncertainty. Reflecting the uncertainty of what we see and what we know- Viola more than anyone is aware that looks can be deceiving.

Act. II.iv- “a blank my lord [...] not this love indeed?” Is some of the strongest imagery Viola uses (because she is truly speaking about herself here- almost taking from what she learned while wooing Olivia).

**Do you use a lot of puns? (For this, read your lines out loud. Puns are mostly an auditory medium and they’re easy to miss on the page.) How do you use the puns?**

Not really, but I do play with words quite a bit. Specifically, in terms of syntactical leaps around concepts of gender (where I say-but don’t actually say-that I am a woman).

**Do you like to rhyme, or speak in assonance? (Again, read your lines out loud.) How do you use rhymes or assonance?**

My lines don’t abound in rhymes- a few of my longer passages end in a couplet but that doesn’t even always happen! My verse is often imperfect, it is the verse of someone that is young and not stringently sticking to social norms. Probably because it isn’t exactly normal for a woman to be dressing as a man and in love with her employer, but who knows, I’m not one to speak for the masses.

**What are five adjectives you would use to describe the way you speak?**

Honest

Observational

Adaptive

Emotional (this isn’t the right word- we can chat- I need an adjective that expresses her honesty to herself and her emotions, that results in her sometimes steering conversations to a place they wouldn’t otherwise go with her discussing herself by discussing “another” female that she knows)

Bright

**What tone of voice do you hear your words in? (slow, quick, sharply enunciated, affected...pick and choose as many as you want.)**

I think that her pattern of speech depends entirely on who she is speaking with. I really think that this reads as the most adaptive verse that I’ve ever read. She occasionally gets carried away with Orsino- really whenever she is carried away by emotion or surprised her speech probably speeds up- as is indicated by the quicker shorter verse connections, but I imagine she generally speaks at a medium speed. With Olivia I imagine she gets into a bit of an affected “lover” pattern when she is reciting, otherwise I think she is merely affected by the speed of Olivia’s wit.

**Do you often use gesture or movement to punctuate your words? When? Why or why not?**

I am not yet sure about this. At present, I don’t think so. It seems like Viola is a quiet observer, who tells it like it is. She doesn’t need big movements to make her point. Her point just comes out.

Appendix II.2 Actors' Exit Questionnaire, Kate Bussert

What surprised you?

What delighted you?

What did you like but not expect to?

Where did you hit a wall?

What were you confused by?

What resources were the most helpful to you?

Write five adjectives that summarized your experience of the rehearsal period:

What do you wish we had done more of?

What do you wish we had done less of?

Tell me a story about a problem you had and how you solved it:

Tell me a story about something that happened during the first run-through or one of the early shows:

As an actor, will you do anything differently after experiencing these new techniques?

Is there anything you wish you could try over? Why?