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Introduction: Dancing (With) Shakespeare

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ABSTRACT

The Introduction to this special issue on "Appropriation in Performance: Shakespeare and Dance" articulates the theoretical foundation and contribution to the study of both topics — Shakespeare *and* dance — and summarizes the essays' arguments and critical relation to one another.

This collection of essays addresses a burgeoning area of study: the relationship between dance and Shakespeare's plays. It does so in a deliberately wide-ranging manner, to indicate the scope of work being done on this topic. The work is interdisciplinary, moving beyond literary studies to incorporate studies of dance, music, theater, film, history, culture, and embodiment. The contributors draw on a wide range of source materials, from early modern dance and conduct manuals, to recent films and ballets, to the experiences and evidence provided by the dancing body itself. Interestingly, the studies tend to reference a particular group of Shakespeare's plays, to which the analysis of dance feels particularly germane. *Romeo and Juliet* provides the subject for the first four essays in the collection, partly because dancing occurs as metaphor and actual practice in the text itself, but also because it has been repeatedly adapted for the dance stage. *Much Ado About Nothing*, and its tragic counterpart *Othello*, are encompassed by the three essays that follow, again due to the prominence of dance in Shakespeare's comedy, as well as the temptation to insert it into contemporary film versions. Finally, the last two essays discuss the uses of dance in Shakespeare's late romances, particularly *The Winter's Tale*, in ways that move beyond language.

The authors of these essays attend to many different areas in which Shakespeare and dance intersect. Alan Brissenden's 1981 book *Shakespeare and the Dance* provides a significant starting point from which a number of the contributors develop their own arguments. Like Brissenden, some of the essays foreground the meanings dance takes on in both Shakespeare's plays and in early modern culture. Unlike Brissenden, whose book focuses solely on dance as literary metaphor, they consider how dance might be embodied in film and theater performances of the plays, but also through dance adaptations in which all or most of Shakespeare's language is removed in favor of movement. As Amy Rodgers notes in her essay, this poses a particular problem for scholars: "For most Shakespeareans, Shakespeare *is* language . . . What, then, do we do with Shakespeare and dance?" Rodgers and her fellow contributors reveal the many different ways we might answer this question, and the variety of perspectives we can gain on the plays when we explore the embodied practice of dance.

Emily Winerock and Emma Atwood both address the use of dance as metaphor in two of Shakespeare's plays. Winerock argues that scholars would benefit from paying attention to the meanings of dance in plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, particularly "how Shakespeare used audio-visual forms such as dance to complement or complicate spoken dialogue." Atwood focuses on *Much Ado About Nothing* to argue that dance becomes an "embodied metaphor that bridges the gap between text and performance and extends to the larger themes of masquerade and mistaken identity that permeate the play." Both Winerock and Atwood extend beyond the Shakespearean texts to how the "embodied metaphor" of dance might be performed. Winerock brings her experience as a dancer and choreographer to bear on a discussion of *The Bard's Galliard*, her staged interpretation of scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry VIII* using early modern dance manuals. Atwood turns to Joss Whedon's 2012 film version of *Much Ado* to analyze how although it excludes Beatrice and Benedick from dancing, the film nonetheless uses aerial acrobatics to illuminate their relationship. Atwood skillfully connects Whedon's acrobats to the tradition of early modern rope dancing, which provides a visual reminder of "the precarious position of love extolled by the play."

Like Atwood, Linda McJannet and Madhavi Biswas are concerned with the ways in which dance is used in film adaptations of Shakespeare. McJannet, like Winerock, examines act 1, scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet* (the Capulet ball) and its realization in twentieth century films by George Cukor (1936), Franco Zeffirelli (1968), and Baz Luhrmann (1996). She reveals that each film devotes "ten or more minutes to this pivotal scene" but ultimately creates "strikingly different effects." The ball scene provides opportunities for the directors to "put their creative stamp on Shakespeare's decision to rely on nonverbal communication . . . to establish and build the lovers' relationship." Biswas turns to the song-and-dance numbers in the 2006 film *Omkara*, a Hindi-language version of *Othello*. She argues that a close look at the dance numbers reveals the expanded roles they provide for the women characters, particularly Bianca (here renamed Billo); yet they also testify to how women are the targets of scopophilia and surveillance. Biswas focuses on the ways in which an elaborate waist ornament worn by Billo, which is the equivalent of the handkerchief from *Othello*, becomes "a visual symbol of female sexuality both exploited as well as literally policed" in the dance scenes.

While film adaptations add dance to the plays and retain spoken language (although not always Shakespeare's language, as in *Omkara*), theater and ballet adaptations can dispense with words entirely, relying on choreography and the bodies of dancers to tell the stories. Sheila Cavanagh investigates how Washington D.C.-based Synetic Theatre creates wordless dance-focused productions of Shakespeare that "push against definitional boundaries," using their 2014 performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* as a representative example. Although Synetic's productions are highly choreographed and use dance imagery that is both enjoyable and accessible for their audiences, Cavanagh reveals how they also convey meaning through "shared cultural references" that incorporate film, visual arts, popular music, and mainstream media. She also notes that Synetic has been successful despite resistance to excising Shakespeare's language, demonstrating that "these stories can be told effectively without vocalization."

Amy Rodgers, Nona Monahin, and I examine ballet adaptations of Shakespeare in our essays; like Cavanagh, we engage with the multiple meanings of dance productions that eliminate spoken language. Rodgers and Monahin both analyze ballet versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, albeit from different perspectives. Rodgers looks at John Cranko's 1962 production for the Stuttgart Ballet, particularly at the creative partnership between Cranko and his Juliet, Marcia Haydée. She draws a productive analogy between their collaboration and "the kind of collaboration early modern playmaking demanded," in order to inspire collaborations between scholars in the fields of Shakespeare and dance studies. Rodgers argues for Haydée as a co-producer of the ballet, attending closely to the choreographic process between Haydée and Cranko, to conclude that dances (and plays) are made by and through the bodies of those that perform them, not simply by isolated off-stage creative geniuses. Monahin turns her attention to a further collaborative aspect of the *Romeo and Juliet* ballet that has a significant impact on audience responses: the Sergei Prokofiev score used by Cranko and many other choreographers. She attends to the pros and cons of using an established score to create a ballet version of the play, especially a score as complex and intricate as Prokofiev's. In particular, she reveals how the problems are compounded by the original "happy ending" of the score, which was eventually changed for the original staging by Leonid Lavrovsky in 1940, noting that "choreographers who are drawn to the Prokofiev music are . . . confronted with several 'original sources' to work with, sources that at times may be at odds with one another." Finally, my own essay considers two recent ballet adaptations of the late romances — Alexei Ratmansky's *The Tempest* (2013) and Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* (2014) — in light of Brissenden's work on the metaphorical meanings dance takes on in the plays. Like Rodgers and Monahin, I attempt to bridge the gap between literary and dance studies by considering how choreographers and dancers have embodied the clash between concord and discord, order and disorder, that Brissenden identifies as a hallmark of the late romances.

Although a number of the contributors — particularly Winerock and Rodgers — pay close attention to the role that performers play in creating these varied dance adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, the final essay in the collection focuses primarily on physical practice. Lisa Dickson's piece, written with choreographer Andrea Downie, uses both literary analysis and journal entries to recount her process of creating and performing a solo based on the character of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. Interspersed with commentary by Downie, Dickson's writing considers what the individual body's experiences with choreography can tell us about the character, the play, and Shakespeare. Her account vividly demonstrates that the "'kinaesthetic imagination' is a powerful interpretive tool that allowed [her] to explore an aspect of this play that [she] had not considered before [she] began to breathe like Hermione." Dickson and Downie's performative experiment provides an illuminating and necessary practice-based perspective to round off the essay collection.

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"We'll measure them a measure, and be gone": Renaissance Dance Practices and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

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ABSTRACT | *ROMEO AND JULIET*: ACT 1, SCENE 4 | SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FESTIVE DANCE TRADITIONS | *ROMEO AND JULIET*: ACT 1, SCENE 5 | *ROMEO AND JULIET* VERSUS *HENRY VIII* | CHOREOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS | TORCH BEARING VERSUS TORCH DANCING | CONCLUSION | NOTES | REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

Dance is an oft-overlooked, yet frequent feature in Shakespeare's plays. The playwright utilizes dance scenes, not only to convey general festivity and celebration, but also to advance plots, to display character traits such as grace and nobility (or their absence), and to highlight the development of romantic relationships. While there are no surviving records detailing the original staging of these dance scenes, there are extant dancing manuals from the period that explain how to do many of the dances that Shakespeare mentions. Moreover, references in a plethora of early modern literary, pictorial, and archival sources offer evidence of how these dances were understood and interpreted by dancers and spectators. Using *Romeo and Juliet* as a case study, this paper demonstrates how one can bring together these diverse sources, supplemented by the insights gained from the "experiential learning" of staging these dances for live audiences, in order to choreograph historically-informed dances, regardless of whether the production is set in the Elizabethan period or the present day. Finally, the paper argues that a better understanding of Shakespeare's dance scenes enables us to gain a better understanding of his plays' central concerns and questions overall.

The precise footwork and exact dance figures performed in the original sixteenth-century performances of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* may never be recovered. Yet, surviving dance instruction manuals and choreographic notes from the period, spectators' descriptions of dance practices in England, France, and Italy, comparisons with similar dance scenes in contemporary plays, and references to dance elsewhere in the text of *Romeo and Juliet* itself enable some reasonable hypotheses regarding what dances might have been done in the original productions and how those dances were "read" or understood by audience members. Attending to dancing also illuminates how Shakespeare used audio-visual forms such as dance to complement or complicate spoken dialogue. Early modern scholars of many disciplines can therefore benefit from giving more consideration and attention to how, historically, dances were staged and interpreted in productions of Shakespeare's own time.

In 1999, for my undergraduate thesis at Princeton University, I scripted, choreographed, and directed a performance of dance scenes from William Shakespeare's plays, entitled *The Bard's Galliard, or How to Party Like an Elizabethan* (Winerock 1999). The performance featured period costumes, live music, and my attempts at historical reconstructions of Renaissance dances adapted to work in scenes from *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Henry VIII*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, among others. Having subsequently continued to do research in early dance, theater, and history, I have had many opportunities to look back on my first experiments in dance reconstruction, prompting reflections that elicit equal parts pride and embarrassment.

The Bard's Galliard included two scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*: act 1, scene 5, the party scene during which Romeo sees Juliet dance and falls in love with her; and act 1, scene 4, a short scene in which Mercutio and Romeo discuss Romeo's emotional state and his reluctance to participate fully in the evening's festivities, namely in the anticipated dancing. In this essay, I will use my initial embodied exploration of dance in *Romeo and Juliet* as a jumping off point for examining the function of dance in teh play more generally and reflecting on how, today, I might stage act 1, scene 5 a bit differently.

ROMEO AND JULIET: ACT 1, SCENE 4

Act 1, scene 4 of *Romeo and Juliet* opens with Romeo and his friends on the way to a party. The party is at the home of Lord Capulet, and so the young men, as members of the rival Montague faction in Verona, have not been invited. This fact, however, presents only a small obstacle to the intrepid young revellers; they have donned masks and will attend the party in disguise. Romeo, in the throes of melancholy due to a bad dream and his unrequited love for the fair Rosaline, accompanies the others reluctantly. Mercutio, Benvolio, and the other masquers are excited to dance with the girls at the party, to "measure them a measure," but Romeo complains, "You have dancing shoes / With nimble soles. I have a soul of lead / So stakes me to the ground I cannot move" (1.4.10, 14-16). Romeo offers, instead, to carry one of the torches: "I am not for this ambling. / Being but heavy I will bear the light" (1.4.11-12).

Despite Mercutio's attempts to persuade him otherwise, Romeo remains determined not to dance: "A torch for me. Let wantons light of heart / Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels / . . . / I'll be a candle holder and look on" (1.4.35-36, 37). Mercutio and Romeo continue to banter back and forth for a while, and Mercutio waxes eloquently about Queen Mab, the fairy trickster and haunter of dreams, until Benvolio reminds them that "[s]upper is done" and they shall come too late to the party if they dally further (1.4.112). Benvolio then calls out "Strike, drum," (1.4.121), and the youths "march about the stage" before withdrawing, ending the scene and creating the impression that they are now marching through the streets of Verona on the way to the Capulets' house (Winerock 1999, scene 4).

In analyzing the function and significance of dance in *Romeo and Juliet* and in the plays and time period of Shakespeare more generally, this scene, which describes dancing rather than displaying it, provides a helpful complement and counterpart to the later dance scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, which only specifies that "*Music plays, and they dance*." In this earlier scene, Shakespeare reveals various assumptions about and associations with dance of the period, even if he does so primarily to pun and play on them.

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FESTIVE DANCE TRADITIONS

Romeo contends in act 1, scene 4 that he should not dance because he is heavy- rather than light-hearted and thus suggests that dancing is only appropriate for those wanting to express joyful, light-hearted emotions. This insinuation is certainly supported by the evidence of dancing practices that can be gleaned from archival and literary sources. In the sixteenth century, dancing was *strongly* associated with joy and celebration. In England, we regularly find dancing at life-cycle celebrations such as weddings and at communal festivities for both religious and secular holidays, including Whitsuntide, Christmas, May Day, and Midsummer (Hutton 1994, Winerock 2012). Dancing on Sundays after church services was another popular, if problematic, customary dance practice, especially in the countryside, as was inviting dancers to perform at church fundraisers to draw larger audiences (Parker 1988, Forrest 1999).

These events all featured dancing that expressed joy and delight and that was thought to elicit the same positive feelings in viewers. Delight in dancing might be tainted by lust or lasciviousness, thus making its delights sinful, dangerous, and worthy of condemnation, but there is little evidence of people dancing to express or expunge sorrow or grief. Rather, when someone dances or mentions dancing during a sad or mournful moment, it is an aberration that highlights the discrepancy between actual and expected feelings or behaviors. While there are a handful of moments in plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries in which dancing serves as a metaphor for agitated motion that is not necessarily celebratory, such as the jerking of a dying body at a hanging, all of the staged dances and all of the in-text references to actual dancing in these plays assume that dancing customarily expresses happiness.

Similarly, at court, dancing at revels and entertainments expressed the positive and the joyful. When Shakespeare was writing *Romeo and Juliet* in the 1590s, the anti-masque — the comic, theatrical opening pieces of the English court masque — had not yet been invented (Welsford 1962, Daye 2008). The early masque popular during the Tudor period was a much simpler and more informal affair. Masquers — masked or disguised noblemen — crashed parties at the houses of other nobles, sometimes performing a choreographed piece for the hosts, sometimes simply engaging in social dancing with those present. Although the antic gestures of the later court masques might sometimes convey distress or anger, the dancing in these early masques was always light-hearted. Thus, Romeo's excuse that his sorrow and heavy heart make him unfit for dancing since it is best suited for "wantons light of heart," is a straightforward statement with which his audience would have been familiar and likely agreed. It also sets up the expectation that the dancing at the party will be similarly joyful and light-hearted.

Romeo and Juliet: Act 1, Scene 5

There is a short comic exchange at the very beginning of act 1, scene 5, in which servingmen jest with each other while they clear away the remnants of a feast. Then Lord Capulet and his family, including his daughter Juliet, enter, as do the other official guests, and Lord Capulet greets the masquers who have just arrived, welcoming them and inviting them to dance with the gentlewomen present, or "walk about" with them (1.5.19). He teases the women, saying that only those who have corns on their toes can resist dancing: "Will now deny to dance? She that makes dainty, / She, I'll swear, hath corns" (1.5.22-23). He then acknowledges that the newly arrived guests are mysterious, disguised masquers, although he is not bothered by this. Rather, seeing the young men in their masks reminds him of his own youthful masked adventures and love conquests:

> . . . I have seen the day
> That I have worn a visor and could tell
> A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear,
> Such as would please: 'tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone. (1.5.25-28)

And he and his cousin have an amusing exchange about whether it has been twenty-five or thirty years since they were last in a mask.

Lord Capulet's welcome to the masquers is immediately followed by several instructions: he asks the musicians to start playing music, he orders the servants to light more lights but "quench the fire" since the room has "grown too hot," and he orders them to make more room in the hall by turning up or stacking the tables. He also tells the young women to start dancing, presumably with the newly arrived masquers, "foot it, girls" (1.5.29-33).

This flurry of activity indicates not just that the masquers' arrival was unexpected, which we already knew, but also that the dancing that is about to occur is happening *because* of their arrival. There were musicians on hand, but the dancing that we see in this scene is unscheduled, improvised, and a direct response to the sudden arrival of mysterious young men in masks. The servants have to move the furniture in order to make sufficient room for dancing, and they must adjust the amount of light and warmth to accommodate the needs of dancers. These details are revealing: first, they confirm that this "masque" is the impromptu, informal type rather than a staging of a carefully choreographed, elaborately costumed, and well-rehearsed court masque.

They also suggest that dancing was not a requisite activity at a private party but could be easily added. There is no indication in the text that this sudden decision to have dancing was particularly unusual. So we may assume that Shakespeare's audience expected that both the masquers and the invited guests would be able to dance together without advance notice, already knowing the steps and figures for several dances, and that the musicians present would know the appropriate dance tunes to accompany them.

ROMEO AND JULIET VERSUS *HENRY VIII*

These assumptions hold true for the similar scene in Shakespeare's later play *Henry VIII*. In act 1, scene 4, masked young men arrive unexpectedly at a private party and dance with the women present, and the dancing leads to one of the men (Henry) problematically falling in love with one of the women (Anne Boleyn). The main difference between the scenes is that Henry VIII falls in love with Anne as he dances with her, whereas Romeo falls in love with Juliet while watching her dance with someone else. Nevertheless, in both scenes the unexpected arrival of masquers does not cause consternation. Masquers, invited guests, and musicians already have a shared repertoire of dances upon which they can draw for impromptu dancing.

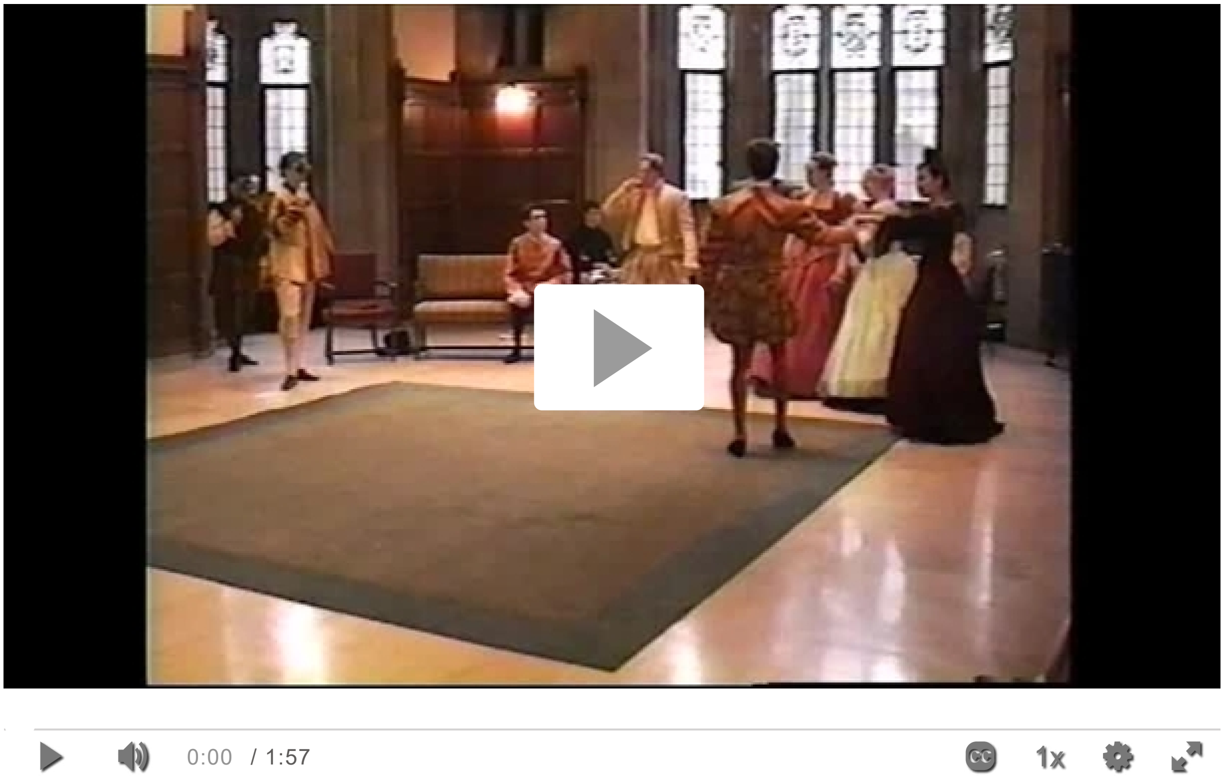
This is an important detail to take into consideration when choreographing this scene for a modern production and also for hypothesizing what sort of dancing might have been staged in the original production. The dance should be interesting enough to please the audience, but it does not have to be choreographed especially for the production. Indeed, one can make a strong argument for staging a well-known dance such as one of the processional pavanes, almains, or English measures (Payne 2003, Ward 1993). The dance only needs to afford Juliet the opportunity to display her notable beauty and grace.

In other words, the choreographic needs of the dance scene in *Romeo and Juliet* are much more modest compared to those in *Henry VIII*, where the dancing must make visible Henry's sudden enchantment and Anne's cautiously positive reaction. In staging this scene for *The Bard's Galliard*, to show Henry's sudden interest in Anne, I had him cut in on one of the other men who was about to ask her to dance (Winerock 1999, Scene 10, 4:43-5:06). To convey Henry's illicit sexual interest and foreshadow Anne's eventual acceptance, I chose the volta, the most scandalous and lascivious dance in the courtly dance canon (Arbeau 1967, 119-23). It was not a forbidden dance, but it was definitely at the far end of acceptable, and women who were particularly jealous of their reputations did not dance it. In addition, to show how Henry's passion for Anne has already begun to distract him and cause him to disregard propriety, I had them dance an extra set of volta turns after the other dancers had finished (Winerock 1999, Scene 10, 6:07-6:30). This extension made their dancing together seem more symbolic, as well as focused the audience's attention on them.[1]

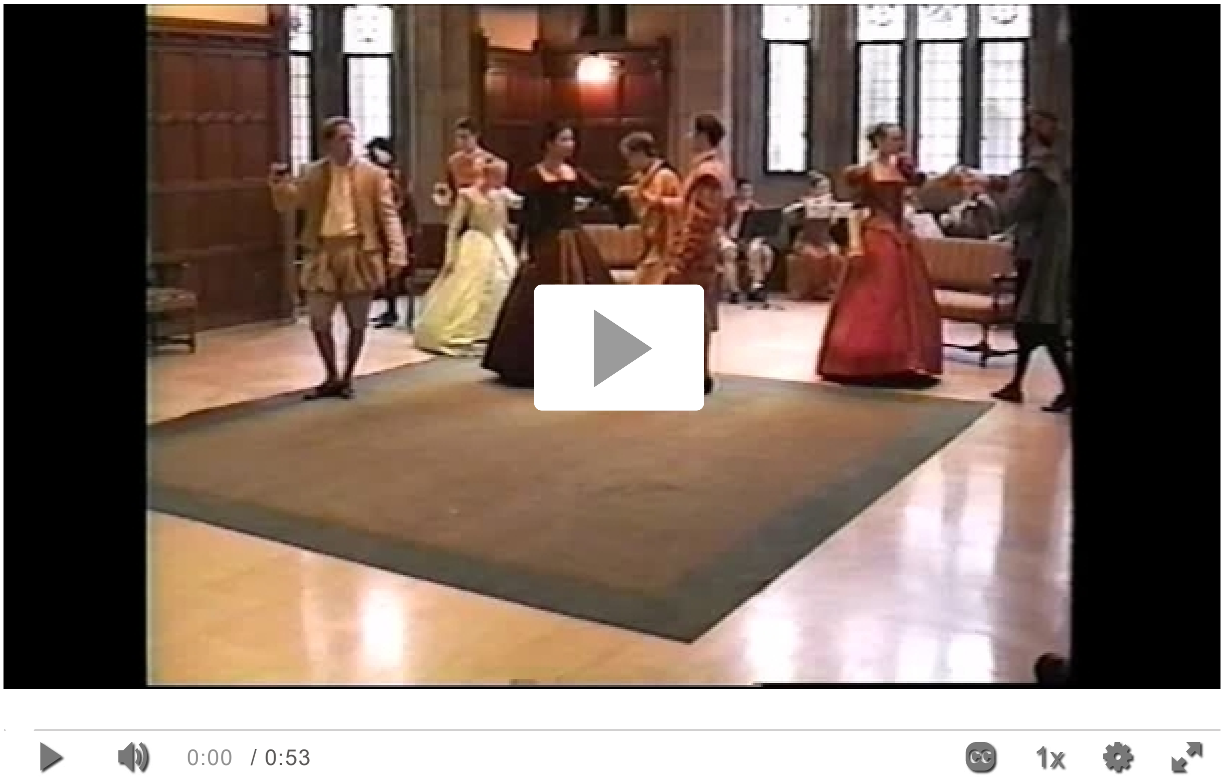
Choreographic Problems and Solutions

In *Romeo and Juliet*, such elaborate machinations were not necessary. However, there were still difficulties in terms of timing and focus. The actual stage direction, "*Music plays and they dance*," occurs in the script partway through Lord Capulet's welcome speech to the masquers, in between "Come, musicians, play" and "A hall, a hall, give room" (1.5.30). It does not make sense that he would call for more room after the dancing had ended, so either the stage direction is in the wrong place, or, more likely, this is where the music begins, but the actual dancing begins somewhat later. One option is to have the masquers seek out their partners, bowing to them, and inviting them out into the center of the stage, while the musicians play a long introduction, the servants move the furniture to make more space, and Lord Capulet bustles about giving instructions and reminiscing about his own dancing past. This, then, allows the dancers to come together and begin dancing in time for Romeo to notice Juliet and her graceful beauty, inquiring of a servingman, "What lady's that which doth enrich the hand / Of yonder knight?" (1.5.48-49). He then continues to praise her beauty while she continues dancing. We know that she is still dancing because he tells us he will wait until the measure is done to approach her. The scene then shifts to Lord Capulet and Tybalt's substantial exchange, after which Romeo approaches Juliet. At this point, she has clearly stopped dancing, but it is unclear when exactly the dance should end. In other words, we know that there is definitely dancing happening during moments of dialogue, but how much overlap is not clear. In a film, where one can shift the focus between dancers and speakers, this works well, but on stage this leads to a divided focus. Does one watch the dancers or the speakers? Moreover, it can be difficult to hear spoken dialogue when music is playing.

In *The Bard's Galliard*, I attempted to solve the first problem by having two dances. Shortly after Romeo and his friends arrive, I had Juliet and one of the gentlemen perform an elegant Italian courtly dance, "Alta Mendozza" (Wortelboer 1996, 8-10). The young woman playing Juliet was a ballet dancer, and her partner a ballroom dancer, and their performance was quite charming and lovely (Winerock 1999, Scene 5, 0:45-2:43).



Romeo's sudden interest in Juliet did not feel surprising, since she was being featured, and historically, having the daughter of the house dance a duet towards the beginning of a dance event would be entirely appropriate. The first dance was followed by a short processional pavane with all of the masquers, except Romeo, dancing with the women at the party. As they watched the dancers, Lord Capulet reminisced with his cousin about their own dancing days, and we added a comic "bit" where Romeo followed the procession, trying to catch a better glimpse of Juliet (Winerock 1999, Scene 5, 2:52-3:45).



While the procession was visually pleasant and clearly involved dancing, it was not particularly choreographically interesting. Thus, the audience did not feel too torn between watching the dancing and listening to the gentlemen, although perhaps Romeo's antics were a bit distracting. Still, the main problem in performance was that it was difficult to hear the dialogue over the music. In retrospect, I should have had the musicians play more quietly or had the actors further forward on the stage with the procession behind them. Nevertheless, the two dances worked as a staging solution. The initial duet danced by Juliet enabled the audience, along with Romeo, to notice her easily and naturally and to see how she "o'er her fellows shows" (1.5.56); the subsequent processional dance fulfilled the requirement of the text that the masquers, except for Romeo, dance with the girls at the party. However, this solution required adding a dance that was simply not called for in the script — a substantial intervention. It worked in performance and was historically plausible, but I am no longer comfortable adding in extra dances. Indeed, Linda McJannet and I recently published an essay about how significant adding dances can be (McJannet and Winerock 2016).

Torch Bearing versus Torch Dancing

That being said, one of the only serious choreographic suggestions that has been published, Alan Brissenden's recommendation in *Shakespeare and the Dance* of a torch dance, also has problems (Brissenden 1981, 65). Thoinot Arbeau's dancing manual *Orchesography* provides a choreography for a candlestick or torch dance (Arbeau 1967, 161-63), and Anne Daye has written about torchbearers in the English masque (Daye 1998). She discusses, of course, the torchbearers who clearly dance in the masque processional dance in Henry Unton's memorial portrait (c. 1596; see figure 1).

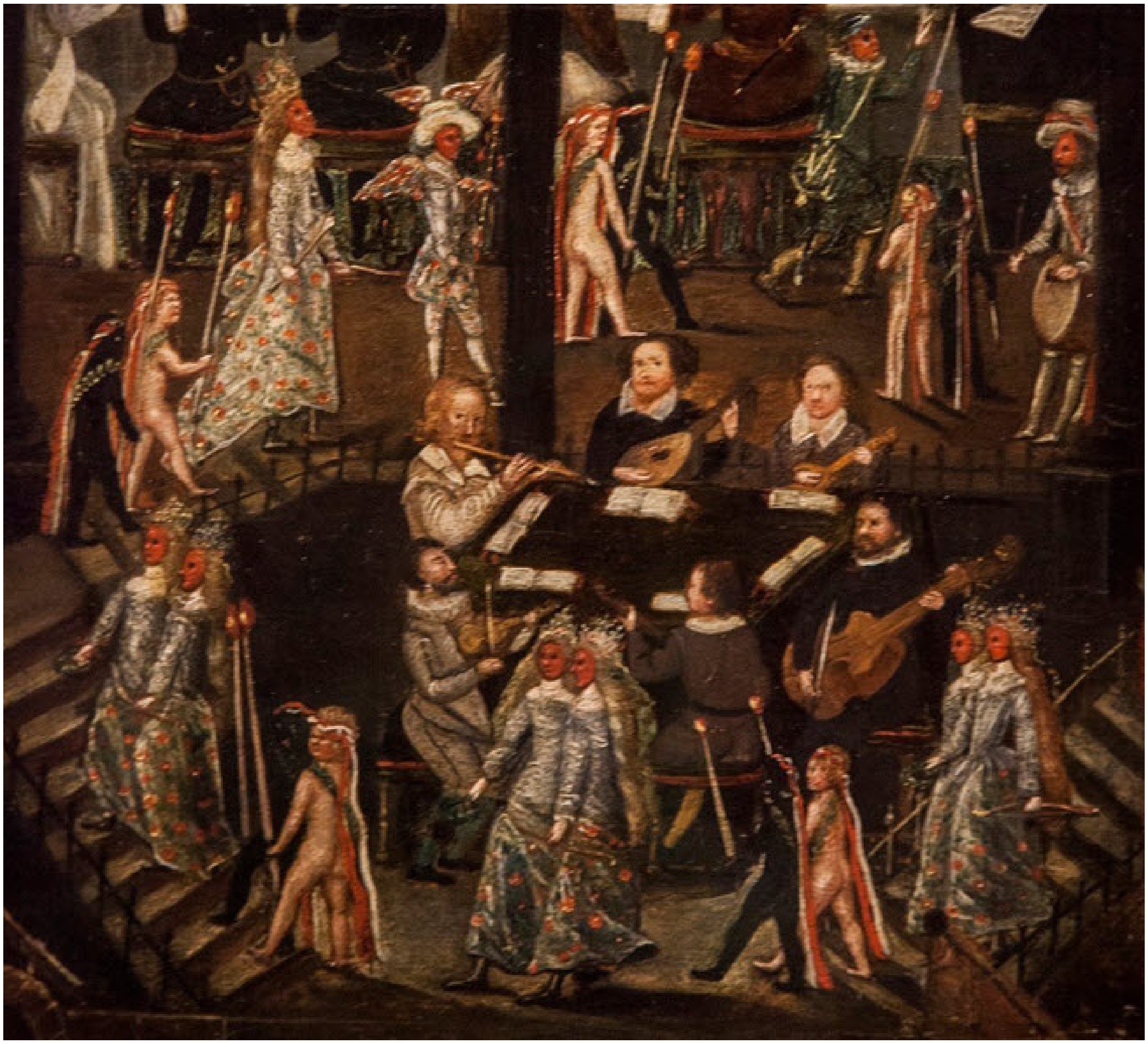


Figure 1. Excerpt from the memorial portrait of Sir Henry Unton, unknown artist, ca. 1596

Yet, it is hard to reconcile Romeo's insistence that he will bear the torch instead of dancing with there then being a dance with torchbearers in it. In such a case, would not Romeo be required to dance with his torch? Moreover, while Unton's portrait features dancing torchbearers, other pictorial evidence shows that torchbearers for dancers did not necessarily join in the dance. In an early seventeenth-century print by Crispin de Pas designed by Martin de Vos known as *Couple Dancing*, two young man hold up torches in the background next to the musicians while a man and woman dance a galliard in the foreground (Barlow 2012, 67). Plate 6 of *The Masquerades*, after Jacques de Gheyn II, has two masked dancers in the foreground, and a partially obscured torchbearer behind them. The torchbearer is in mid-step, but he faces a different direction than the dancers, indicating that he is not "in step" with them (see figure 2).

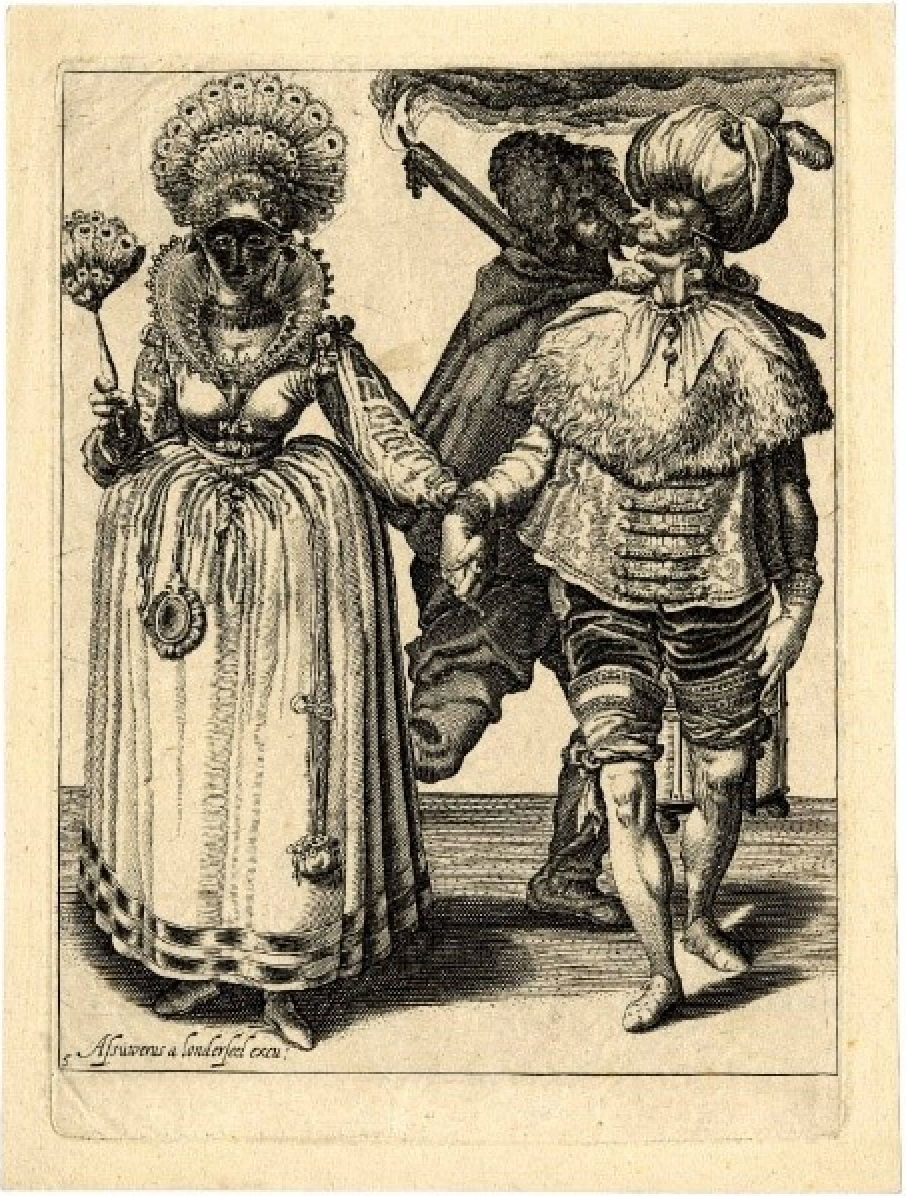

5 Assuerus a londerseel excu.

Figure 2. Plate 6, The Masquerades, after Jacques de Gheyn II, ca. 1595

CONCLUSION

In *Romeo and Juliet*, dance, character, and plot are enmeshed. A dance mediates the first encounter of the star-crossed lovers. But it is not through dancing together that the lovers come together. Juliet's dancing sparks Romeo's love, but though his heart is lightened, his heels remain heavy. As the play unfolds, his love pulls Juliet away from her family and the light-hearted dancing of their first encounter; he is not drawn into her dance.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare uses dance to skillfully manipulate the audience's emotions and expectations. The dances in the beginning of act 1, scene 5 fit the sixteenth-century assumption that dancing was appropriate for and indicative of joyful, communal expressions of celebration. Thus, Juliet's dancing is not simply aesthetically pleasing; it also demonstrates that she is a valued member of a warm, inclusive community. Then the playwright unsettles these expectations by having Romeo draw Juliet away from the dancing instead of joining her, mirroring the way he will draw her away from her family instead of joining it.

There are countless possibilities when staging the dancing in *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as many challenges, especially if one wants to stage historically plausible dances. However, understanding dance's sixteenth-century connotations, and how Shakespeare mines and undermines them, can help modern-day choreographers and directors make decisions that support and clarify the play's nuances rather than inadvertently obfuscating them.

NOTES

1. For ease of access, some video clips are embedded in the body of this essay; additional footage is available at https://shakespeareandance.com/video-gallery/shakespeare-miscellanies/the-bards-galliard (https://shakespeareandance.com/video-gallery/shakespeare-miscellanies/the-bards-galliard) [accessed 30 April 2017].

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PERMISSIONS

Figure 1. Excerpt from the memorial portrait of Sir Henry Unton, unknown artist, c.1596. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 2. Plate 6, *The Masquerades*, after Jacques de Gheyn II , c1595. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ABSTRACT | *ROMEO AND JULIET*: ACT 1, SCENE 4 | SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FESTIVE DANCE TRADITIONS | *ROMEO AND JULIET*: ACT 1, SCENE 5 | *ROMEO AND JULIET* VERSUS *HENRY VIII* | CHOREOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS | TORCH BEARING VERSUS TORCH DANCING | CONCLUSION | NOTES | REFERENCES | TOP

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Creation Myths: Inspiration, Collaboration, and the Genesis of *Romeo and Juliet*

Amy Rodgers, Mount Holyoke College

Abstract | Symbiosis as Genesis: Creating Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* | Dance as Shakespearean Archive | Notes | References

Abstract

Recent inquiries into Shakespeare and dance have tended towards excavating the place and form of dancing in Shakespeare's plays or historicizing movement itself. My essay takes a different heuristic route by exploring what dance might bring to our understanding of how Shakespeare's plays were constructed. Using John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* as a test case, I explore how this work's collaborative creation might offer insight into the material means of plays' genesis and realization in Shakespeare's era. In doing so, I suggest an additional line of inquiry into the relationship between Shakespeare and dance, one that adds to work that expands our understanding of early modern drama's production.

What is Shakespeare without language? Scholars have explored Shakespeare without women (Callaghan 2000), without class (Hedrick and Reynolds 2000), and without English (Chaudhuri and Lim 2006), but for most Shakespeareans, Shakespeare *is* language. As one eminent scholar puts it: "Much of the time [Shakespeare] is talking about language itself, and we are never allowed to forget it" (McDonald 2001, 58). What, then, do we do with Shakespeare and dance? Of course, as my collaborators herein suggest, dance was an integral part of Shakespeare's dramatic works, artistic milieu, and social and cultural practices and remains a significant communicative form for contemporary theater and film directors, especially as a signifier of a particular historical period and/or sociopolitical context. Seen via these perspectives, dance participates in creating meaning in the plays and their afterlives on stage and screen not by replacing language, but as an additional communicative form that, along with music, supplements or fills out the plays' linguistic, aural, and visual composition.

What, then, about forms of danced "Shakespeare" that do not use language at all, such as the many full-length dance incarnations based on his plays? While the relationship between Shakespeare, his plays, and dance adaptations remains mostly *terra incognita*, there has been a recent surge of interest in Shakespeare-based dance narratives. Julie Sanders (2007) has explored dance adaptations of Shakespeare as one of several significant performance epiphenomena that have proliferated from Shakespeare's dramatic works and that also include orchestral music, opera, musical theater, and film. Focusing on Cathy Marston's 2009 *Julia und Romeo* for Bern:Ballett, Lynsey McCulloch explores dance as a kind of translation. Tracing the fault lines between dramatic and dance renditions of Shakespeare, McCulloch "explores the process by which early modern text becomes movement and asks what distinguishes the linguistic context of the play from the kinetic concept of dance" (2013, 255). And, in her provocatively titled essay, "'There Are No Mother-In-Laws in Ballet': 'Doing' Shakespeare in Dance" (2005), Robin Wharton argues that the translation of Shakespeare's plays into dance creates a unique space for disrupting classical ballet's rigidly circumscribed conventions for representing gender, while still retaining the vocabulary and structure of classical dance.

Like these scholars, I am interested in questions of adaptation, translation, and disruption, but with a somewhat different end in mind. Rather than interrogate the relationship between Shakespeare's works and their dance incarnations by placing them in a historical narrative of adaptation practices or a theoretical one of signification, I consider the place of danced Shakespeare in what Joseph Roach calls "performance genealogies." Performance genealogies are structures that function as repositories for those cultural memories that exist and are passed down in forms other than linguistic ones. As Roach puts it, "Performance genealogies draw on the idea of expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies" (1996, 26), citing ballet as a paradigmatic example of a legible kinesthetic history.

In this essay, I consider dance as an important part of a Shakespearean performance genealogy: as a living, breathing example of a certain kind of creative and collaborative process that, for the most part, has not survived in contemporary theater practice. In other words, dance can help us better understand not only the process by which Shakespeare created his plays, but also his creative milieu, one that was relentlessly collaborative, intertextual, and imitative (or, to use the modern parlance for this sort of iteration, plagiaristic).[1] Informed both by historicist studies that helped destabilize the "Great Man" master narrative and by performance studies and theater history scholarship that investigate the manifold ways in which early modern drama was generated by a creative network that included playwrights, actors, theater owners, costumers, printers, audiences, and readers, my inquiry suggests further points of contact between the fields of Shakespeare and dance scholarship. In particular, I argue that dance offers an alternative kind of archive for studying early modern performance practices, a field in which one of the primary obstacles is a dearth of records. However, when considering what we do know about the early modern English theater, a number of striking similarities with the twentieth-century repertory ballet company emerge.

Much as professional drama and the profession of dramatist flourished in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, the mid-twentieth century ushered in a kind of renaissance for classical ballet and dance. From the rise of the most influential classical choreographers since Petipa (including George Balanchine, Anthony Tudor, Frederick Ashton, Agnes DeMille, Kenneth MacMillan, and John Cranko) to the proliferation of modern choreographers and companies (such as Martha Graham, José Limón, and later Paul Taylor, Merce Cunningham, and Alvin Ailey), dance companies and choreographers seemed to multiply exponentially. Moreover, while the traditional repertory theater model dwindled in the twentieth century (a trend that continues into the present day), ballet and modern companies built on both repertory and touring models proliferated in the 1960s, and most dance companies continue to employ them in the twenty-first century. This hybrid model resembles the one used by the majority of theater companies in Renaissance England, but is used by few theater companies now. And, whereas few of the twentieth century's major playwrights either directed or held a resident playwright position with a theater company, nearly all of the twentieth century's major choreographers either ran their own company or held the title of resident choreographer. This allowed them to develop a repertory built on not only their own talents, but also the talents of individual dancers with whom they worked repeatedly. Finally, the post-World War II era saw a dramatic change in the composition of ballet audiences, from a small, elite cohort to a much larger, more diverse audience: dance critic and historian Frank Jackson claims that during this period, ballet became "the art of the masses" (1953, 35).

Within this vital mid-century moment, I locate a particular creative nexus, one that assembles the energies of dancers, choreographers, designers, and composers and fosters a culture of cross-pollination among them. Focusing on the relationship between one of the major twentieth-century choreographers, John Cranko, and the Stuttgart Ballet's principal dancer, Marcia Haydée, I suggest that their collaboration on Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* provides a fertile analogy for understanding the kind of collaboration early modern playmaking demanded. Analogous, yes, but not identical: I do not aver that the mid-century ballet company can (or should) be directly mapped onto the early modern English theatrical one. Instead, I hope that such an analogy will prove useful in opening new avenues of inquiry into Shakespeare's plays and the early modern theater and demonstrate the opportunity, even urgency, for greater cross-disciplinary conversation and collaboration between the fields of Shakespeare and dance studies.

SYMBIOSIS AS GENESIS: CREATING CRANKO'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

In a variant of the one-upmanship fueled by the masculine and writerly *agon* that spurred many of early modern England's most precocious wits to try their hand at writing for the stage, John Cranko's inspiration for choreographing *Romeo and Juliet* came about after seeing Leonid Lavrovsky's elaborate production in 1956 (Percival 1983, 122; Haydée 2013, 32:24).[2] Cranko's initial attempt at the ballet was for La Scala in 1958, with the twenty-one-year-old Carla Fracci in the role of Juliet. The production was not a success (Percival 1983, 123), but it did provide Cranko with a useful learning curve for his next attempt: a heavily revised version made by his company at Stuttgart four years later. Circumstances could not have been more different from La Scala. Stuttgart was a small, newly formed company, qualities reflected in its modest budget. Whereas Cranko could mount a production at La Scala that mimicked some of the Lavrovsky production's opulence and spectacle, the Stuttgart production would live or die by the strength and expressive capabilities of the choreography and dancers. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Cranko's 1962 production is the sparseness of its staging. Cranko collaborated with novice set designer Jürgen Rose to create a minimalist set consisting of movable structures that could be easily manipulated to form the armature for different kinds of spaces: street, ballroom, bedroom, and cloister (Percival 1983, 133-34).[3]

More formative than budgetary constraints, however, was the presence of Cranko's muse, Marcia Haydée, for whom he choreographed the revised Juliet. In 1962, twenty-five-year-old Haydée found herself at that ephemeral moment in a dancer's career where she is at the peak of her technical powers but just starting to reach her artistic abilities' full florescence. Equally significantly, she had worked with Cranko since 1957, when he had, despite the misgivings of the theater director, made Haydée the company's prima ballerina, because, as he stated, "She understands me" (Haydée 2013, 12:08). According to Haydée, the choreographic process was highly collaborative, to the point where Cranko's dancers were equal partners in crafting steps, style, and dramatic effect. Reminiscing about Cranko's choreographic process during *Romeo and Juliet*, Haydée stated: "John didn't know the steps he was going to do, but he was so clear about the situation, how to build that situation . . . And for me and Ray [Barra, Haydée's Romeo] whatever he said, we immediately did. And sometimes it was different than what he wanted, but he says: "'Oh no, this is better; let's keep that'" (2013, 17:03-24). Haydée's description is revealing for not only what she says, but how she says it. Her choice of language deftly testifies to the liminal, generative space of creation through the language she uses to describe both intention and process. Haydée states that while Cranko did not know the *steps* he wanted the dancers to perform, he was pellucid on "the situation," an ambiguous construct for those of us left outside of that moment. Does it mean the narrative? The emotional tenor of the scene? Haydée's paradoxical concatenation of abstraction ("the situation") and transparency ("he was so clear") captures something about the nature of creative collaborations. A temporal and spatial dimension in which something inchoate is given form, rhythm, and dimension, the creative transfiguration from idea to language or movement becomes reified in Haydée's account of how Cranko's vision of *Romeo and Juliet* came to be: "Whatever he said, we immediately did."

When comparing Cranko's rendition to the Lavrovsky version that inspired him, we may see traces of this unique, almost instinctive, collaborative process through where and how Cranko features his lead ballerina. Known for her combination of seriousness, intelligence, and ability to create a sense of fantasy onstage, Haydée provided the cynosure for Cranko's production. In the Lavrovsky version, Juliet is present from the ballroom scene's opening, and Juliet (danced by Galina Ulanova at the premiere) seems perfectly at ease, sitting among the guests and gracefully inclining her long neck to listen to a courtier's whispered pleasantries.[4] When Paris hands her a bouquet, she accepts it with delight. Cranko, however, has Juliet enter in the middle of the Knights' dance: she scurries in and stands upstage, awkwardly, as if she is not sure she belongs there.[5] After getting her frock fluffed by the Nurse, she runs towards her parents, touches her mother lightly on the shoulder and then defers to her father's presence, bowing somewhat stiffly, in an unpracticed manner, to the floor. She is then introduced to Paris, at whom she glances — barely — then runs to her mother, as if seeking reassurance.

Whether she finds reassurance is uncertain, since her father takes her hand and places it in Paris's, who leads her to the side, and the Knights' dance continues. Unlike the Lavrovsky version, where Juliet is centrally placed in and always a part of the festivities, Cranko's Juliet irrupts onto the scene, an entrance that clearly marks her as singular and incandescent. Immediately following the Knights' dance, Juliet and Paris take center stage. In the Lavrovsky version, the courtship dance exhibits bold, traditional *pas de deux* elements. The steps showcase the ballerina's technique and the danseur's partnering skills (there are balances for Juliet and multiple overhead and press lifts for her partner). In addition, the couple tends to cover the entirety of the ballroom's space and move along multiple axes: vertical, horizontal, and diagonal in both directions (left to right and right to left). In Cranko's courtship dance, however, the guests hem the pair in, and they travel only on the diagonal, two choices that serve to emphasize Haydée's portrayal of Juliet as aware of her rapidly narrowing options as she stands on the precipice of adulthood. Haydée's Juliet seems almost as if she is a trance, as if she cannot quite believe any of this is happening to her. None of the *pas de deux*'s steps appears to be technically challenging, although in many ways they are more so than the virtuoso steps found in the Lavrovsky. Cranko's choreography demands a steadiness of pacing and show of effortlessness in the sequence's technique and partnering: a form of *sprezzatura* nearly impossible to achieve. However, it also allows for a greater emphasis on Haydée's dramatic rather than technical gifts. Indeed, according to Haydée, Cranko's primary inspiration for choreographing, particularly at the height of his career, was neither music nor libretto, but the dancers themselves. As Haydée puts it, "I don't think John could ever create something without really making it for the person" (Haydée 2013, 12:40).

We might simply chalk this quality up to idiosyncrasy, to a particular strand of Cranko's emotional and intellectual DNA. However, when one scrolls through the list of the major ballet choreographers of the twentieth century — Frederick Ashton, John Cranko, Kenneth MacMillan, and George Balanchine — one finds them yoked to another set of names — Margot Fonteyn, Marcia Haydée, Lynn Seymour, and Suzanne Farrell. Often these dancers are collected under the aegis of the *muse* — that rare, transcendent entity that moves beyond his or her function as the vehicle upon which the creator's vision is written to become the catalyst for it. However, I would argue that the muse is more than a source of inspiration; rather, he or she is collaborator and co-creator of the artistic product. This relationship between choreographer and dancer often resonates well beyond their own moment of creation. For example, Kenneth MacMillan's better-known version of *Romeo and Juliet*, choreographed only three years after the Stuttgart version, is heavily influenced by both Cranko and Haydée.[6] British dance critic Luke Jennings has noted that MacMillan's ballet "borrows so liberally and unambiguously from Cranko's version that at times the eyes widen in disbelief" (2008). Tellingly, much of the "borrowing" comes from those scenes that serve to introduce us to Juliet's character: "At the moment in act 1 when Juliet discovers she's got breasts, a whisper of recognition ran through the audience on Wednesday's opening night. Gesture for gesture, note for note, the scene is almost identical" (Jennings 2008). But MacMillan was not the only one influenced by Cranko and Haydée. In 1964, Seymour had gone to Stuttgart to dance Juliet as a guest artist, and Haydée had coached her in the role. These tessellations of influence suggest that art forms requiring more than a single compositor do not simply come into being ex-nihilo from the mind of the genius, but from a complex, interdependent creative network, one that continues to affect and shape future artists and performances even if the exact imprints of the various collaborators become effaced over time.

Dance as Shakespearean Archive

What, then, might dance tell us about Shakespeare? Certainly, it can provide us with additional insight into the culture in which he lived and worked. It can help us better understand the rhythm and pacing of his plays, and the myriad avenues through which they are communicated. Dance offers access into under-theorized adaptive spaces that can allow for greater insight into how Shakespeare has been interpreted and reimagined over four centuries. However, as I have been suggesting, dance can also offer us a living template for understanding not just Shakespeare's plays or culture, but also the process by and conditions under which his works were — dare I say — choreographed. Performance scholars often take literary scholars to task for not considering "embodied Shakespeare" — that is, for failing to consider the ways in which an actor's body, gesture, and voice are as significant sites of meaning as the text. Anthropologist Ruth Finnegan cautions that play texts can be be "a surprisingly misleading guide to what people are actually doing onstage and/or experiencing as a viewer" (1988, 40). I would add that play texts can be surprisingly misleading about the conditions of their own generation. Rather than imagining the version of Shakespeare immortalized in John Madden's 1998 *Shakespeare in Love* — the solitary playwright struggling alone with his thoughts — we might revise the scene to include the writer, the actor, the designer, and the impresario working together, trying out lines, imagining blocking possibilities, feeling their way around speech cadences and line rhythms. It might look rather more like Haydée's version of creation: "I always questioned Cranko about what he really wanted, and I told him if I agreed or not. There's always a dialogue with the choreographer, otherwise there's no way one can create a ballet" (Haydée 2001). Embodiment (in this case via dance and its creative processes) may supplement more than our understanding of how Shakespeare's plays come to mean; it may also illuminate the very process through which they came into existence both on stage and page.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Jonathan Hope, *The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays: A Socio-Linguistic Study* (1994); Gary Taylor, "Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth, Part One*" (1995); Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Early Modern Drama* (1997); and John Jowett, "Varieties of Collaboration in Shakespeare's Problem Plays and Late Plays" (2005).
2. Lavrovsky's production premiered in St. Petersburg in 1940.
3. It is worth noting that these staging practices echo both what we believe to be the original staging practices for the early modern theater and the minimalist approach that marked some of the most significant theater productions of the mid-twentieth century, such as Peter Brook's 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. For a description of early modern staging practices, see E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* Vol. 3 (1923); Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (2000); and Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (2009).
4. For an online version of the Lavrovsky version starring Alina Somova and Andrian Fadeyev in 2010 at the Mariinsky Theater, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAIaPjdXXDk (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAIaPjdXXDk) [accessed 25 April 2017].
5. For an online version of the Cranko version starring Haydée and Richard Cragun, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wknSiNIIkII (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wknSiNIIkII) [accessed 25 April 2017].
6. An anecdote cited in Parry's biography of MacMillan suggests that Cranko did not believe, in this case, that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery: "Cranko had been watching a performance of MacMillan's ballet when a fellow spectator said to him, 'I wish I'd seen yours.' 'You just have,' replied Cranko" (2009, 284).

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"A hall, a hall! Give room, and foot it, girls": Realizing the Dance Scene in *Romeo and Juliet* on Film

Linda McJannet, Bentley University

Abstract | Overall Design Decisions — Cukor, Zeffirelli, Luhrmann | Cukor: A Court Masque, a Comic Juliet | Zeffirelli: Transported by a Wild Moresca | Luhrmann: Bonding from a Distance | Conclusion | Notes | References

Abstract

In Shakespeare's text, the dancing at the Capulets' feast is initiated by Romeo's friends, who enter as masquers and approach the ladies, while Romeo watches from the sidelines. Film directors alter the dance in interesting ways. George Cukor (1936) relies on Renaissance paintings and dance steps to create a "production number" for Juliet. He creates a glittering court masque in which Juliet has the queen's leading role and Romeo the king's prime vantage point. Franco Zeffirelli (1968) includes Romeo in the choreography, and the lovers' initial attraction reaches a dizzying climax in a Moresca enjoyed by everyone in the household. In the most dramatically and psychologically satisfying version, Baz Luhrmann's (1996) film, the lovers independently seek refuge from the drunken party. Later, Juliet must dance with a sweetly dorky Paris while she and Romeo bond over her predicament. The different interpretations demonstrate that dance sequences are under-analyzed sites of directorial creativity. In these three cases, they contribute to the characterization of Juliet, the implied basis of the lovers' mutual attraction, and the theme of their relationship to their social and familial milieu.

As Emily Winerock's essay has demonstrated, Shakespeare structures the dance sequence at the Capulets' feast in *Romeo and Juliet* as an informal masque, a social practice in which masked youths essentially crash a party, refrain from speaking, are welcomed by the host as mysterious guests, and invite the ladies to dance. As Winerock notes, the stage direction "*Music plays, and they dance*" (1.5.23) leaves a host of details to the discretion of the players or (in modern times) the director and/or choreographer, but cues embedded in the dialogue establish important aspects of the scene as Shakespeare conceived it: namely, Romeo is ambivalent about attending the party; once there, he does not dance but watches Juliet from the sidelines; during the dance the lovers discover their passion for each other; and the abrupt departure of the young men occasions the end of the party and the scene. In the text, the dance potentially occupies significant stage time; sixty-six lines of dialogue separate "*they dance*" and Romeo's taking of Juliet's hand, which he has planned to do once the "measure [is] done" (1.5.47). Literary critic Alan Brissenden viewed the dance in this scene as a symbol of harmony and an ironic contrast to the "discord and tragedy which follow" (1981, 64), but in performance — and especially in film adaptations such as those of George Cukor (1936), Franco Zeffirelli (1968), and Baz Luhrmann (1996) — the dance contributes in many other ways, as well. All three films devote ten or more minutes to this pivotal scene. None presents the masquers as initiating or ending the dancing, and two of the three eventually permit Romeo to dance with Juliet, but they preserve the other elements listed above. Within this framework, however, the choreography and blocking of the sequence create strikingly different effects.

OVERALL DESIGN DECISIONS — CUKOR, ZEFFIRELLI, LUHRMANN

Naturally, creative decisions about the dance sequence do not occur in a vacuum; they are influenced by a host of other decisions, such as the choice of period, geographical setting, and costumes and by the cinematic and aesthetic tastes of their respective eras. Cukor and Zeffirelli chose different approaches to a "period production." Cukor modeled his sets and costumes on Italian Renaissance paintings of religious scenes and classical myths, and he produced what Kenneth Rothwell has termed (not altogether ironically) "a first-rate example of the kind of archaeological production" that was popular in the nineteenth century (1973, 347). The "super-extravaganza mentality" of 1930s cinema also influenced Cukor, who filled the main roles with box-office stars (most of whom were in their forties and thus too old for their parts).[1] The dance sequence occasionally resembled a "production number" in the style of Broadway musicals from the 1930s (Rothwell 1973, 345). The result is a reverent, glittering, inappropriately epic production, with lots of spectacle and (to this viewer's eye) very little emotional depth or credibility.

Zeffirelli, by contrast, shot his film on location in an Italian hill town and recreated the dress and domestic architecture of Renaissance Italy (not Renaissance fantasies of goddesses and angels). He assigned the lead roles to Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, teenaged unknowns, whose youth and inexperience were seen by many as an asset, even if their mastery of the heavily cut text was sometimes lacking. Having worked with Luchino Visconti, a master of Italian realist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, Zeffirelli was seen as rejecting "years of stifling reverence" to create a truly cinematic and artistically unified version of the play (Cirillo 1969, 71 and 78). Zeffirelli's production also benefitted (as Cukor's could not) from being shot in color.

Unlike Cukor and Zeffirelli, Australian filmmaker Baz Luhrmann had no interest in a period production. Rather, he set the play in a postmodern, beachside Latin city, dominated by warring family-owned corporations (Montague and Capulet) and saturated with media, violence, and religious imagery. Luhrmann's ethnically diverse cast featured young but known actors in the main roles: Leonardo DiCaprio (22) and Claire Danes (17) as the lovers; Colombian-born John Leguizamo (32) as Tybalt; and African American actor Harold Perrineau (33) as Mercutio. Prominent characters actors (such as Brian Dennehy, Diana Venora, and Paul Sorvino) took the adult roles. The cinematography featured "whip pans, lightning cuts, super macro-slam zooms, static super-wide shots, tight-on point-of-view shots, and other vertigo-inducing angles courtesy of crash-crane camera-work" (Lehmann 2001, 206). Some critics objected to Luhrmann's "postmodern razzmatazz," but others admired and were energized by his use of multi-media pastiche and by his artfully realized imaginary world, "itself a curious hybrid of Shakespeare's Veronese setting, L.A.'s Venice Beach, and the film's on-location shots of Mexico City" (Lehmann 2001, 191-92).

Not surprisingly, the choreographers of the two period productions, Agnes de Mille and Alberto Testa, respectively, provided plausible simulations of Renaissance dances, while Lurhmann and his choreographer, John "Cha Cha" O'Connell, employed a variety of modern styles — from 1970s "pantomime dances" (like the Swim) to Motown. But beyond enhancing the historical moment of the setting, the choreography and blocking of the dance scenes contribute significantly to the characterization of Juliet, the implied basis of the lovers' mutual attraction, and the theme of their relationship to their social and familial milieu.

CUKOR: A COURT MASQUE, A COMIC JULIET

Initially, Cukor's masquers resemble those implied by the text. Romeo and his friends wear cloaks and commedia-style masks and hold palm fronds; they march in without speaking and are greeted by a nostalgic Capulet. However, they do not initiate the dancing. Capulet's line, "A hall, a hall! Give room . . ." (1.5.24) is cut, since a torch dance is already visibly in progress. After being spurned by his current love Rosaline (in an interpolated sequence), Romeo walks off alone, just as Juliet and other ladies enter the enormous hall and begin a dance for the entertainment of the guests. Juliet is at the center, the featured performer, and she immediately catches Romeo's eye, though he is quite far away from her. A line of pages bearing silvery branches precedes the women, singing Juno's wedding song from *The Tempest* ("Honour, riches, marriage-blessing" [4.1.106]) and later "O mistress mine, where are you roaming?" from *Twelfth Night* (2.3.35). The lyrics create a nice in-joke for those who recognize them and imply that the performance is a kind of "coming out" or engagement party for Juliet, who has been promised to Paris by her father. The women are dressed in white gowns with embroidery based on the dress worn by the goddess Flora in Botticelli's *Primavera*, not normal Renaissance clothing (see figure 1).

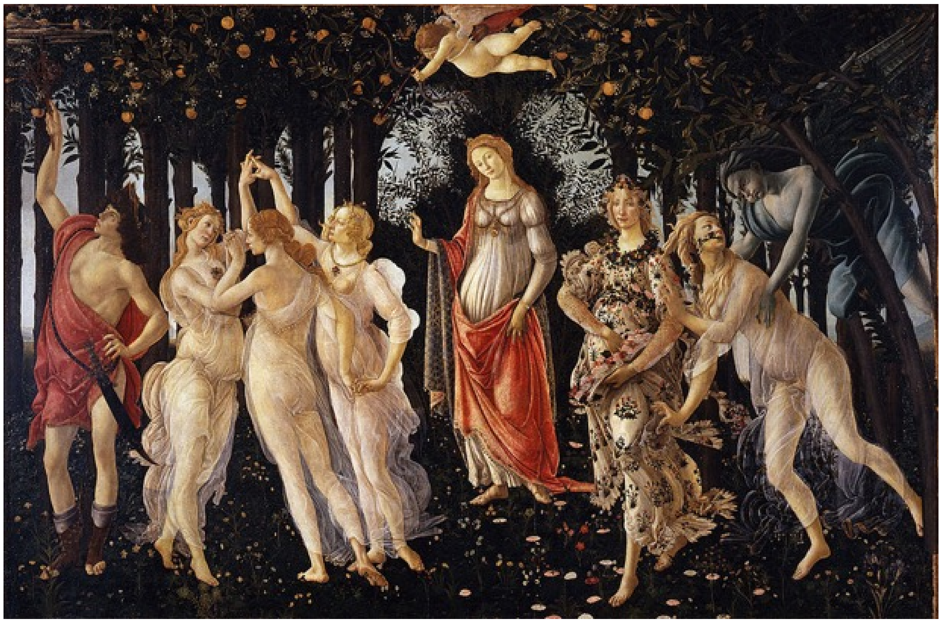

Figure 1. Primavera, Sandro Botticelli, c. 1482. Flora is third from the right

At one point in the dance, De Mille also recreates the iconic tableau of the Three Graces (on the left in Botticelli's painting), with Juliet in the central position. As a result, Cukor's version of the scene resembles not the informal masque of the text, but the court masque popular in the reign of James I. Romeo occupies the "king's position" directly opposite the ladies' entrance, as the observer to whom the entire spectacle is addressed. The cinematography puts the viewer as well in this privileged position. As a result, the lovers' initial attraction is rather grandly orchestrated (in all senses of the word). The dance is a showcase for Juliet; how could Romeo not notice her? He is captivated by her beauty and grace, as in the text, but one might feel that he merely yields to the prepared spectacle rather than picking Juliet for his own reasons. On the other hand, as we shall see, in responding to Romeo's gaze, as she eventually does, Juliet departs from the script others have written for her.**[2]**

De Mille's choreography for the women relies on simple steps: balances left and right, a *ronde de jambe*, and a "turn single" with quick running steps (each lady dances in a small circle around herself). The light, shimmering fabric of the ladies' skirts billows as they turn (see figure 2).

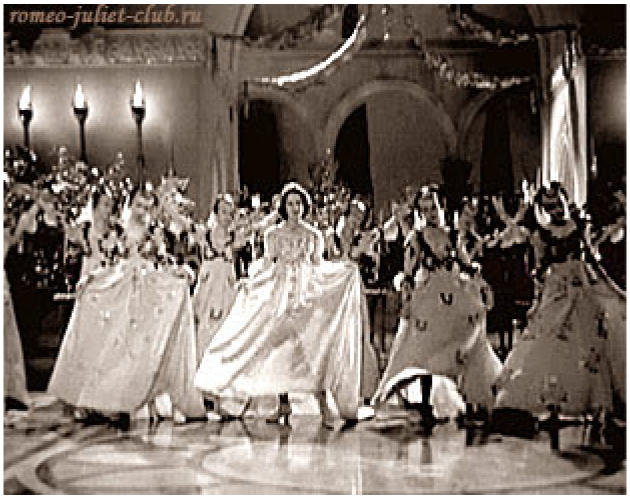

Figure 2. Juliet and her ladies dance in their flowing skirts in Cukor's 1936 film

Later in the scene, De Mille inserts a historically accurate pavane sequence to the very music Thoinot Arbeau suggests for this stately dance.[3] Other moments, however, recall Busby Berkeley musicals. At 26:00, the ladies take hands and make a series of arches. Juliet runs under their arms directly toward a strategically placed camera at the other end of the "tunnel." Also Berkeley-esque are the cascading arm gestures as the ladies kneel to crown Juliet as if she were a queen, indeed, and the domino effect as a line of young men turn toward her in quick succession, with Paris being the last. At this point, Juliet is supposed to give Paris a rose and dance with him, but she and Romeo (who is now within her field of vision) lock eyes, and poor Paris is toast (27:45). From this moment on, Juliet's trance-like dancing becomes a source of comedy. She dances toward Romeo when she should be going in the other direction; she repeatedly wanders away from Paris, who is bewildered by her behavior. Romeo watches with affectionate laughter, and the viewer is invited to do the same. As a result, Juliet departs from her parents' script, and she (but not Romeo) emerges as helplessly smitten and somewhat dotty in the grip of love.

In Cukor's version, Romeo does eventually dance with Juliet, and the choreography cleverly motivates Romeo's first line. Juliet (delighted to find that Romeo has stepped in to be her partner) offers her hand, but when she tries to withdraw it, Romeo holds on, violating the pattern of the dance. This nicely motivates his first words to her ("If I profane with my unworthiest hand . . ." [1.5.90]), and they proceed to speak their sonnet together in the relative privacy of a balcony, into which Romeo steers Juliet, having continued to hold onto her hand. In effect, Romeo uses his knowledge of — and willingness to depart from — the choreography of the dance to initiate physical contact and to draw Juliet into private conversation. Overall, the choreography creates a grand spectacle and stresses the comic aspects of Juliet's first encounter with love, which, for some viewers, may reduce her stature as a heroine, especially since the actress playing Juliet seems rather mature to be so bedazzled.[4]

ZEFFIRELLI: TRANSPORTED BY A WILD MORESCA

In contrast to Cukor's glittering, sound-stage spectacle, Zeffirelli set the scene in a plausible Italian Renaissance mansion with an interior courtyard and banqueting hall. The period costumes (for which the film won an Oscar) are richly realized. The scene glows with reds and golds, and one can feel the weight of velvet and brocade encrusted with jewels (unlike Cukor's flowing silks and black-and-white aesthetic).[5] Zeffirelli preserves something of the masque premise: while a few other guests sport masks, Romeo and his friends stand out in their disguises. Capulet welcomes the masked youths along with others thronging his doorway, but he speaks the lines that hail their arrival as the occasion for dancing ("A hall, a hall!") as a general greeting *before* the masquers appear, and, as in Cukor, dancing is already under way (22:56).

Like Cukor, Zeffirelli gives viewers a revealing glimpse of the character of Rosaline, Romeo's current love. One of Romeo's friends asks her to dance, and she puts down her goblet and primps before extending her hand. As Rosaline pirouettes towards the camera and past it, Juliet (between her suitor Paris and another man) suddenly replaces Rosaline in the frame (24:14). Romeo reacts and then then watches intently as Juliet dances. The choreography and camera-work enable us to view Juliet's entrance from Romeo's perspective and to accept that, in the instant that her body and her red velvet gown replace Rosaline in the frame, she also replaces Rosaline in Romeo's heart.[6] While this moment is certainly contrived by Zeffirelli, it is by chance that Romeo happens to have this perspective on the scene. Juliet is one of many dancers on the floor, not the central figure, and as the dance progresses Romeo has to compete with other spectators to keep his eye on her; he does not occupy a privileged position, as Cukor's Romeo did.

After her entrance, Juliet and the company dance an extended facsimile of a pavane or other slow dance, using anachronistic hand gestures (palms raised and facing outward) that nonetheless give a period feeling. The music is an orchestrated version of the melody that accompanied our first view of Romeo, a nice touch that further links the lovers (Cirillo 1969, 74). Initially, Juliet does not notice Romeo — she is intent on her dancing; but eventually he catches her eye and nods deferentially, and thereafter she begins to look for him as she dances. After the Capulets chide Tybalt for threatening to challenge Romeo, Lady Capulet calls for a "Moresca" (an allegedly Moorish-inspired dance with a reputation for wildness), and wristlets with bells are distributed.[7] Romeo hesitates — making a "no thanks" gesture — but then puts the bells on and joins the line of men circling the women, who are dancing in the opposite direction. He meets Juliet in the course of the dance, and they make eye-contact and share a few steps (see figure 3). They touch elbows, but their hands do not touch until he speaks to her after the dance is over.

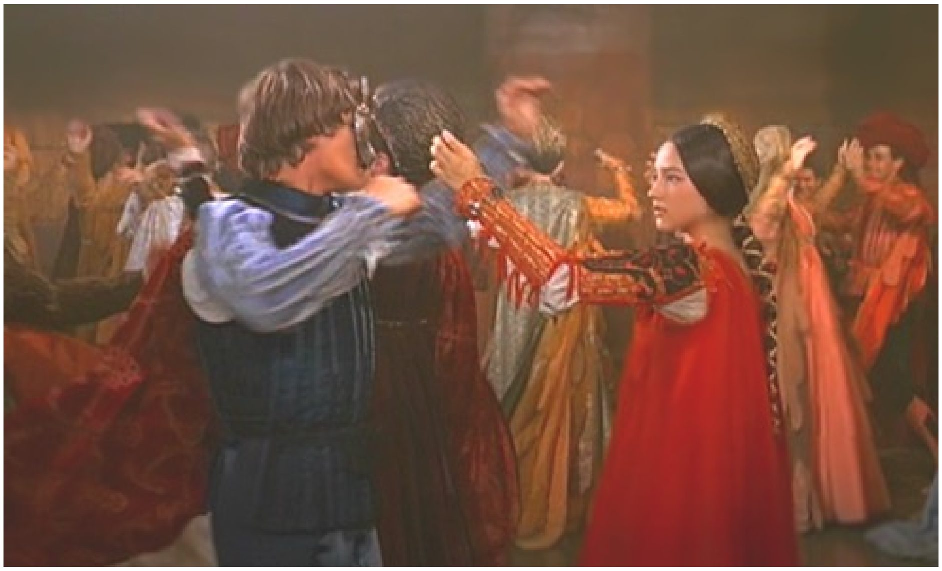

Figure 3. Zeffirelli's Romeo meets Juliet in the course of the dance

At 29:57, the music accelerates, and the dance reaches a dizzying climax, emblematic of the emotions aroused in the lovers. Unlike Cukor, Zeffirelli presents them as equally caught up in the moment, an effect that the camera accentuates (and conveys to the viewers) through accelerated footage, cross-cutting, and blurry focus. If anything, Romeo is the more affected by passion, since he changes his initial decision not to dance, while Juliet maintains decorum and her part in the dance till the very end. The choice of the dance — the wild Moresca — alters the motivation for the end of the scene. Zeffirelli emends Capulet's line so that he hails a group of ladies who are fanning themselves as they leave the hall: "Oh, what ho, my mistresses! Will you be gone?" (37:31). By addressing the ladies instead of the masked "gentlemen" (as in the text [1.5.118]), it is the ladies' fatigue, rather than the abrupt departure of the masked youths, that brings the festivities to a close. The energetic dance also partly explains Juliet's unexpected exit from the dance floor. Breathless, laughing, and slightly unsteady, she walks into the atrium. Despite her obvious innocence and demure behavior throughout the scene, the blocking suggests that her interactions with Romeo have awakened her flirtatious instincts: as she enters the atrium, she turns to see whether Romeo has followed her (30:48). Thus, in this version, the attraction between the lovers seems more equal, more personal, and more influenced by chance than in Cukor. The choreography of the dance does not "present" Juliet to Romeo and the guests; rather, he picks her out of the crowd, and she responds.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Zeffirelli's version is the warm, joyous inclusiveness of the dancing. Everyone — from the nurse and the young pages to the master, mistress, and their guests — enjoys watching (laughing and clapping) or participating in it. Juliet is a part of the whole, not its focus (as in Cukor), and Romeo must struggle to keep her in view as he watches from the sidelines or joins the line of young men in the dance. We experience, as Winerock and Brissenden note, the happiness and security that are about to be lost. At the same time, the exuberant choreography reflects and feeds their nascent passion, and a suddenly more mature Juliet emerges who is willing to take matters into her own hands.

LUHRMANN: BONDING FROM A DISTANCE

In Luhrmann's version, the dance sequence is (predictably) eclectic and over-the-top. The masque of the text is transformed into a Carnival-like masquerade ball. Everyone is in costume and high on something. Romeo views the party ambivalently, as in the text, but Luhrmann (more than Cukor or Zeffirelli) emphasizes Romeo's alienation from the festivities, which embody the excesses and emotional shallowness he finds in his social milieu.[8]

The first part of the scene stars Mercutio, not Juliet, emphasizing his importance in this production. The unchallenged leader of Romeo's cohort, he is dancing energetically on a grand staircase in Broadway or Las Vegas style, with a phalanx of male backup dancers in purple satin. He is cross-dressed in a white afro wig and a silver lamé bra and miniskirt.[9] He performs high kicks, hip gyrations, and arm pumps in a Latin/Motown amalgam. His gender-bending outfit reminds us of his close — and perhaps homoerotic — relationship with Romeo and emphasizes the link between dance and sexuality, which is not overtly stressed in the more decorous period productions.[10] The camera cuts away from Mercutio to find Romeo, who is still dazed from the drug Mercutio gave him before the party. Amid a room full of dancing couples, Romeo is accosted by Capulet, who reminisces about wearing a visor in his youth (using lines moved from earlier in the scene), but his drunken bellowing (*"Amore!"*) and Romeo's woozy sensations drive him from the ballroom to the bathroom, where he doffs his mask and dunks his head in the sink to sober up. As he leaves, he notices colorful fish in a large aquarium. As he inspects the fish, he spies the eye of a young woman (Juliet) looking up at *him* from the other side. The love theme "Kissing You" begins off-screen, and the two smile and connect, moving along the sides of the tank, playing with their reflections in the glass, which appear to bring them together, even though their bodies are separated by the tank (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet play with their reflections in the fish tank

This carefully blocked (and much noted) sequence, though not technically a dance, helps make the lovers' attraction believable; they have both sought refuge from the party and enjoy the colorful fish and their graceful movements.[11] They have independently and simultaneously elected to deviate from the script for the evening. As they near the end of the tank, where they might speak to each other, the Nurse arrives and hurries Juliet away. Romeo runs after them to see Juliet presented by her mother to Paris. In an interesting transposition, Paris says to Juliet, "Will [you] now deny to dance?" — a variation on Capulet's line earlier in the scene (1.5.17), when he challenged the women to dance with the masquers. Thus, the line that might have led to Juliet's dancing with Romeo (but doesn't in the text) is now modified to cajole her into dancing with Paris, while the lovers' theme song swells (ironically) in the background.[12]

The choreography for Paris and Juliet is simple. Taking ballroom hold, they execute a few slow steps, arm wraps, and underarm twirls. Like the fish tank, the dance both separates and unites the lovers. Juliet is constantly looking over her shoulder at Romeo, obviously more interested in him than in Paris. For his part, Romeo smiles — not at her, but in affectionate sympathy for her dilemma. Paris, oblivious in his astronaut suit (which contrasts with the lovers' more romantic knight and angel costumes), proudly executes some (apparently dated) pantomime arm movements resembling "the Swim" or "the Curtain." Juliet tries to stifle her laughter and looks at Romeo for validation (see figure 5).

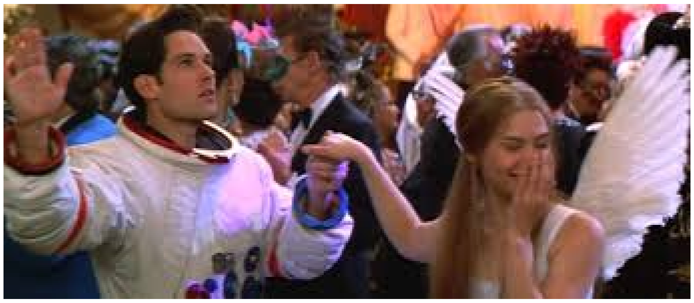

Figure 5. Luhrmann's Juliet reacting to Paris's pantomime dance

The dynamic Luhrmann creates is a charming and original realization of the text: the dance separates Romeo from Juliet physically (rather than bringing them together, as in the other versions), but it deepens their emotional and psychological connection, as they bond over Paris's sweetly dorky attempts to impress her.

After the dance, Romeo takes Juliet's hand near a pillar (as in Zeffirelli), they speak their sonnet together, and kiss (more passionately than in the period productions) in the mansion's glass elevator. The Nurse, Paris, and Lady Capulet run up and down the grand staircase (like a trio of Keystone Cops) trying to intercept them, while the camera dances around the lovers in the elevator, capturing their passion from every angle. Thus, though Luhrmann does not allow Romeo to dance with Juliet, he satisfies the audience's presumed desire to see them express their new-found love through physical contact. More important, the comedy of the scene is at the expense, not of either of the lovers, but of those who would obstruct their love (Paris, the Nurse, and Lady Capulet).

Conclusion

In these versions of the dance at the Capulet feast, the choice of period, actors, music, and other large-scale directorial decisions naturally affect the overall impact of the scene. However, the details of the choreography and blocking lead to three strikingly different effects with respect to the character of Juliet, the basis of the lovers' attraction (beyond or in addition to the chemistry of "first sight"), and their relationship to their environment. Cukor creates a suave Romeo, who receives love as if on a silver platter, and a goddess-like (if somewhat distracted) Juliet. Zeffirelli gives us two teenagers drunk with love, who impulsively forsake the warm embrace of the families who expect to manage their fates. Luhrmann gives us young people, mature beyond their years, who seek refuge from a society dominated by media, drugs, and violence and find it, if only briefly, in their love for each other. In my judgment, Luhrmann's production is the most satisfying, dramatically and psychologically, but all three directors use the details of the choreography and blocking to put their creative stamp on Shakespeare's decision to rely on nonverbal communication — dancing, eye-contact, and the touching of hands — to establish and build the lovers' relationship before they put their feelings into words. Beyond music and spectacle, the details of the dance sequences in these and other adaptations of Shakespeare's plays repay close study, both as aspects of Shakespeare's dramatic art and as prime sites for directorial license and creativity.

Notes

1. Leslie Howard (43) and Norma Shearer (34) were the lovers; John Barrymore (54) and Basil Rathbone (44) played Mercutio and Tybalt, respectively. The quoted phrase is from Rothwell 1973, 345.
2. Elisa J. Oh has argued that the masquers' entry into the party is itself somewhat transgressive, an act of *sprezzatura*, but as we have seen, Mercutio is the instigator and Romeo only a reluctant follower (2014, n.p.).
3. This sequence occurs between minutes 29:00 and 30:40 of the published DVD. Future time references will be given parenthetically in the body of the text. I am indebted to Dr. Nona Monahin for verifying that the music on the sound track is indeed a tune that Arbeau recommended for the pavane in his dance manual *Orchésographie* (1589).
4. Unlike the two other scenes I will discuss, Cukor's version of the feast is not available on YouTube.com or other public sites.
5. Cirillo comments at length on the beauty of the *mise en scène* and the cinematography: "crimson velvets, pink and yellow satins. Never have textures been so closely reproduced on a screen" (1969, 74).
6. This moment and most of the scene can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrpOxPctRyU (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrpOxPctRyU) [accessed 27 April 2017].

7. As Winerock notes, no specific dance is mentioned in the text. However, Zeffirelli and Testa's Moresca draws on the dance's historical features. Bells were an important element of Renaissance Morescas (intended to drive away evil spirits), and one form of the dance relied on circles and free-form linear patters, as seen in this scene. Some Morescas became so antic and grotesque that Castiglione advised in his *Book of the Courtier* that persons of rank dance it only "*in camera privatamente*," that is, in their rooms, privately (*International Encyclopedia of Dance* 1998, 4:462).
8. Rosaline does not appear in Luhrmann's version of the scene, so the sudden transfer of Romeo's emotions from one woman to another is not highlighted, as it is in Zeffirelli's and Cukor's versions.
9. Mercutio's prominence in Luhrmann's version has something in common with Cukor's, in which Mercutio's sexual antics dominate the build-up to the dance scene. He smooches prostitutes and pantomimes sodomizing a dancing hobby-horse with a toy sword; he is comically repaid when another hobby-horseman rams a lance between *his* legs.
10. The link between dancing and sexuality is deep and part of the subtext of masquing. As Paul Kottman observes, a masque formalizes "conditions under which a veritable parade of substitutable objects of desire might appear to each other" (2012, 11-12).
11. The aquarium anticipates the swimming pool in which the majority of the balcony scene will take place and other meaningful uses of water in the film.
12. The complete scene can be found at http://www.teachertube.com/video/luhrman-party-scene-352584?utm_source=video-google&utm_medium=video-view&utm_term=video&utm_content=video-page&utm_campaign=video-view-page (http://www.teachertube.com/video/luhrman-party-scene-352584?utm_source=video-google&utm_medium=video-view&utm_term=video&utm_content=video-page&utm_campaign=video-view-page) [accessed 27 April 2017].

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William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet. 1996. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Cinematographer, Donald M. McAlpine. DVD. Twentieth-Century Fox, 1997. 120 minutes.

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Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*: Some Consequences of the "Happy Ending"

NONA MONAHIN, MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

ABSTRACT | PROKOFIEV'S SCORE | CHANGING THE ENDING | CONSEQUENCES | THE INTRODUCTION | THE FIGHT SCENE | ROMEO'S INTRODUCTION | CONCLUSION | NOTES | REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

This essay discusses some of the musico-dramaturgical implications of Prokofiev's ballet score for choreographic adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Prokofiev's original score itself alters Shakespeare's tragedy by giving it a "happy ending," and the popular, better-known "tragic" versions of the ballet are based on a score that represents a later, somewhat problematic, set of compromises. Adapting Shakespeare's plotline to the dancing stage is thus subject to multiple, often conflicting allegiances, as choreographers make choices with regard to how to integrate Prokofiev's already variously adapted musical score into their own vision of the ballet. Reversing the ending of a musico-dramatic work does not automatically alter the affective quality of the entire work, yet any traces of the non-tragic vision in Prokofiev's score would presumably be at odds with Shakespeare, the reinstatement of the tragic ending notwithstanding. I identify several such possible remnants of Prokofiev's original vision (in the overture, Romeo's first entrance, and the first fight scene) and examine choreographic responses to them by Leonid Lavrovsky, Rudolf Nureyev, Angelin Preljocaj, and Mark Morris.

Danced adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* frequently involve Sergei Prokofiev's musical score of the same name, a work that has been used by numerous choreographers, making the Shakespeare/Prokofiev *Romeo and Juliet* one of the most performed full-length ballets since 1940.[1] The popularity of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* for a ballet is fairly easy to understand. First, dancing is already present in the form of the ballroom scene and the two fight scenes — especially if the fights, being set outdoors, are preceded by some merry folk dancing by the *corps de ballet*. Thus we already have two styles of diegetic dancing — courtly and country — as well as two sword fights. Then there is the (non-diegetic) dancing-out of a moving love story by the two principal dancers. Even the older dancers in the company, who sometimes perform the less technically demanding "character" roles, are provided for in the roles of the Capulet and Montague parents and the nurse. The ballet practically stages itself. Couple this with the advantage of using a well known plot — thereby eliminating the need for excessive explanations that may be difficult to get across without words — and we have a blockbuster! The persistent use of Prokofiev's score, on the other hand, is less self-evident, since a pre-existing musical score has both advantages (a ready-made rhythmic and emotional framework on which to hang the choreography) and disadvantages (the restrictions imposed by the same framework). Moreover, Prokofiev's score is no mere background music; it is a complex orchestral composition that stands on its own, so that audiences may be as involved in listening to the music as in watching the dancing, while choreographers may be attracted by the challenge of creating their own interpretation of a musical warhorse almost as a rite of passage.

Further complications arise when one keeps in mind that Prokofiev's original score itself alters Shakespeare's tragedy by giving it a "happy ending" and that the popular, better-known "tragic" versions of the ballet are based on a score that represents a later, somewhat problematic, set of compromises. Choreographers who are drawn to the Prokofiev music are thus, in a sense, confronted with several "original sources" to work with, sources that at times may be at odds with one another. Adapting Shakespeare's plotline to the dancing stage is thus subject to multiple, often conflicting allegiances, as choreographers make choices with regard to how to integrate Prokofiev's already variously-adapted musical score into their own vision of the ballet. Recently, the original score was restored by musicologist and Prokofiev specialist Simon Morrison, and a "happy ending" version was choreographed by Mark Morris and performed by his company in 2008.[2] In this essay, I consider some of the musico-dramaturgical implications of Prokofiev's ballet score for choreographic adaptations of Shakespeare's play, as well the tensions created by the shift between a "happy" and a "tragic" ending.

PROKOFIEV'S SCORE

Much has been written about the intrigues surrounding the composition of Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* score (for example, by Bennett, Wilson, Kravetz, and Morrison), so a brief summary here will suffice. Conceived in 1934 with the Leningrad Kirov Ballet in mind but composed a year later for the Moscow Bolshoi, it was not performed in its entirety until 1940, at the Kirov, by which time it had undergone numerous revisions.[3] In Prokofiev's original version the lovers do not die, since Friar Laurence intercepts Romeo in time and explains the effects of the potion. Various reasons have been proposed for this initial decision to reverse Shakespeare's tragic ending. Simon Morrison has suggested that the composer's religious views played a significant part: Prokofiev, who had committed to the Christian Science faith in 1924, "wanted his music to look toward the light, to embody the divine" (Morrison 2009b, 3). The so-called happy ending was intended to function as an apotheosis, with Romeo and Juliet dancing in paradise for all eternity.[4] Another theory is that Prokofiev's collaborators on the libretto wanted to give the story a proletarian spin, with the lovers representing the forward-looking communist youth struggling against the older generation's outmoded ways (3). As such, their message would presumably be stronger if they survived. Prokofiev's own reason was that "only living people can dance" (3). Reactions to the proposed happy ending ranged from approval to outrage, with a middle course suggested by way of adding a subtitle, "On Motifs of Shakespeare," to acknowledge a distancing from the original play. (This is also the subtitle of the Mark Morris work.) For whatever reason(s), the happy ending had been abolished by the time of the work's first performance.

To arrange Shakespeare's play into a ballet libretto for the 1935 version, Prokofiev worked with theater director Sergei Radlov, dramatist Adrian Piotrovsky, and choreographer Rostislav Zakharov. The level of detail in the pre-compositional drafts is remarkable. Not only is the exact timing of each dance number noted, but often the character of the musical number, as well. Yet by the time the work was performed in 1940, a different choreographer, Leonid Lavrovsky, had been appointed at the Kirov, and, not surprisingly, he had his own vision of how the work should unfold. The tragic ending had been reinstated long before, but it was Lavrovsky's numerous other requests for changes that created much tension between composer and choreographer. For one thing, Lavrovsky insisted on more purely dance numbers, both for the ensemble and for the soloists, in contrast to Prokofiev's original emphasis on the drama, and even went as far as inserting an unrelated composition of Prokofiev's to serve as an additional folk dance (Wilson 2003, 167). Possibly because Prokofiev was eager to have the ballet finally performed, he reluctantly gave in to Lavrovsky.[5]

Changing the Ending

The first thing that strikes one when comparing the two versions is the relative brevity of the new tragic ending, as well as its subtitle, "Epilogue," both of which suggest a tacked-on quality. In fact, as Morrison has shown, rather than composing entirely new music for the new ending, Prokofiev reworked some of the music from his original non-tragic version. This is a curious transformation that underscores the importance of context in the perception of the music. That the music accompanying Juliet's awakening in the non-tragic version was reworked into the music of her death (no. 52 in the 1940 score) is not, however, as outrageous as it might seem, because this music has a very wistful quality that can be made to go in either direction. More dramatic is the music immediately preceding it (no. 51). In the non-tragic score, this is the music during which Romeo appears at Juliet's bedside, followed soon by Friar Laurence. In the tragic version, it accompanies the most heart-wrenching scene of the entire ballet, during which Romeo discovers Juliet, tries to revive her (in many ballets, he ends up "dancing" with her limp body), and finally drinks the poison. After seeing the two versions in reverse chronological order (I had seen the traditional Kenneth MacMillan choreography before the Mark Morris version), it struck me that this music, which sounded heartbreaking in the traditional version, came across as ostentatiously melodramatic when Friar Laurence arrived as a *deus-ex-machina* and prevented Romeo from harming himself. In fact, the main musical motif of this passage is based on a musical cliché: a chromatically descending melody line that has come to be associated with horror in film music.[6]

Consequences

Reversing the ending of a musico-dramatic work does not automatically alter the affective quality of the entire work. Traces of the original temperament may remain, even though, as shown above, context can affect perception of the music just as music can affect perception of a situation. Because Prokofiev's original vision of this work was itself a reversal of Shakespeare's, any remnants of a non-tragic vision would presumably be at odds with Shakespeare, despite the reinstatement of the tragic ending. Below I identify several such possible remnants of Prokofiev's non-tragic vision that may be found at the beginning of the score — the overture (titled "Introduction"), Romeo's entrance, and the fight scene — and examine selected choreographers' responses to them.

THE INTRODUCTION

Not surprisingly, if we accept Prokofiev's life-affirming outlook, the orchestral introduction is based mostly on themes that will later become associated with love; there is no trace of any sinister foreboding. Compare this to Shakespeare's Prologue to act 1, where, in the short span of fourteen lines of text, seventeen grim words or phrases are uttered: "grudge . . . mutiny . . . blood . . . unclean . . . fatal . . . foes . . . misadventured . . . piteous . . . death . . . bury . . . strife . . . fearful . . . rage . . . death-mark'd . . . star-cross'd . . . take their life . . . their children's end" (Prologue 3-11).

At least two choreographers have felt the need to modify this discrepancy. Rudolf Nureyev's solution was to move the ominous-sounding music titled "The Prince's Command" from the end of the fight in act 1, scene 1 to the end of the Introduction, during which mysterious figures in dark cloaks move about the stage menacingly and finally reveal a grim funeral procession, perhaps cleverly hinting at the plague that will play such a key role in the story's outcome.[7] Angelin Preljocaj, whose story is set in a dismal dystopia, cuts the Introduction altogether (as well as the first few musical numbers), substituting concrete sounds appropriate to his dramatic setting (an urban subway passage).

THE FIGHT SCENE

Along similar lines, the fight music in act 1, scene 1 sounds quite lighthearted, perhaps better suited for a fencing class than a fight between sworn enemies. In fact, the quarrel, before the fight proper, has more sinister-sounding moments, but those morph in and out of folk-dance melodies, thus reducing the menacing effect. The actual fight music sounds very mechanical, as if the participants are going through their motions on "auto-pilot." This may well be a valid interpretation of a Montague's response to seeing a Capulet, and vice versa, but the groundwork was laid by Prokofiev, and a choreographer will need to decide whether to accept it or to devise ways of contradicting it. In the majority of productions that I have seen, the fight scene does indeed appear to have an "auto-pilot" quality. Mark Morris extends this concept by making this scene part fight, part sword dance, with the dancers at one point carrying their swords above their heads as they dance. Preljocaj offers a different solution: by cutting all the music that precedes the actual fighting and having the preceding quarrel take place in silence, he establishes a menacing atmosphere before the music begins and thereby subjects the music to his vision rather than letting it dictate the action.

ROMEO'S INTRODUCTION

The way in which Romeo is introduced musically may have also been influenced by the fact that Prokofiev's original version was not going to end tragically. In Shakespeare's play, Romeo is first mentioned towards the end of act 1, scene 1, in a conversation between his parents and Benvolio that takes place after the first fight. The expressions that Montague uses to describe his son all point to a melancholy disposition: "with tears augmenting the fresh morning dew . . . adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs . . . shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out" (1.1.125-32). Later, when Romeo enters and laments about Rosaline, his speech further demonstrates his despondency: "Ay me, sad hours seem long" (1.1.154), "griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast" (1.1.179), "a sick man in sadness makes his will" (1.1.195), and "do I live dead that live to tell it now" (1.1.217).

Prokofiev's music for Romeo's first appearance (which, incidentally, occurs immediately after the overture) seems to be at odds with the character depicted in Shakespeare's text. Although a note in the scenario describes Romeo as "very pensive," the music suggests a much less serious portrayal.[8] Following some introductory chords played by plucked strings (No. 2; bars 1-6), a rather prosaic tune on the bassoon (an instrument sometimes associated with comic representation) is heard (bars 7-14).[9] Finally, a snippet of a more lyrical melody on the clarinet emerges (bars 15-23), but disintegrates and is repeated (bars 24-31) before the bumbling bassoon tune returns (bars 32-39). Karen Bennett, in her analysis of the music, writes: "This first rendition of Romeo's theme is not only extremely disjointed and incoherent, but also somewhat comic . . . Romeo is being portrayed as immature and uncoordinated, and gawkily clownish, but without the wit and style of Mercutio" (Bennett 2003, 319-20). The scene ends with four bars of slower ascending notes with a lush chordal accompaniment.

Leonid Lavrovsky's introduction of Romeo is rather neutral.[10] A young man (Romeo) is shown walking, then sitting and reading. He is joined by another (Benvolio), and the two walk off together. Other characters appear only very briefly, performing naturalistic movements (walking, sitting; there is no dancing yet), thus subsuming the prosaic and slightly comic quality of the music into a portrayal of equally prosaic (everyday) events. Changes in the music do, however, coincide with changes in image: a young woman (Juliet) looks out of a window on the first sounding of the more lyrical melody, while Benvolio enters on the second; on the lush chords of the ending, another woman (an anonymous townsperson) on a balcony does an early morning stretch before descending down some steps into the street.

In Nureyev's version, too, Romeo is not despondent. He enters with a few steps and strikes a confident pose.[11] He then proceeds to dance a very energetic balletic solo that shows off the dancer's technical ability but has little to do with the music. For although the steps are all executed in time with the music, there are no nuances in the choreography that might reflect the changes of mood in the music noted above.[12]

Perhaps because Morris was choreographing the "happy ending" version, he could afford to take a more lighthearted, ironic approach to the work, as in the opening scene he seems to have used the comic quality of the music to play with audience expectations.[13] As the curtain rises, we see a young man (whom we may take to be Romeo, but who turns out to be Benvolio) sitting pensively among some wooden structures (which appear to be pews in a church, but which we come to realize — as several girls enter running and skipping and Friar Laurence mimes picking flowers — actually belong to an outdoor setting). When Romeo finally does enter, however, there is no doubt about his identity because he enters with all the balletic bells and whistles: on the lyrical tune, highlighted by a spotlight, and doing a totally gratuitous (given the naturalistic movements of the other characters so far) leap into a clichéd balletic pose.[14]

CONCLUSION

Media psychologist Stuart Fischoff has pointed out that the film experience operates on a variety of significatory levels:

> The general feeling about film is that it is singularly a visual experience. It is not. While we certainly experience film through our eyes, we just as surely experience it through our ears . . . Music plays upon our emotions. It is generally a non-intellectual communication. The listener does not need to know what the music means, only how it makes him feel . . . The onscreen action, of course, provides clues and cues as to how the accompanying music does or is supposed to make us feel. (Fischoff n.d.)

Because most ballets and modern dances are performed to music, a similar dynamic also applies to dance, and it appears to apply to choreographers (and dancers) as much as to audience members. Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* score is such a significant, compelling, musical composition that choreographers who choose to employ it cannot help but have their choreographic decisions influenced by it — consciously or not — as much as by Shakespeare's play. I showed only a few brief examples of how the selected choreographers juggled their conflicting allegiances to playwright and composer and how some of the changes to Shakespeare made by Prokofiev affected their decision-making: sometimes choreographers decide to move particular sections of the score around to fit a particular scene; sometimes they insert parts of other compositions to fill perceived gaps; sometimes they reinterpret the music's emotional impact by altering the context in which it appears; and sometimes they feel compelled to leave out portions of the music altogether. The various versions of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* highlight the manifold tensions and complexities involved in combining a well-known story, a choreographer's vision, and a composer's score, indicating that for a choreographer there is more at stake than merely finding and setting appropriate movements and steps to music.

NOTES

1. The choreographers include Leonid Lavrovsky (1940), Frederick Ashton (1955), John Cranko (1958), Kenneth MacMillan (1965), John Neumeier (1971), Rudolf Nureyev (1977), Yuri Grigorovich (after Lavrovsky; 1979), Angelin Preljocaj (1990), and Mark Morris (2008), to name some of the better-known ones. Occasionally choreographers have turned to music other than Prokofiev's for their versions of *Romeo and Juliet*: for example, Antony Tudor (1943; music by Frederick Delius) and Maurice Béjart (1966; music by Hector Berlioz). See Felciano and Hellman, *Crossed Stars* (1994) for more about different versions of the ballet.
2. For more on the "happy ending" musical score, see Morrison 2009a, 2009b, and 2016. I am grateful to the Mark Morris Dance Group for lending me a video of one of the company's performances of this work to use for this study. The video was filmed at the Fisher Center at Bard College. The artists on this video include the Mark Morris Dance Group, with Maile Okamura as Juliet and Noah Vinson as Romeo. The production alternated casts; the one I saw live, in July 2008, featured Rita Donahue as Juliet and David Leventhal as Romeo.
3. See Wilson, "Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* (2003)", for a detailed account of the transformation of the score.
4. Prokofiev's notes in the original score suggest that he wanted a serene rather than triumphant ending: the penultimate number (no. 55) was to be "bright . . . but would not attain a forte." The music was criticized, much to the composer's chagrin, for "not express[ing] any real joy at the end" (Morrison 2009b, 4). This factor may have played a part in the happy ending being eventually scrapped.
5. A shortened version of the ballet, danced to excerpts from the score, had meanwhile been performed in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1938 (see Semberová 1994).
6. For example, the famous opening of J. S. Bach's *Toccata and Fugue* in D minor, BWV 565. Uncannily, the same set of descending notes [B-flat, A, A-flat, G, G-flat] that make up Prokofiev's theme in this section was also used by Andrew Lloyd Webber as the theme for his overture to *The Phantom of the Opera* (Prokofiev, No. 51 measures 13-15; Webber, Overture measures 1-2).
7. Nureyev choreographed his own version of the ballet for the London Festival Ballet in 1977. Previously he had danced the role of Romeo (with Margot Fonteyn as Juliet) in the Royal Ballet's 1965 production choreographed by Kenneth MacMillan.
8. Notes added to the revised 1935 scenario read: "A street. Romeo [Early morning. Romeo passes by, very pensive. Perhaps some female passers-by seek to halt him, but he pays no notice.] 1 minute" (Morrison 2009a, 395).
9. Hector Berlioz, who composed a score of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1966 (see note 1), had remarked that "[the bassoon's] timbre, totally lacking in éclat and nobility, has a propensity for the grotesque." See William Waterhouse, "Bassoon," *Grove Music Online*, n.d. For use of the bassoon in animated cartoons, see: http://www.npr.org/2011/09/04/139947087/the-clown-of-the-orchestra-takes-its-revenge (http://www.npr.org/2011/09/04/139947087/the-clown-of-the-orchestra-takes-its-revenge) [accessed 3 February 2014].
10. Although I watched the 1954 film version of the ballet, which may differ from the original staged version, the scene in question could have easily been performed on stage.
11. YouTube excerpts from the 1983 production *Romeo e Giulietta*, filmed in Milan, with Rudolf Nureyev (Romeo), Carla Fracci (Juliet), Margot Fonteyn (Lady Capulet). This except begins just after Romeo's opening pose.

12. I watched this passage with the sound turned off to see if I could detect any indication of change of mood in the choreography, but saw none.
13. Despite being now widely known as Mark Morris's "happy ending" version, the ending is not without sadness. Prokofiev, as already mentioned, wanted the end to function as an apotheosis, and Morris appears to have respected this wish. The lovers are not shown living happily ever after, either in Verona or in any other recognizable setting; rather, they are shown dancing in an ambiguous, star-filled environment, which Simon Morrison has aptly described as a "dreamscape" or an "unsullied Apollonian landscape" (Morrison 2009b, 9).
14. An *arabesque* — a pose that involves standing on one leg, with the other leg extended straight behind. Incidentally, this is the same pose that opens Romeo's entrance in Nureyev's version.

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Scotch Jig or Rope Dance? Choreographic Dramaturgy and *Much Ado About Nothing*

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ABSTRACT | DANCE IN THE PLAYTEXT | DANCE IN RECENT PRODUCTIONS | THE EARLY MODERN ROPE DANCE | REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

This essay considers the role of dance in *Much Ado About Nothing*, a play that pairs two large company dances with a sustained verbal discourse *about* dance. This pairing creates a rich, embodied metaphor that bridges the gap between text and performance and extends to the larger themes of masquerade and mistaken identity that permeate the play. After this brief textual analysis, this essay then looks particularly at the role of dance in Joss Whedon's 2012 film adaptation to argue that Whedon's production makes a curious connection to popular early modern rope dances and acrobatic performances. This production offers a renewed context for the diversity of early modern dance.

When it comes to early modern choreography, stage directions do not give theater historians much to work with. From the vague "they dance a strain" in *Blurt, Master Constable* (1602), the equally imprecise "Here they dance" in The *Faire Maide of Bristow* (1605), and the especially maddening "Musique, dance, &" in George Chapman's *The Tragedie of Charles Duke of Byron* (1608), these stage directions leave plenty to the imagination. Deceptively simple, the word "dance" appears in stage directions nearly 350 times in plays written between 1580 and 1642 (Lin 2012, 107). It follows, then, that dance constitutes some of the more memorable scenes in the canon, from Romeo's first encounter with Juliet to Prospero's supernatural wedding masque. But when it comes to Shakespeare, no play engages the metaphor of dance quite like *Much Ado About Nothing*, which pairs two company dances, one in act 2 and the other in act 5, with a sustained verbal discourse *about* dance. This pairing creates a rich, embodied metaphor that bridges the gap between text and performance and extends to the larger themes of masquerade and mistaken identity that permeate the play. This two-part essay explores the way in which the discursive metaphor of dance operates in the text and then considers the dramaturgical mark that embodied choreographic choices have left on productions of the play over the past decade, especially in the case of Joss Whedon's recent 2012 film adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

DANCE IN THE PLAYTEXT

Not only does *Much Ado About Nothing* feature multiple embodied dances, but the characters in the play overtly discuss these dances, demonstrating a deep awareness of the way dance could be used to signify social relationships. Notably, characters in *Much Ado About Nothing* use dance as a litmus test for their suitors. For instance, Margaret wishes to be matched with a good dancer but hopes to escape after the dance is finished (2.1.89-92). Similarly, Beatrice prizes dancing ability, saying that "a good leg and a good foot" could win her over, though she doubts anyone will have the skill to match her (2.1.13). In their desire for accomplished dancers, Margaret and Beatrice speak to the influence of Castiglione on early modern English culture. Hoby's English translation of Castiglione prizes a balance between dancing, wit, and fashion (Scodel 2002, 53), a trifecta that Benedick criticizes when he notes the change in Claudio's taste in musical preferences, fashion sense, and conversational style:

> I have known where there was no music with him but the drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe. I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour, and now will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier, and now is he turned orthography. (2.3.12-18)

As behavior manuals like Castiglione's helped to change the definition of model masculinity, many men, like Benedick, struggled to adapt. Benedick, a soldier recently returned from war, begins the play enshrined in the older model. He eventually tries to adapt in order to win Beatrice, but is surprisingly bad at writing poetry, complaining that "I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried . . . I was not born under a rhyming planet" (5.2.35-40) and is likewise "an awkward dancer and ineffectual masker" (Collington 2006, 302). With dance situated as an essential social skill, it represents Benedick's struggle to master the rules of courtship.

Extending the logic that men who are bad dancers will also be bad lovers, Beatrice uses three different popular dances to unfavorably describe the stages of courtship:

> For, hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig — and full as fantastical; the wedding mannerly modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry. And then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his grave. (2.1.60-66)

Critics such as Harry Berger (1982) and Skiles Howard (1998) have read this metaphor as evidence of Beatrice's conflicted attitudes towards marriage: it is at once too tedious and too frenetic. In this way, Beatrice's critique reveals her impossible expectations, setting her up for a change of heart in act 5. On the surface, Beatrice's aim is to disparage marriage by comparing it to a series of over-the-top dances. However, her metaphor also makes these dances appear ridiculous. After hearing her speech, it would be impossible not to view the dancing that begins just four lines later without a sense of irony. If the dancers begin a Scotch jig, we have been conditioned to see it as over-the-top and ridiculous; a measure "full of state and ancientry," stuffy and pretentious; a cinquepace, braggadocious and unsustainable. Thus, we are asked to view the dance through Beatrice's eyes.

While there are a number of dramaturgical possibilities for the masked dance, Alan Brissenden suggests that the rhythm of the scene, with its four-unit patterns of equally-paced dialogue, suggests a pavan, a traditional dance that allows couples to dance side-by-side. Brissenden elaborates: "the steps involve turns back and forth, retreats and advances, so that it is ideal for highlighting dramatic conversation" (Brissenden 1981, 49). A black alman, like the one described by the Rawlinson Poet and transcribed by James Cunningham in his book *Dancing in the Inns of Court* (1965), could also match this dialogic rhythm with some added tension of near partner changes and pinwheel movements. Brissenden suggests that the masque might conclude with a cinquepace, "the quick, showy and energetic dance in triple time whose figures are based on five steps" (Brissenden 1981, 50), sending the partners off stage in a rush of excitement. If this was the case, the connection with Beatrice's earlier metaphor would have been even more pronounced.

But regardless of which dance pattern was originally used, Beatrice's participation in the masque poses a particularly sticky problem. Beatrice has disparaged three dancing styles and then, just a few lines later, says she must "follow the leaders" (2.1.130). Though she participates, she dances ironically, hoping to abscond as soon as possible: "if they lead to any ill I will leave them at the next turning" (2.1.132-33). The rhythm of her insults further disrupts the rhythm of the dance. Instead of adhering to short stichomythic lines, Beatrice responds with two longer rants, beginning "Why, he is the prince's jester" and "Do, do" (2.1.117, 125). Beatrice views dance as she views marriage — as structured, confining, and best avoided. However, early modern dance scholars have shown that the constraints of dance could actually provide dancers with opportunities to challenge social rigidity. For instance, Desaive argues that the symmetry of early modern partner choreography undercuts its own appearance of conservative formality: "Dance was the only form of body language that allowed a woman to express herself as an equal of, and in perfect symmetry with, a man" (Desaive 1993, 291). Thus, it is from within the structure of the dance that, perhaps paradoxically, women could be most liberated. Masked dances were especially associated with these kinds of "liberating inversions" (Castle 1986, 18). Castiglione says that being in a mask meant that one could behave with greater abandon: "Because to be in a maske bringeth with it a certaine libertie and lycense" (Castiglione 1561, sig. M3r). This license permitted men to show off more challenging dance steps and women to hold eye contact with their dance partner, both of which were otherwise uncouth (Winerock 2011, 460). Thus, Benedick attempts to use the anonymity of the masked dance to insult Beatrice, but Beatrice is able to seize on "certaine libertie and lycense" to criticize him in kind, calling him dull and rude (2.1.118-23). In this way, dance allows both characters the liberty to speak freely with one another, though this freedom only deepens their mutual ruse.

It is not until act 5 — once everyone is "unmasked and happy" (Brissenden 1981, 51) — that Beatrice and Benedick come together by way of a concluding dance:

> BENEDICK: Come, come, we are friends, let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels.
> LEONATO: We'll have dancing afterward.
> BENEDICK: First, of my word; therefore play, music. (5.4.112-16)

Flouting social convention, Benedick suggests dancing before the wedding, not after. In this way, he seeks to avoid a repetition of Hero's crisis at the altar. Though inverting the order of events may make Benedick a social rebel, his self-appointed role as leader of the dance ultimately confirms his transformation into a gentleman, as he "assumes the mantle of the courtier-ideal" (Collington 2006, 307). The stage directions imply that Benedick, not Leonato, gets his way. Cleverly, Benedick's use of dance also ameliorates Beatrice's earlier concerns about "hot and hasty" (1.2.61-62) engagements. Through the delay of dance, Benedick is able to curb Beatrice's prejudices and give dance a new context for consensual rather than obligatory partnership.

In his reading of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Harry Berger references Beatrice's dance metaphor from 2.1 to argue that a Scotch jig was originally used to close the play: "everyone in the last scene does a Scotch jig to avoid the imminent dispersal through marriage" (Berger 1982, 312). However, we cannot know for sure how this final dance was originally performed. Certainly there was a concluding jig, as all plays of the period featured them (West 2009, 203). Jigs were so commonplace that in Ben Jonson's play *Every Man Out of His Humor*, printed the same year as *Much Ado About Nothing*, he refers to a custom as "a thing studied, and rehearst as ordinarily as his coming from hawking or hunting, as a jigge after a play" (Jonson 1600, sig. F3v). However, the particular style of the concluding dance is open to interpretation; as William West admits, "the jig is whatever happened at the end of the play" (West 2009, 205). Though original dances — pavan, Scotch jig, or otherwise — cannot be entirely recovered, we can explore the range of interpretative possibilities by examining recent performance choices.

DANCE IN RECENT PRODUCTIONS

The dances in *Much Ado About Nothing* have taken many different forms in the past decade, from a Cuban salsa conga line at a professional Florida production (Stodard 2006, 83) to a 1940s jitterbug at the Old Vic (Collins 2014, 289). At the Wyndham Theatre in London, director Josie Rourke even added lap dances to her production, as Claudio and Hero enjoyed simultaneous bachelor/bachelorette parties onstage (Collins 2011, 653-54). In performance, dance — like music, costuming, set construction, and other design elements — can pull subtle meanings from the text while offering interpretative shape to a production. Thus, a conga line evinces a festive celebration of community rather than a celebration of coupling, while a "formal and ordered" dance, like the one that concluded the San Diego Old Globe Theater's production of *Much Ado* (Croteau 2012, 165), suggests the traditional ascendancy of marriage, and perhaps even the cultural capital of "Shakespeare." Thus, the Globe Theatre in London uses "curtain call" dances to harness what they believe to be an authentically early modern experience, even though these dances are not necessarily choreographed from early modern dance manuals, reflecting more of a contemporary nostalgia for an idea of an "original Shakespeare" than anything else.

Often, the precise forms of dance matter less than who dances and who does not. This dramaturgical choice can offer insight into the social position of various characters. For instance, when we first meet Don John, we are told he is "out of measure sad" (1.3.1); this sense of being excluded from a dance casts him as "out of step" (Brissenden 51) with his fellow characters. Moreover, Don Pedro traditionally does not join the final dance in *Much Ado*, as he is excluded from the happy ending and has no partner to dance with (Collins 2011, 653-4; Klett 2007, 58). However, Joss Whedon's 2012 film adaptation opts to excuse Beatrice and Benedick from dancing throughout the entire production. Though a masquerade goes on around them in 2.1, Beatrice and Benedick are seated for their repartee and do not dance together during the scene. Beatrice excuses herself to join a conga line, but this operates primarily as her polite exit from the conversation.

But why excuse Beatrice and Benedick from the dance? Whedon's approach is risky, considering the fact that the witty "dance" between Beatrice and Benedick is what drives the play; as A. P. Rossiter argued over half a century ago, "Messinans have dancing minds, and make words dance or caper" (Rossiter 1961, 68). Removing this crucial metaphor from the two leads would seem impolitic. And yet, Whedon uses cross-cutting, a technique exclusive to film, to temper this choice and provide an even more effective dance metaphor for his production. During the masked dance scene (2.1), Whedon cross-cuts to repetitive shots of two acrobats performing on an elevated trapeze (figure 1).

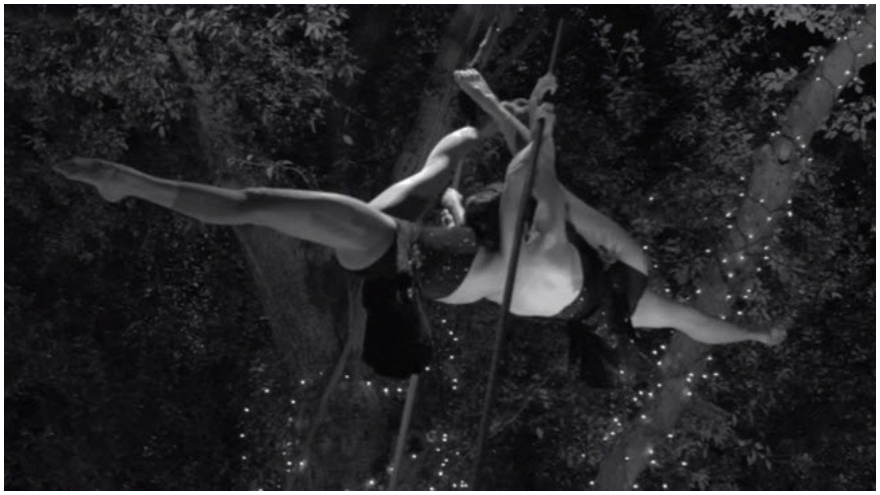


Figure 1. Screen shot from Much Ado About Nothing, dir. Joss Whedon, 2012

The dancers are dressed as twins, and their movements echo one another as if in a mirror. As they move through their balletic routine, they hold one another up with their bodies, suspended in midair and poised above the raucous crowd below. They pay no attention to the partygoers, but focus intensely on each other with sustained eye contact that intensifies as their routine continues. Whedon cross-cuts to the acrobatic dance throughout Beatrice and Benedick's argument, a dramaturgical choice that creates the effect of an intellectual montage, connecting the dancers to the couple. Like the acrobats, Beatrice and Benedick are shown to be twinned equals. Though they remain unaware of this until the final act, the audience is led to this dramatic irony through choreography. Film reviewer Ted Scheinman praises the choreography, arguing that the dancers evoke a sense of doubleness that permeates the play: "The masque [sic] scene features a pair of acrobats who mimic each other's bodies in gravity-defying poses that create a mirror effect, as though the uppermost tumbler is posed over her own reflection. It's a rich, lovely moment that evokes the play's undercurrent of deceit, even among the good-hearted matchmakers" (Scheinman 2013). Rather than an undercurrent of deceit, though, I argue that these acrobats provide the film with a sense of embodied trust: Beatrice and Benedick must learn to forget social pressures and hold one another up.

This is precisely what Beatrice and Benedick embody by the end of Whedon's film: in the final scene, other couples pair off to drunkenly dance, while Beatrice and Benedick stand apart, pressed against the wall away from the dancing, enjoying each other. As the shot focuses on Beatrice and Benedick, the music transitions to an extradiegetic crescendo, as if they cannot perceive their surroundings. In removing Beatrice and Benedick from both dance scenes and introducing cross-cutting in its place, Whedon offers a moving foreshadow of their developing relationship.

Not only does this choreographic choice offer a striking visual metaphor, but it also colors the way in which viewers perceive the play. For instance, in his review of Whedon's film, A. A. Dowd makes no mention of the acrobats but says that the film is full of "acrobatic wordplay" (Dowd 2013). Similarly, Melissa Croteau's review of a stage production of *Much Ado*, published the same year as the film's release, argues that "directors must walk a tightrope between these extremes both to capture the complexity of Shakespeare's mature comedy and to please an audience" (Croteau 2012, 160). Dowd's use of the term "acrobatic" and Croteau's use of "tightrope" are evidence that choreography can shape the way we perceive a text, a perception that can even bleed into subsequent viewings of different productions of that text. Therefore, if we see acrobats, we think the language is acrobatic, a cognitive interpolation that speaks to the power of choreographic dramaturgy.

The Early Modern Rope Dance

Whedon's directorial choices do more than offer a contemporary context for *Much Ado About Nothing*, as the jitterbug or Cuban conga do. I'd like to suggest that Whedon's use of acrobats actually brings a peculiar early modern sensibility to his production. Whether or not this choice was conscious, it is especially effective. This is because acrobats were a popular form of entertainment in the early modern period, performing some of the "feats of activity" that entertained English people on a regular basis (figure 2).

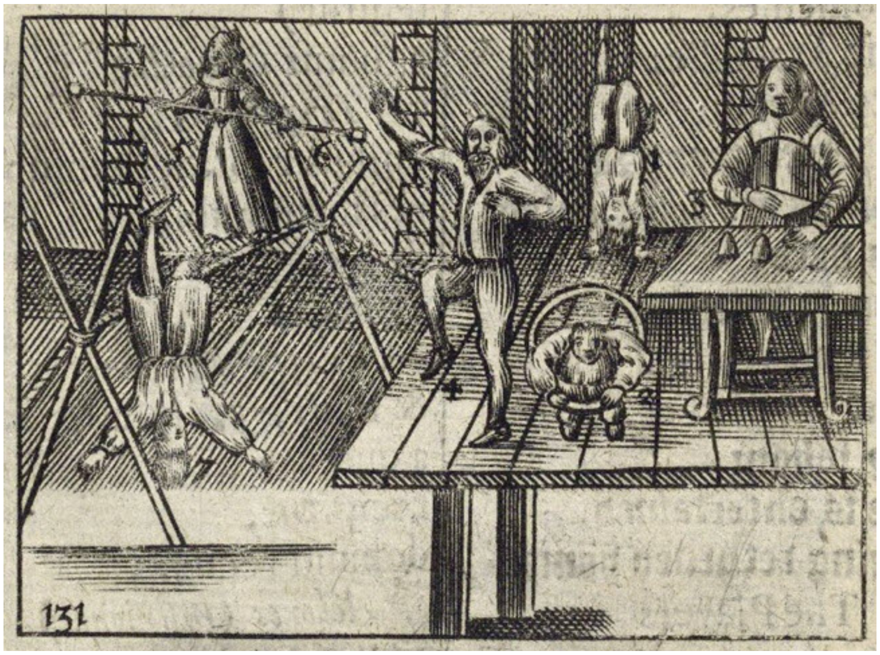


Figure 2. Tumbling, rope-dancing, and other feats of activity. Johann Amos Comenius, Orbis sensualium pictus. London, 1659, 1685. 266 S5v

Many of these "feats of activity" involved performing while suspended in air (figure 3).

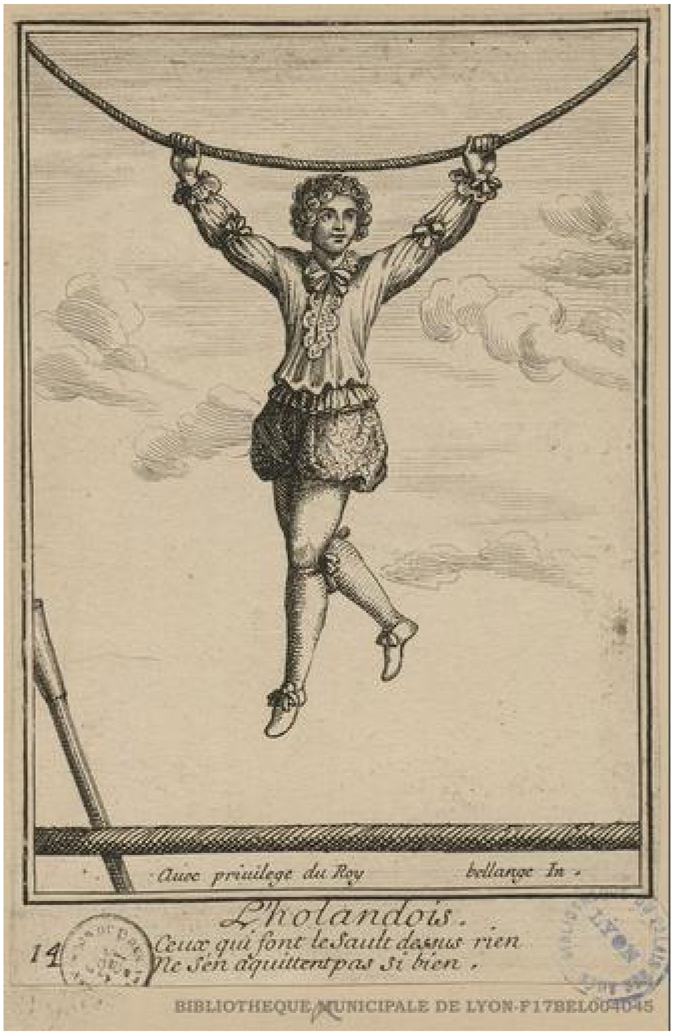
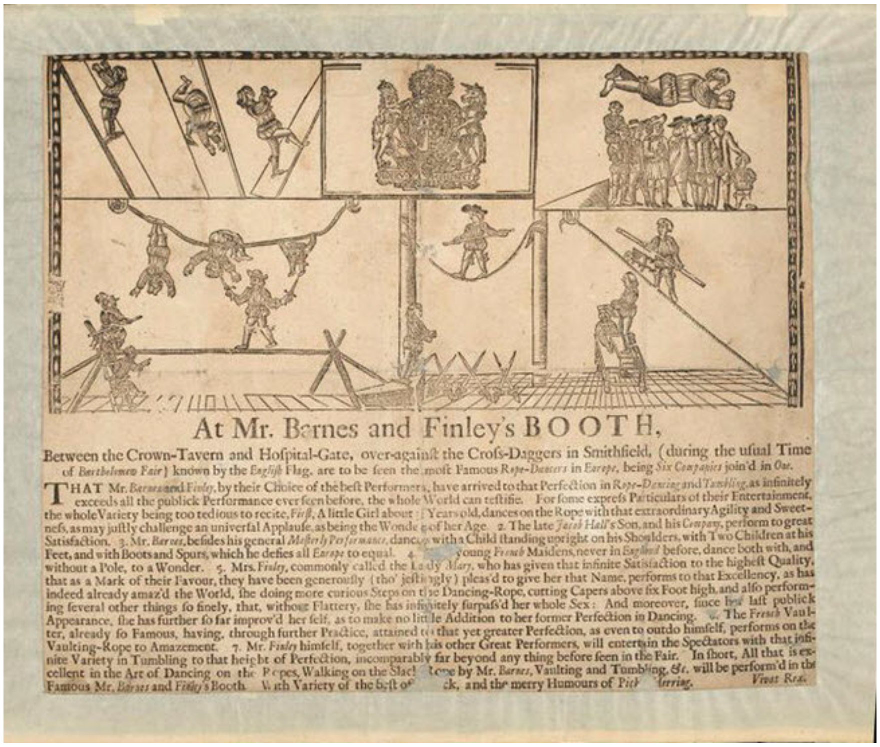

Auec priuilege du Roy
bellange In.
L'holandois.
14
Ceux qui font le Sault dessus rien
Ne s'en aquittent pas si bien.
BIBLIOTHEQUE MUNICIPALE DE LYON-F17BEL004045

Figure 3. Bellange, Jacques? L'holandois. c. 1575-1638. Engraving. Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, F17BEL004045

One specific form of entertainment was tightrope walking, better known as rope dancing (figure 4).



At Mr. Barnes and Finley's BOOTH,

Between the Crown-Tavern and Hoſpital-Gate, over-againſt the Croſs-Daggers in Smithfield, (during the uſual Time of *Bartholomew Fair*) known by the *Engliſh* Flag, are to be ſeen the moſt Famous *Rope-Dancers* in *Europe*, being *Six Companies* join'd in *One*.

THAT Mr. *Barnes* and *Finley*, by their Choice of the beſt Performers, have arrived to that Perfection in *Rope-Dancing* and *Tumbling*, as infinitely exceeds all the publick Performance ever ſeen before, the whole World can teſtifie. For ſome expreſs Particulars of their Entertainment, the whole Variety being too tedious to recite, *Firſt*, A little Girl about [illegible] Years old, dances on the Rope with that extraordinary Agility and Sweetneſs, as may juſtly challenge an univerſal Applauſe, as being the Wonder of her Age. 2. The late *Jacob Hall's* Son, and his *Company*, perform to great Satisfaction. 3. Mr. *Barnes*, beſides his general *Maſterly Performance*, dances with a Child ſtanding upright on his Shoulders, with Two Children at his Feet, and with Boots and Spurs, which he defies all *Europe* to equal. 4. [illegible] young *French* Maidens, never in *England* before, dance both with, and without a Pole, to a Wonder. 5. Mrs. *Finley*, commonly called the Lady *Mary*, who has given that infinite Satisfaction to the higheſt Quality, that as a Mark of their Favour, they have been generouſly (tho' jeſtingly) pleas'd to give her that Name, performs to that Excellency, as has indeed already amaz'd the World, ſhe doing more curious Steps on the Dancing-Rope, cutting Capers above ſix Foot high, and alſo performing ſeveral other things ſo finely, that, without Flattery, ſhe has infinitely ſurpaſs'd her whole Sex: And moreover, ſince her laſt publick Appearance, ſhe has further ſo far improv'd her ſelf, as to make no little Addition to her former Perfection in Dancing. 6. The *French* Vaulter, already ſo Famous, having, through further Practice, attained to that yet greater Perfection, as even to outdo himſelf, performs on the Vaulting-Rope to Amazement. 7. Mr. *Finley* himſelf, together with his other Great Performers, will entertain the Spectators with that infinite Variety in Tumbling to that height of Perfection, incomparably far beyond any thing before ſeen in the Fair. In ſhort, All that is excellent in the Art of Dancing on the Ropes, Walking on the Slack Rope by Mr. *Barnes*, Vaulting and Tumbling, &c. will be perform'd in the Famous Mr. *Barnes* and *Finley's* Booth. With Variety of the beſt of [illegible]ck, and the merry Humours of *Pick* [illegible] *Herring*. *Vivat Rex.*

Figure 4. Poster advertising Rope Dancers performing 'At Mr Barmes and Finley's Booth.' Woodcut, ink on paper. London, c. 1700. V&A 2.3925-2009

In her survey of the history of the high wire, Catherine Yass (2008) shows how English rope dancing was popularized by medieval festivals and continued to be popular through the Restoration. Rope dancers are discussed in Holinshed's *Chronicles*; in 1554, an acrobat "came downe upon a rope tied to the battlements with his head before, neither staieng himselfe with hand or foot: which shortlie after cost him his life" (Holinshed 1587, 1121). The coronation of Edward VI in 1547 was likewise celebrated with a rope dancer who "went upwards upon the rope till he came over the midst of the churchyard; where he, having a rope about him, played certain mysteries on the rope, as tumbling, and casting one leg from another. Then took he the rope, and tied it to the cable, and tied himself by the right leg a little space beneath the wrist of the foot, and hung by one leg a certain space" (Strut 1801, 180). Even companies better known for their theatrical performances took part in these entertainments. For instance, the Lord Admiral's Men were paid £20 in 1588 for "showinge other feates of activitye and tumblinge" to Elizabeth I (Butterworth 2005, 33). Such popular entertainments relied on shock and skill to thrill spectators (Lin 2012, 107-108). With the visceral excitement of the early modern rope dancer, Whedon's acrobats infuse his adaptation with a taste of the range of early modern performances — beyond traditional drama — that were available to early modern spectators.

In early modern England, rope dancing was part spectacle and part metaphor. For example, it was used as a political metaphor in a song by playwright Alexander Brome — "Those that on the high rope dance, / Will do the same trick too" (Brome 1664, 92) — and was used to critique Oliver Cromwell's tenuous control over London (figure 5).

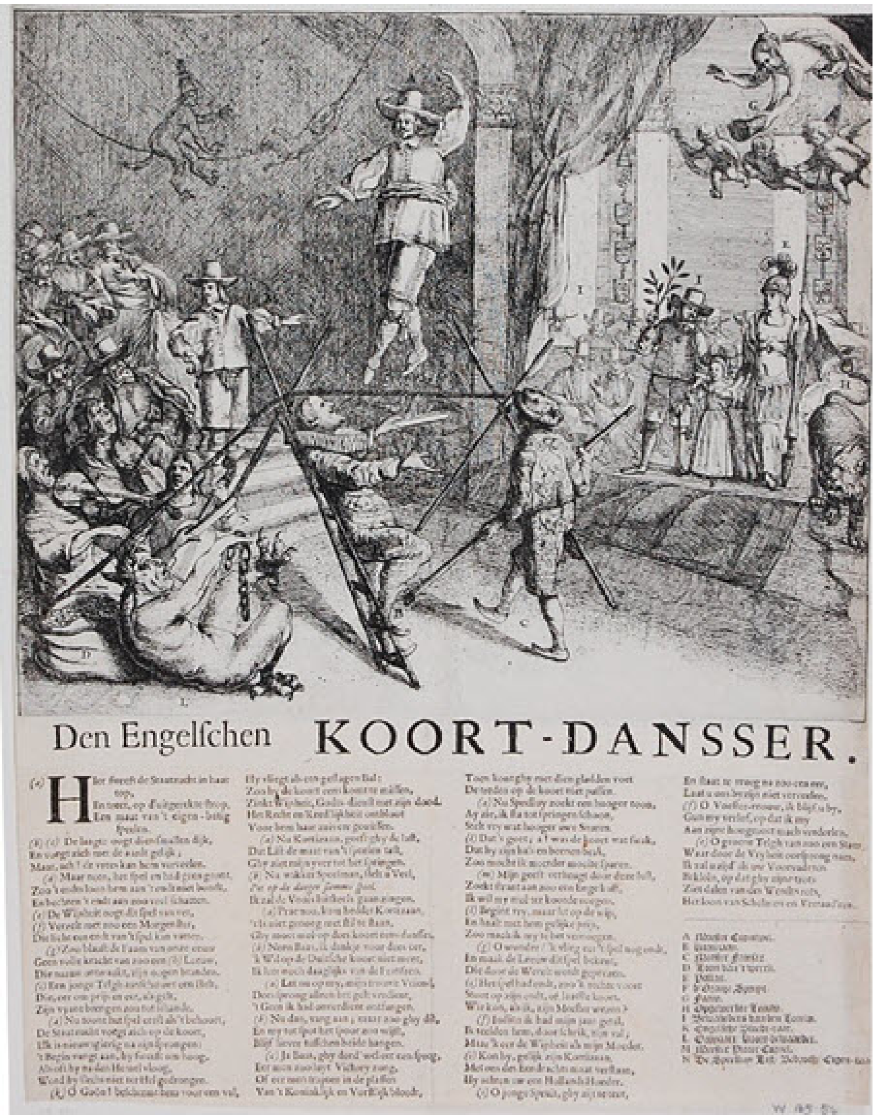

Den Engelschen KOORT-DANSSER.

Figure 5. Stoop, Dirk. 1652. Broadside satirising Oliver Cromwell as a rope dancer. Netherlands. The British Museum 1846,0509.50

By bringing this spectacle of metaphor to the dance in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Whedon's production offers an intriguing interpretation of the play. When the final dance begins in act 5, the acrobats are gone. However, Whedon's Benedick literally sweeps Beatrice off her feet into his arms to "lighten her heels." As she is suspended in mid-air, we are visually reminded of the acrobats' dance. Seeing Beatrice and Benedick as early modern rope dancers emphasizes the precarious position of love extolled by the play: first they must fall — "she shall fall in love with Benedick" and "he shall fall in love with Beatrice" (2.1.331-34) — so that they might catch one another.

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A "Merry War": Synetic's *Much Ado About Nothing* and American Post-war Iconography

Sheila T. Cavanagh, Emory University

Abstract | Shakespeare without Spoken Language | Messina on the Town | *Much Ado* in the 1950s | Is It Shakespeare? | Las Vegas as Messina? | Kinesthetic Shakespeare | Notes | References

Abstract

Synetic Theatre, a Washington, D.C. area theatrical company with artistic roots in the Republic of Georgia, has achieved significant renown for its ongoing series of "wordless" Shakespeare performances. Highly choreographed, these "physical theater" productions vary dramatically in tone and presentation, although they each use distinctive costuming, music, and movement in order to offer nuanced interpretations of Shakespearean drama despite the absence of spoken language. Although their style closely resembles dance, they push against those definitional boundaries and encourage audiences to view their presentations as movement-based genre pieces that defy ready categorization.

Shakespeare without Spoken Language

Synetic Theatre, a Washington, D.C. area theatrical company with artistic roots in the Republic of Georgia, has achieved significant renown for its ongoing series of "wordless" Shakespeare performances.[1] Highly choreographed, these "physical theater" productions vary dramatically in tone and presentation, although each uses distinctive costuming, music, and movement in order to offer nuanced interpretations of Shakespearean drama, despite the absence of spoken language. Although their style closely resembles dance, they push against those definitional boundaries and encourage audiences to view their presentations as movement-based genre pieces that defy ready categorization. Beginning with *Hamlet . . . the Rest is Silence* in 2002, Synetic has created award-winning productions of eleven Shakespearean plays, including *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Twelfth Night*. Their eleventh offering in this series, *Much Ado About Nothing*, premiered in February 2015.

Set predominantly in Las Vegas during the 1950s, this production uses culturally resonant images and music to offset its lack of dialogue. The result is a performance that is not quite Shakespeare, but that demonstrates how eliminating the verbal can highlight other modes of communication and enhance the meaning expressed through movement. As dance theorist Della Pollock remarks, "performative writing is *citational*" (Pollack, 92, emphasis in original). Synetic's performances are likewise citational, with meaning conveyed through images and dance maneuvers that are both fresh and familiar.

MESSINA ON THE TOWN

Accordingly, this *Much Ado About Nothing* relies heavily upon shared cultural references in order to present its narrative to audiences who may or may not know the play. In many instances, this strategy emphasizes aspects of the text that recede during more conventional productions, although it also adds interpretive levels to the performance that do not coincide neatly with the details of Shakespeare's drama. The show opens, for example, with Beatrice and Benedick reenacting a famous image closely tied to the celebrations ending World War Two. (For discussion about this photograph in relation to the Synetic Theater's *Much Ado*, see Lacey 2015.)

When twenty-first century American audiences view the sailor kissing a woman bent backward in an iconic pose, they are likely to situate the action historically. The choreography surrounding this initial moment confirms that identification, with costumes and dancing reminiscent of Gene Kelly and his sailor companions in *On the Town* (1949). This environment, which firmly contextualizes this *Much Ado* in a specific post-war era, also facilitates a "back-story" scene illustrating a truncated prior romance between Beatrice and Benedick, which is alluded to in Shakespeare's text, but not definitively presented. As Beatrice obliquely remarks to Don Pedro: "Indeed, my lord, he lent it [Benedick's heart] me awhile; and I gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one: marry, once before he won it of me with false dice, therefore your grace may well say I have lost it" (2.1.242-45). In Synetic's version, Benedick (Ben Cunis) clearly abandons a smitten, but unwitting, Beatrice (Irina Tsikurishvili) after a period of apparent romantic bliss. This Beatrice has ample cause to feel betrayed when Benedick returns from battle. The general upheaval of the war years and the stress of conflicting allegiances contribute to significant personal sorrow for her.

Much Ado in the 1950s

After the energetic and poignant opening sequence that conveys numerous allusions to the Second World War, the production charges forward to the 1950s, where Benedick emerges as a Marlon Brando/James Dean biker and Beatrice is transformed into a singer showcased in her Uncle Leonato's casino. Lights, music, and costuming reflect this new environment, although musical selections are also drawn from more recent recordings (such as Pink Floyd) and period pieces from Elvis, Chuck Berry and others. This shift facilitates striking costuming and appealing special effects, such as single wheel motorcycles that regularly roar through the scene with lots of light and noise. It also introduces an arena replete with Don John's drug use, Beatrice and Benedick's comic gambling (at one point, they play strip poker), and a host of other images drawn from real or imagined communal cultural associations within the casino realm of Las Vegas. The production offers an array of visually captivating scenes and familiar popular music. As usual, Synetic provides an impressive and entertaining evening of theater. As Rosalind Lacey notes, this company's ambitious choreography always moves in exciting new directions: Irina Tsikurishvili, a nine-time Helen Hayes choreography award winner, has created ingenious dance routines, replete with understated

> sexuality, that push the envelope, and go light years further than any previous Synetic production. She breaks boundaries, veering on the edge of chaos. It's as if she is trying to see how far she dare go with her well-trained dancers who she has execute acrobatics, cartwheels, pratfalls and well-timed slapstick comedy. Near a climactic point, the bikers pick up their bikes and twirl them like batons. (2015)

Synetic's *Much Ado* continually keeps audiences wondering what will happen next.

Is It Shakespeare?

Does it, however, present Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*? The answer, as with many adaptations, is mixed. Synetic's Artistic Director, Paata Tsikurishvili, knows his Shakespeare, although he admits to reading the plays more closely in Georgian than in English. He also draws heavily from literary and dramatic critical responses to the plays. Here, for instance, he includes reference to the play's focus on "noting" as part of its investigation of how information is transmitted and interpreted. In addition, Synetic productions do not hesitate to make significant alterations to the plays. Their *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, begins with a woman in labor, giving birth to the Indian boy, who then mysteriously transforms into Puck. This change makes for a memorable opening scene, but cannot be mistaken for a silent rendition of Shakespeare's spoken text. Their *King Lear*, moreover, draws as much from Fellini as it does from the First Folio. Synetic often places concept first, aiming for metaphoric associations in lieu of textual fidelity.

In the case of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Synetic's changes draw attention to Shakespeare's title. Tsikurishvili's Las Vegas bears little resemblance to the Bard's Messina, except that it skillfully portrays a society where flash easily overshadows substance and where comedic dunderheads can triumph over their purportedly sharp-witted superiors. Allusions to *The Wild One* (1953), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and countless Vegas-based films emphasize both the seriousness and frivolity of the plot. Skirting disaster, the casino-based ensemble demonstrates how the rampant exuberance generated by the end of a war can rapidly transform into threats against future stability. As the close parallels between the stories of *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing* illustrate, tragedy and comedy share close quarters. The manufactured glitz of Las Vegas, coexisting with its reality of lives and ideals thwarted by substances, greed, and failure, suggest that the "nothing" referenced in the title can easily translate into "everything" and can just as readily evaporate. As Susannah Clapp notes in *The Guardian*, Rupert Goold demonstrated something similar in his recent Las Vegas *Merchant of Venice* at the Royal Shakespeare Company and London's Almeida Theatre: "By setting the play in modern Las Vegas, Goold shows capitalism at its kitschiest being invaded by emotional reality" (2014). While these productions have disparate outcomes, the common setting offers similar cultural associations. Las Vegas remains a site overwhelmed by misplaced hopes and rampant illusion.

LAS VEGAS AS MESSINA?

The sordidness of this environment led some viewers to criticize Synetic's reimagining of this play, however, claiming that none of the characters in this rendition warrant audience sympathy. In the online Theater Critic DC review, for instance, one regular theater blogger bemoaned a perceived need to criticize a generally laudable company:

> What really ruined this show for me was how mean and sleazy all the characters are presented. Everyone in the biker gang (as you would expect from a biker gang) is a violent macho asshole. Beatrice, who ought to be portrayed as proud and independent feminist who dislikes Benedick for his cockiness, is instead just bitter and jaded — a semi-celebrity with a chip on her shoulder. Claudio is less of a macho asshole than his friends, but not by much; and Hero is a virginal ingénue . . . sort of. Don John has been given a heroin addiction, which seems pretty clearly to be only a byproduct of his already being an insufferable asshole rather than the cause of it. (2014)

While understandable, given the affection often bestowed upon the characters in this play, this response does not acknowledge the dark undertones regularly present in Shakespearean comedy. *Much Ado*'s bustling seaport of Messina may not correlate closely with the tawdry environment of Las Vegas, but Shakespeare's comedies generally recognize the complex, often contradictory, nature of human beings and their creations. Claudio's treatment of Hero can raise eyebrows even in comparatively benign settings. The confused Dogberry's essential intervention in the affairs of this witty group of intellectuals also draws attention. Accordingly, Las Vegas can be used to exaggerate and make visible the elaborate facades that often silently mask the human foibles represented in this drama. Jaques's jaundiced departure toward the end of *As You Like It* reflects the cynicism that many feel at the unconvincing equanimity reigning over lighthearted productions of Shakespearean comedies, including *Much Ado About Nothing*. The lively banter at the heart of this comedy captures the imagination of many audiences, but that does not denote a setting devoid of complication. Early modern post-war Messina, like its twentieth-century desert counterpart, hides an array of competing ambitions and desires, something this play works hard to display, even as its characters endeavor to distance themselves from such harsh realities.

KINESTHETIC SHAKESPEARE

Synetic's incorporation of Las Vegas into its production facilitates the kind of interpretative responses to movement described by dance theorist Jane C. Desmond, who argues,

> We can analyze how social identities are codified in performance styles and how the use of the body is related to, duplicates, contests, amplifies, or exceeds norms of nondance bodily expression within specific historical contexts. We can trace historical and geographic changes in complex kinesthetic systems and can study comparatively symbolic systems based on language, visual representation, and movement. We can move away from the bias for verbal texts and visual-object-based investigations that currently form the core of ideological analysis. (1997, 29-30)

As Desmond recognizes, our propensity for privileging spoken language often leads to a discounting of "complex kinesthetic systems" such as those demonstrated through Synetic's physical theater. However central language remains in more conventional Shakespearean performances, this company's ability to infuse their choreography with pertinent, recognizable cultural references suggests that these stories can be told effectively without vocalization. As Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy comment, moreover, "Interesting theoretical and practical issues arise when the ephemerality of dance gets caught up in the 'permanence' of the written word. That dance cannot be frozen, held still, is its very essence" (1995, 5). Synetic's reliance upon nonverbal cues in order to communicate its Shakespearean narratives enables audiences to interpret such "theoretical and practical issues" as they merge the aesthetic experience of watching a Synetic production with their expectations and experience of Shakespearean drama. In the case of this *Much Ado About Nothing*, these issues include determining how well Shakespeare's play transforms itself into a new generic representation, a revised setting, and a performance that privileges movement and image instead of the excised language.

Desmond rightly notes that many scholars continue to focus primarily upon the spoken word, even though this approach faces increased resistance: "Cultural studies remains largely text-based or object-based, with literary texts still predominating. Even excursions into popular culture are concerned largely with verbal or visual cultural products, not kinesthetic actions" (1997, 30). As Synetic continues to create Shakespeare without dialogue (this next season will include *As You Like It*), they are building a body of kinesthetic material that is intricately bound to its textual origins, yet contradictorily, largely divorced from the words behind their origin. By incorporating communally recognized images into their polished stage design and expert choreography, Synetic consistently presents noteworthy Shakespearean drama, despite the absence of dialogue. The company has earned its widespread critical acclaim as it continues to stretch the boundaries of choreographed, physical theater without words.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Paata Tsikurishvili and to Monica Jilling from Synetic Theater for making Vimeo and DVD renditions of this production available to me.

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"Light Your Cigarette with My Heart's Fire, My Love": Raunchy Dances and a Golden-hearted Prostitute in Bhardwaj's *Omkara* (2006)

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ABSTRACT | SONGS AND DANCES IN HINDI FILMS | *OMKARA*: RECEPTION, PLOT, AND ADAPTATION | BILLO/BIANCA'S TWO SONG-AND-DANCE SEQUENCES IN *OMKARA* | REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

This essay argues that *Omkara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006) foregrounds contemporary gender concerns in modern, small-town India, primarily through the film's reformulation of the three female roles in *Othello*. Billo/Bianca, played by a glamorous, contemporary, female star, gets her own romance and two popular and raunchy song-and-dance tracks in *Omkara*. These dance tracks are a peculiar mixture of traditional folk Nautanki and identifiable Bollywood masala "item numbers," whose layered lyrics have been penned by Gulzar, a well-known poet, lyricist, scriptwriter, and ex-film-director who closely collaborates with Bhardwaj. The essay argues for the recognition of the songs in *Omkara* as a parallel narrative that intertwines with and intersects the central narrative of the plot, inflecting it with a range of cultural and social intertexts, along with a dash of metatextual flavor. The article examines how the two song-and-dance sequences by Billo/Bianca in the film use the familiar tropes of the "courtesan" figure of Hindi films and draw upon traditional folk-theater — reflecting both its local poetry and its vulgarity — to evoke a new kind of verbal and visual "realism" that intertwines Bollywood glamor with local histories.

Omkara, with its big budget stars, glossy production values, and popular song-and-dance numbers interspersing the narrative — elements that are often associated with the "Bollywood" style of Hindi cinema — is the most obviously commercial of Vishal Bhardwaj's three Shakespearean adaptations. All three adaptations, *Maqbool/Macbeth* (2003), *Omkara/Othello* (2006), and *Haider/Hamlet* (2014) are notable for emerging from the heart of the commercial Mumbai film industry and making a fair profit at the domestic box-office, while garnering international recognition. The recent visibility of Asian cinema on the global stage and the cultural currency of screen Shakespeare have, no doubt, contributed to the success of the films. However, the successful commercial releases of these films in the vast Indian domestic market and their circulation in the overseas market and international film festival circuits showcase Bhardwaj's skillful negotiation of the expectations of distinctly different audiences in these adaptations.

A defining feature of Bhardwaj's adaptations is his ability to follow the Shakespearean plot closely while keenly evoking specific landscapes and local, identifiable characters that merge seamlessly with the genre-oriented structure of Bollywood films. *Omkara* plays out the *Othello* drama as a mixture of crime drama and romance in a small north-Indian town riddled with politics and crime. Race is reframed, rather pertinently in the Indian context, as a caste issue, which is a deeply entrenched and unjust social stratification that still inflects the social and political fabric of contemporary India. However, it is the film's focus on female sexuality and the underlying violence of its monitoring, often legitimized in the institution of marriage and romanticized in Indian cinema, that gives this adaptation its particular edge. This essay provides a reading of *Omkara* that focuses on the ways in which issues of female sexuality are interrogated in the film through its three female characters: Dolly (Desdemona), Indu (Emilia), and Billo (Bianca). It discusses, in particular, two song-and-dance sequences featuring Billo, examining the ways in which these sequences extend the scope of the narrative beyond the confines of the plot to include a range of social, cultural, and literary contexts that reference both local histories and contemporary gender issues.

SONGS AND DANCES IN HINDI FILMS

Omkara's big-budget star cast and its typical song-and-dance numbers raised the stakes for the success of the film in the domestic market. A great number of the initial expectations of the film's domestic success rested on the popularity of the seven songs in this film. Songs are one of the most distinctive features of Indian commercial cinema. Sung diegetically by multiple characters, and often by the main romantic pair, they circulate independently on television and radio as very popular forms of entertainment that cut across divisions of class and age. They enter seamlessly into the cultural fabric of Indian society, played or sung at marriage festivities, games, religious festivals, fairs, and group activities of all sorts. Their wide-ranging appeal and cultural currency draw upon a multitude of cultural, literary, religious, and local traditions, and they incorporate a wide variety of influences, including Indian classical music, Indian folk music, and religious *bhajans*, as well as Western pop and classical, Latin American, and Arabian music — to name just a few. In the large, diasporic Indian community, they often become reference points for establishing the sense of a shared past and an idealized pan-national identity. These songs, frequently accompanied by dance sequences, are now used to promote the films aggressively on television and radio, and often the success or failure of the songs has a strong impact on the success of the forthcoming film.

Of late, these sequences have been lavishly and slickly produced and have become an identifiable feature of the "Bollywood" style that has acquired some recognition among the global audience. Such recognition, however, does not necessarily translate into acceptance. A degree of exoticization or a lack of familiarity with the conventions of this form lends itself to either a complete omission of the songs in critical references, or, at best, a superficial nod to them as glamorous window-dressing. Moreover, a certain reductive homogenization is evident in the "Bollywood" label itself, which while providing these songs with "global" currency, imposes a pan-Indian face on it. This encourages an elision of cultural and regional specificities that songs and dances frequently reference. A serious lack of academic scholarship focused on songs and dances in Indian cinema aggravates the situation and often leads to incorrect assumptions and claims about these songs. Critical studies such as Lalitha Gopalan's *Cinema of Interruptions* (2006), Anna Morcom's *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (2007), and Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti's *Global Bollywood: The Travels of Hindi Song and Dance* (2008) have somewhat redressed this neglect, but much more sustained research needs to be done in this area. Gopalan's analysis of Indian cinema, for example, as linear, logical narratives interspersed with "interruptions," considers song-and-dance sequences as constituting an alternative creative space. Similar studies providing critical terminology for these sequences would greatly enhance the potential for engendering more fruitful and critical debates about them and encourage cross-cultural comparisons and contrasts with related global forms.

OMKARA: RECEPTION, PLOT, AND ADAPTATION

Omkara was released commercially in 2006 and entered the U.K. Top Ten charts along with Hollywood hits released in the same year, such as *Cars*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, and *Superman Returns*(Shahryar 2006). The contemporary British film reviews of *Omkara* provide a telling example of the continued neglect of film songs despite the global currency of Hindi films. The reviewers were largely appreciative of the film's polished direction and its narrative style, yet their reactions to the songs were quite dismissive, ranging from Philip French's casual afterthought at the end of his analysis, "[t]here are the usual Bollywood songs," to Demetrious Matheou's more trenchant summation, "[i]t's a bit rum when Iago breaks into a song-and-dance number, when Desdemona's murder is followed by a trilling love song" (Matheou 2006). While one could make a polemical point about operatic adaptations of Shakespeare plays making similar "rum" moves, it is perhaps more useful to look at the song-and-dance tracks in question in detail, factoring in the music, lyrics, choreography, acting, and dancing that layer the song sequences of *Omkara*. Moreover, the idea of song-and-dance sequences in Hindi cinema as providing an alternative cinematic space that is "different" from the dominant paradigms of linear, logical narratives allows for a more nuanced analysis of the dance sequences of Billo, which, in particular, have been singled out as extraneous "item numbers" or crowd-pullers in *Omkara*.

Omkara, made in Hindi, situates the *Othello* story in the dry and dusty plains of Uttar Pradesh, or U.P., as it is commonly called in Northern India. It is the story of Omkara (Othello), a small-time leader of a criminal gang, who gains a degree of legitimacy by entrenching himself as the coercive arm of the local corrupt politician, Bhaisahib (Duke). Omkara, who unofficially works for Bhaisahib, abducts Dolly (Desdemona), the college-educated daughter of a well-known lawyer of the town, on her wedding day. The father of the girl accuses Omkara of abducting his daughter forcibly, but

Dolly admits to having gone with Omkara of her own will. The father, in a statement very similar to the one made by Desdemona's father in *Othello*, bitterly warns Omkara that the daughter who could betray him this easily would one day betray Omkara. Iago's role is played by Langda (Lame) Tyagi, who is Omkara's henchman. Langda is disappointed when the second-in-command position is bestowed upon Kesu (Cassio), nicknamed "Firangee" (foreigner) by his group because he is young, college-educated, and seems more "westernized" to them. Langda gets Kesu drunk during a rowdy celebration party and instigates a brawl, which angers Omkara and results in Kesu's dismissal. Kesu, who is Dolly's classmate, asks Dolly to intercede on his behalf. Omkara's jealousy, fostered by Langda, finally leads him to murder Dolly on their wedding night.

As the preceding summary reveals, the central narrative of the film remains close to the Shakespearean plot, with a few notable exceptions, such as the shifting of the marriage of Dolly and Omkara to the end of the story and the expanded roles of Indu (Emilia) and Billo (Bianca). The marriage of Dolly and Omkara takes place at the end of the film, before which Dolly lives openly with Omkara. This would be considered a transgression of social norms — both within the diegetic space of the film as well as outside it — as large sections of the Indian middle-class audience would be uncomfortable with the concept, if not outright reject it. The "innocence" of Dolly is problematized deliberately by postponing the marriage of Dolly and Omkara to the end of the movie. Rather than the "half-caste" Omkara, it is she who is consistently "othered" in the film, a condition highlighted at various points in the narrative. This deliberate conflation of the issue of Dolly's innocence regarding her fidelity with her sexuality is further linked to the expanded roles of the other two female characters, Indu and Billo, whose social positions are explicitly compared and contrasted with Dolly's.

Both Dolly's and Billo's social positions are constantly under threat in the film because they are not legitimately married. Indu's social position, however, is the most stable, as she is the legitimate wife of Langda Tyagi. She is also the mother of a male child, a position that still carries tremendous social currency in contemporary India, with its lopsided sex ratio — recorded in the latest census as 940 women per 1,000 males (Census 2011 India). Considering herself Omkara's sister and teasing him on occasion, she occupies an authoritative social space as the "fulfilled" married woman or *Bhabhi*, a role that has simultaneously been de-sexualized and celebrated in countless Hindi films. This authoritative space is strengthened further by casting Konkana Sen, who is widely known for her acting prowess, in the role. *Omkara* both employs and deliberately overturns this social and "Bollywood" image by providing Indu with a formal space in which to express her sexual dissatisfaction, mainly through highlighting her silences and focusing on her eyes in shots that visually register her lack of a vocabulary to express that dissatisfaction verbally. Even though she provides a moral compass for *Omkara* and offers a sense of feminine agency in killing her husband at the end of the film, her personal fate remains mired in a dead end, as suggested by the final shot of her, desperately facing a well, contemplating suicide.

While Indu's role in the film speaks directly to issues of female agency, Billo's expanded role in the film negotiates a more complicated and compromised space.

She is the prostitute Bianca in Shakespeare's play, but in *Omkara*, she is also Kesu's love interest, a woman whom he intends to marry. As a prostitute, Billo's social position in society is that of a sexual object, making her vulnerable to exploitation and placing her at the other end of the gender spectrum as the most obviously "othered" character in the narrative. As Kesu's love interest, Billo's personality is fleshed out, obviously in order to build her up as a sympathetic character. Her cynicism and foul colloquial slang are balanced against her powerful attraction for, and her vulnerability towards, Kesu. Her earthy language brings a strong dose of realism to her character, which obviously contrasts with those Hindi screen prostitutes who either speak a courtly polite Urdu or a non-region-specific polished Hindi. On the other hand, her role does derive from a standard stock character in Hindi cinema — the courtesan/prostitute with the heart of gold who often ends up sacrificing her life for the hero.

The Indian screen stereotype of the golden-hearted courtesan, who is often sentimentalized and appropriated into the larger discourse of patriarchy to contain her sexuality, is elaborated in some detail in Sumita S. Chakravarty's book, *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1941-1987*. Discussing the emancipatory possibilities of the popular "courtesan genre" in Indian cinema, Chakravarty points out that the courtesan's profession gives her a certain economic independence and autonomy to function outside societal norms. However, the potential of the role gets dissipated by "romance" and "purity" narratives once she falls in love with the protagonist, at which point she transitions into the traditional role of a committed married wife (269-305). Thus, the courtesan's "tragedy" and the subsequent sympathy generated for her pivot around empathizing with her thwarted desire at not being accorded the recognition or status of a married wife, which supports the very status quo that her role potentially disrupts. Billo's dreams of marrying Kesu certainly reference this stereotype. However, the consistently egalitarian, on-screen depiction of the Billo-Kesu relationship negates the stereotype of the subservient wife/lover both visually and verbally. Billo is often positioned on top of Kesu, and her playful abuses aimed at him far outnumber his comebacks. In the *Beedi* song, in fact, there is a shot of Billo with her foot on Kesu's heart (see figure 1). This is particularly striking in contrast to the marked gender inequality between the other two couples in the film.

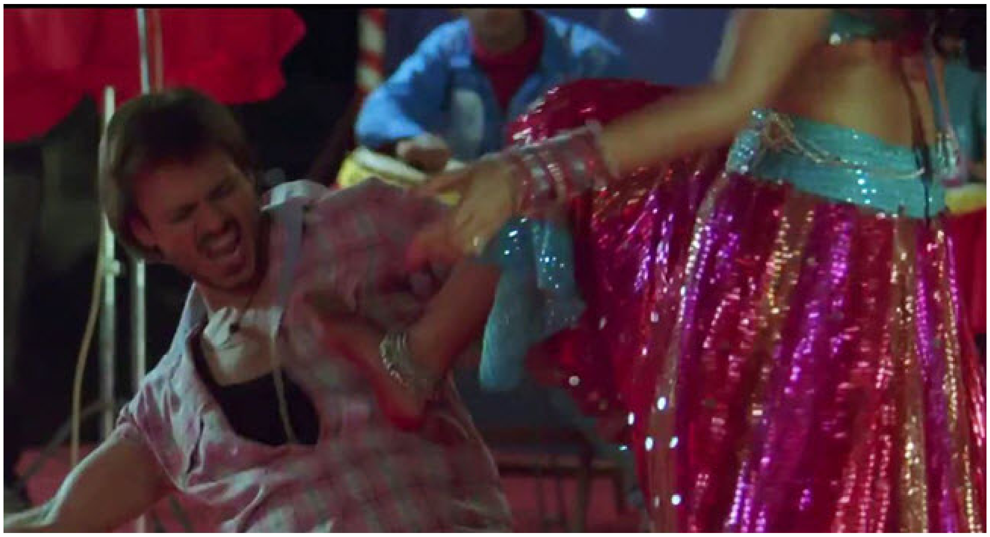

Figure 1. The Beedi Dance: Billo with her foot on Kesu's chest

Billo/Bianca's Two Song-and-Dance Sequences in *Omkara*

The space from which Billo speaks to gendered "othering" is further complicated by her participation in two sexually provocative song-and-dance sequences. Her narrative positioning as the most marginalized or "othered" character in *Omkara* is visually contradicted in the song sequences, where she is at the center, framed as the obvious object of desire for the exclusively male crowd that surrounds and lusts after her. The issues of both scopophilia and commercialization evident in these songs need to be informed by the complex cultural and social history of songs and dances in Indian films. In *Omkara*, Billo is played by Bipasha Basu, a model turned popular "A-grade" star. Apart from being offered substantial roles in big-budget films, she also does guest appearances in films, thus increasing the commercial value of those films. Indian stars frequently appear in carefully crafted "item numbers" or songs, lavish dance numbers that are very aggressively marketed and targeted to draw the crowds into the theaters. Bhardwaj was well aware of the commercial value of the song — the following quotation from an interview before the release of the film reveals his attempts to balance his commercial concerns with his artistic ambitions: "For the *Beedi* . . . song I told [the lyricist, Gulzar] I wanted an item song bigger than *Paan khayo saiyyan hamar* and *Jhumka gira re*. These were mass-oriented songs, but still so classy. Only Gulzar saab could do it" (Bhardwaj 2006).

A brief note about the film's lyricist, Sampooran Singh Kalra, or Gulzar, as he is popularly referred to, is relevant here. Bhardwaj entered films as a music composer, and has continued this career along with his career as a film director, composing music for his own films and for the films of other directors. He has formed a particularly productive, professional relationship with Gulzar, who apart from being a respected poet and writer in India, is a notable film director in his own right, and is often acknowledged by Bhardwaj as his mentor. Gulzar's successful adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* — *Angoor* [Grapes] (1982) — remains one of the rare acknowledged adaptations of Shakespeare in mainstream Hindi films of the eighties that was a commercial and a critical success. Gulzar gave Vishal Bhardwaj his first break as a music director in his film *Maachis* [Matchstick] (1996), and he has composed the lyrics of all of Bhardwaj's films, just as Bhardwaj composed the songs of Gulzar's last two films before Gulzar's unofficial retirement from film direction. The importance of songs in Bhardwaj's films also needs to be seen in the context of this intermeshed partnership between the two directors, and their longstanding and strong commitment to music and lyrics in their dual, overlapping careers.

The raunchy lyrics of the song *Beedi jalaile jigar se piya/jigar mein badi aag hai* [light the cigarette with my heart, my love / my heart's full of fire] is often referenced as typifying the "Bollywood" element of *Omkara*. However, analyzing both the lyrics and the dance in the context of the folk tradition, which has a very specific, local feel of rural northern India, provides a very different context for the song. It harkens back to a long tradition of Nautanki, which is a form of folk theater including song, dance, and comedy routines. It involves both epic and bawdy elements, and existed as a form of vaudeville that was the most popular mode of entertainment in rural northern India before the advent of films and television. Gulzar is particularly interested in this form of theater, as is evident from films such as *Naram Garam* [Soft and Sizzling] (dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1981), for which he provided the lyrics, and *Namkeen* [Salty] (dir. Gulzar, 1982), which includes sympathetic characters from the Nautanki. *Namkeen*, in particular, has as its central character an old, almost senile woman who was a former Nautanki singer trying to fend for herself and her three daughters in a small village. Bhardwaj's reference, in his interview, to *paan khaye saiyyan hamaar* [My lover chews betel leaves] concerns a song from a very well-known Hindi film — based on a literary novella — titled *Teesri Kasam* [The Third Promise] (dir. Basu Bhattacharya, 1967), which is about the life of another Nautanki dancer. The song, in the film adaptation of the novella, with its evocation of the rural folk tradition of India, is considered a classic. Bhardwaj's quotation thus references not just the theater history of Nautanki, but its film history as well.

The Nautanki feel of the *Beedi* song, epitomized by its leading image of the popular *beedi* (a locally made, poor man's cigarette), has been glamorized by the presence of a svelte Bipasha Basu, but the folk elements remain strong in the lyrics, the music, and the style in which the song is performed. The layered lyrics of the choric chant of the song are worth noting: *Na Gilaaf, Na Lihaaf, Thandi Hawa ke khilaaf, Sasuri / Itti Sardi hai kisi ka lihaaf lai le / Ja padosi ke chulhe se aag lai le* [No pillow cases, No blankets, / Bracing this chilled wind, Cruel one! / It is freezing, go get someone's blanket / Go get the fire from the neighbor's place]. The song's lyrics evoke the freezing winters in northern Indian villages, when people gather around fires and sing songs to beat the winter's chill. The dominant images of beds, blankets, and pillows are suggestive of illicit affairs, as well as a sharing of scarce resources, as is the allusion to getting the fire from the neighbor's house. Such suggestive, bawdy lyrics are an intrinsic part of the generic folk tradition, even as they playfully pick up the specific theme of extramarital deceit that is the central concern of the plot.

The dance sequence plays up the thematic concerns of the film in a number of its dominant images and throwaway lines that include premonitions of Dolly's fate. The dance pulses with the leashed tension of the male crowd, reflected in their sexually aggressive dance moves and lyrics, as Billo and Kesu flirt with words in the foreground. Kesu's line, *Na kasoor, na fatoor, bina jurr-am ke hajoor, mar gaye* [No fault, no obsession . . . without a crime, my lord . . . we die] fits in smoothly with the use of such words and phrases in typical romantic songs, albeit with a regional flavor — in the extension of the more formal *jurm* [crime] to *jurr-am*, and the use of the "j" sound instead of the more formally pure "z" sound in the *Urdu hajoor* [sir]. At one point, Billo cajoles him to "call a court" one afternoon, involving just the two of them, for which she promises to come dressed in anklets. And yet, words such as *kasoor* [fault], *fatoor* [a mispronunciation of *fitoor*, which means obsession], *jurm* [crime], *kachehri* [court], and *mar gaye* [dying], expressed playfully and provocatively, become unmoored in the song, carrying ominous undertones which finally extend beyond the confines of the plot. They underscore the crucially unstable position of women in a society where the undercurrent of violence is often masked by the blanket of respectability that the institution of marriage provides it, and the romance with which cinema, in particular, imbues marriage. The sequence's self-reflexive participation in romanticizing and glamorizing such sexual monitoring is peculiarly efficacious in its balancing of many contending social, artistic, and thematic resonances, and particularly so when the song is interspersed right in the middle for thirty-eight seconds with an intimate scene between Dolly and Omkara. This "interruption" within the "interrupted" space of the song foregrounds the waistband, which in the film is the repository of both tradition and sexuality, and is the agent that pushes the romance of Omkara and Dolly towards violence and murder.

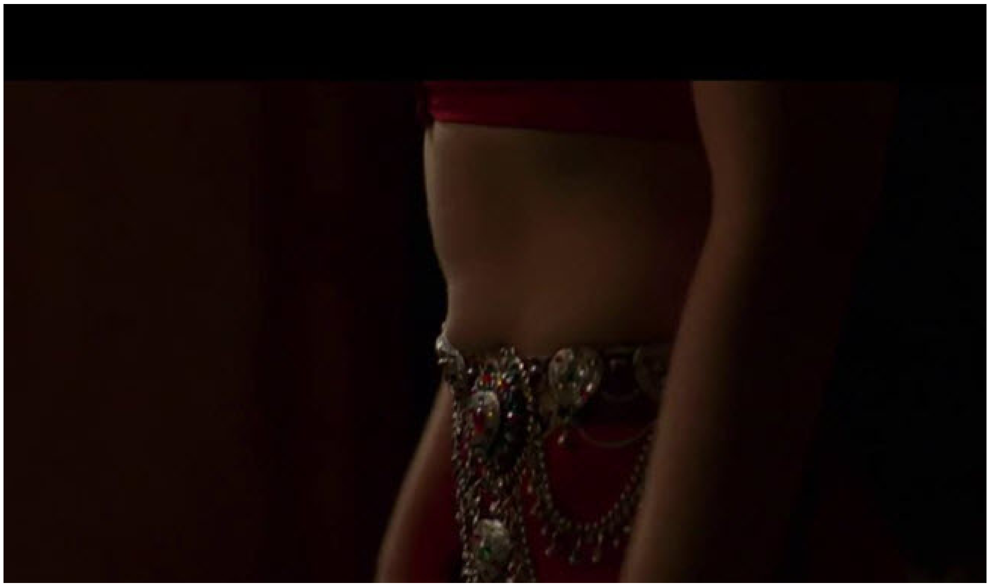

Figure 2. The Beedi Dance: The 38 sec. interspersed scene foregrounding the waistband

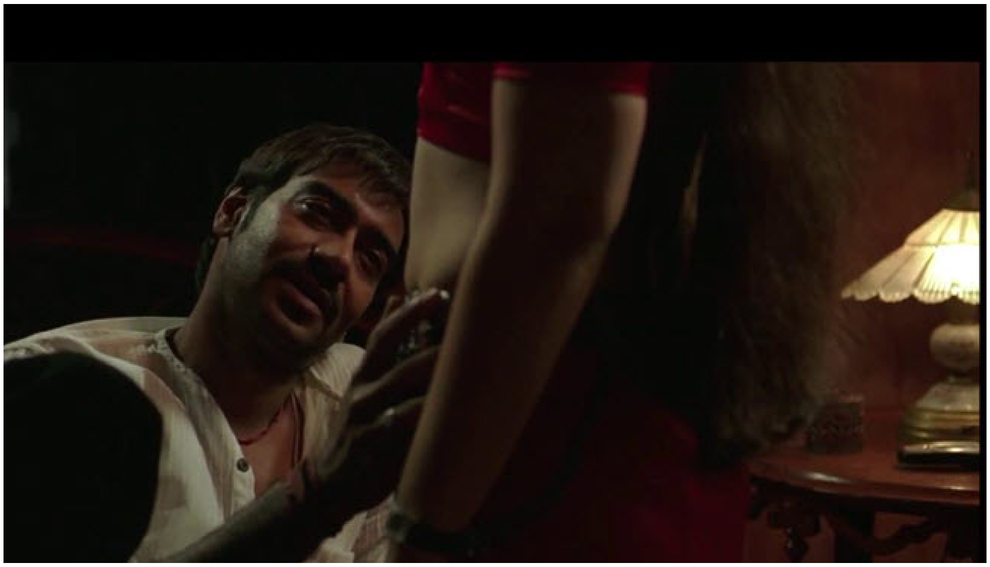

Figure 3. The Beedi Dance: The 38 sec. interspersed scene between Dolly and Omkara

Moreover, nestling within evocative words such as *kachehri* [court], and erotic phrases such as *aisa kaate ki daant ka nisan reh jaaye* [a bite that leaves teeth-marks], rest archaic meanings of words and phrases that point to both local and national histories that are lost to contemporary usage. *Kachehri*, for example, according to Gulzar, is the deliberate evocation of a forgotten feudal term that means *diwankhana* and the tradition associated with it, comprising traditional festivities, involving *nautch*-girls, which were held in the courtyards of the zamindars or landlords ("Gulzar reveals the meaning" 2011). In another interview, Gulzar claims that "*Beedi Jalaile* is about the *zamindaarana* [feudal] system." The phrase "*Aisa Kaate ke* . . . ," he points out, "is where I compare *zamindaars* to Alsatian dogs who leave bite marks. What people took away from the song is a different thing" ("Gulzar on how" 2015). The same lines, *Na [Qu]soor, na f[i]toor, bina jurram ke huzoor, mar gaye* [No fault, no obsession . . . without a crime, my lord . . . we die] in this context take on a different meaning as a protest against the excesses of the feudal system. The *Beedi* song's ability to hold these contradictory meanings requires such "thick" descriptions to understand its evocation of the intertwined elements of theater, cinematic tradition, regional literature, and culture, even as it distinguishes itself from earlier, more genteel film renditions, such as *Teesri Kasam*, as literally a more "vulgar" and hence more "realistic" reflection of the local culture.

The visual register of the dance sequence provides a carefully detailed background evoking the semi-rural atmosphere of a small town in Uttar Pradesh. At the same time, it maintains the glamorous and controlled dance in sync with the sophisticated lighting and orchestration of a "Grade A" Bollywood film production that won Ganesh Acharya, the film's choreographer, the prestigious Indian Filmfare Award for choreography. The opening shots of the dance provide an interesting vignette of this transition when Billo, covered and positioned in front of the harmonium in a more "traditional" style of the song, suddenly throws off her *dupatta* (scarf) at the crowd to reveal her more glamorous attire, which corresponds with her later, more modern "Bollywood *jhatkas*" (shaking of the hips associated with Bollywood dance moves, see figures 6 and 7). The dance sequence takes place amongst the celebrations outside the building where Omkara and Dolly consummate their relationship. The exterior shots of that building, with its latticed balcony and the *shamiyana* (temporary celebration tent), are as carefully detailed as the close-ups of the makeshift stage where Bipasha Basu as Billo dances, surrounded by her musicians. The background of a big satin banner announcing the name of her company, "Billo Chamanbahar and Orchestra" — the English phrase written in Hindi along with her phone number — keenly evoke the air of a small town and the local dancer's humble attempt at entrepreneurship responding to shifts in the local economy. Minute details such as the odd beer in *firangee* Kesu's hands, contrasting with the local rum in the hands of the others in the crowd, and the ubiquitous *charpais* (stringed, wooden beds) on which they sit and on which they finally hoist Billo and Kesu in drunken, enthusiastic celebration, are as region-specific as the language and the clothes that ground the plot in the semi-rural milieu.

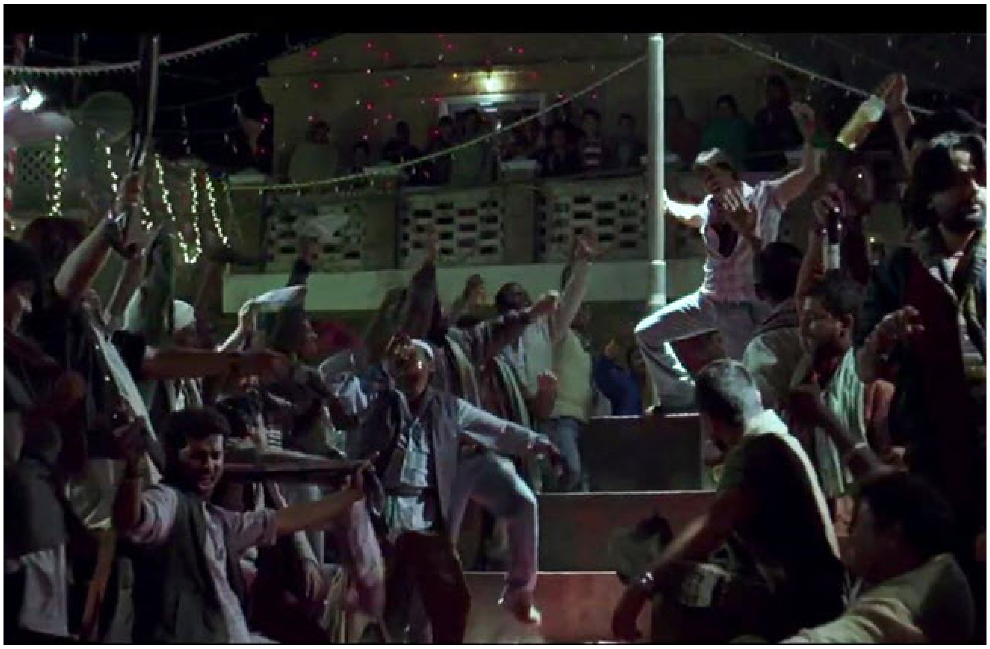

Figure 4. The Beedi dance: The group outside Omkara's balcony

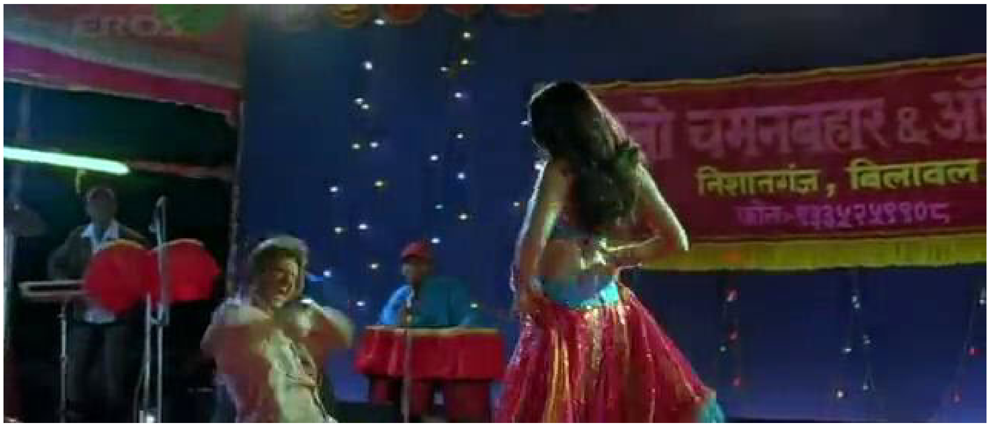

Figure 5. The Beedi Dance: Detailed interior décor of the stage on which Billo dances

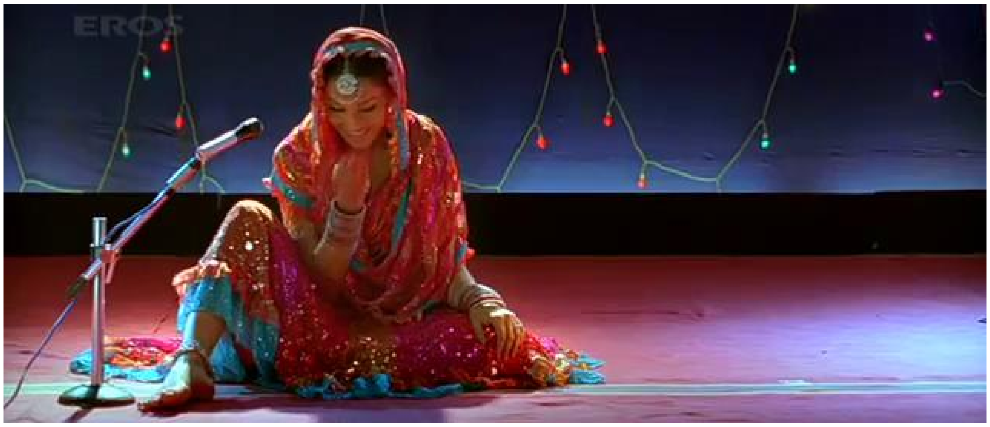

Figure 6. The Opening Shots of the Beedi Dance: Billo's dress

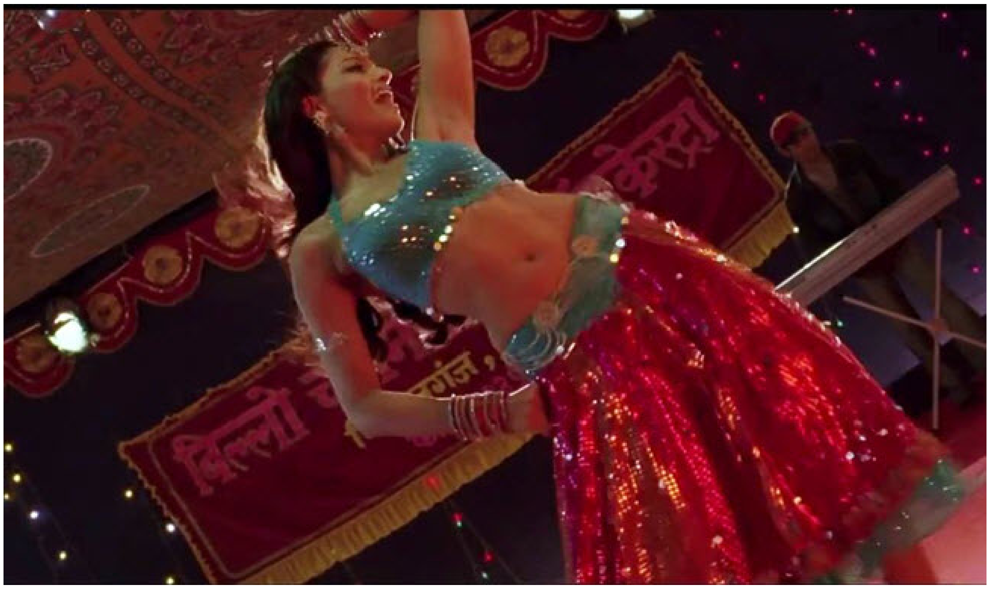

Figure 7. The Beedi Dance: Bollywood style

The second song-and-dance track, *Namak Ishq ka* [The Salt of Love], which features Billo, also pays close attention to minute background details. It is much more obviously related to the plot of the film. Billo, who has accepted Kesu's proposal, agrees to help out Omkara's gang and is sent as a decoy to the police station to trap the members of a rival gang who are plotting against Bhaisahib. Once again, the setting, the lyrics, and the visual and aural registers of the song extend beyond the scope of the immediate plot and the narrative. In this context, Susanne Gruss's analysis of *Omkara*, concerning the realism of the two songs featuring Billo, is worth noting: "Billo is, however, neither filmed in a sumptuous setting, nor is her choreography as elaborately staged as audiences might expect. The gritty realism of both bar scenes is a decided move away from the anti-realism of comparable scenes, the colors are subdued instead of luminous and saturated, neither scene is brightly lit" (Gruss 2009, 233). While Gruss's article certainly counts as a rare instance (along with Poonam Trivedi's recent article titled "Singing to Shakespeare in *Omkara*" [2013]) in which Hindi songs are discussed in some detail, Gruss's observations and comments misrepresent these particular songs. As a detailed description of the songs was not within the scope of the essay, it reflects, perhaps inevitably, a tendency to homogenize the songs while defining their stylistic variations from other "Bollywood" songs.

While it is true that both dance sequences are realistic, they are realistic in very different ways. The first song is sung on an open stage and uses bright, gaudy colors that are typical of the Nautanki style, even though it is a glamorized version of the style. The second song sequence, choreographed by a different artist, Bhushan Lakhandri, is sepia-toned and not particularly realistic. Its use of coordinated color tones, balancing the khaki uniform of the crowd with the browns of Billo's dress, and her muted yet perfect makeup, lend the scene the glamor of a more generic, high-end Bollywood production. It does, however, use the very realistic backdrop of a local police station, not a "bar-room," and the drinking and dancing policemen, in their very identifiable khaki uniform of the Uttar Pradesh police force, are indulging in an illegal practice of getting a "*nautch* girl" for entertainment in the office. The gritty realism of this scene emerges out of closely observed details about the building, which is a typical, run-down colonial British-style building with wide rooms, peeling walls, solid, wooden doors, and windows thickly coated with green paint. These buildings are still commonly used in post-Independence India as government buildings, especially in small towns that have not undergone the fast-paced changes of the Indian metropolises (see figures 8 and 9).

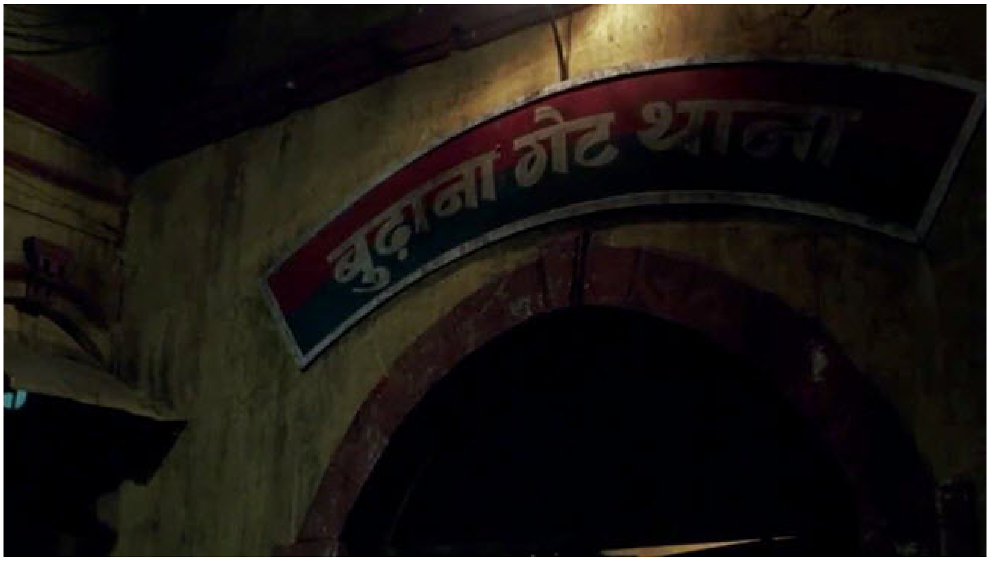

Figure 8. Namak Dance: Exterior, Police Headquarters in Hindi

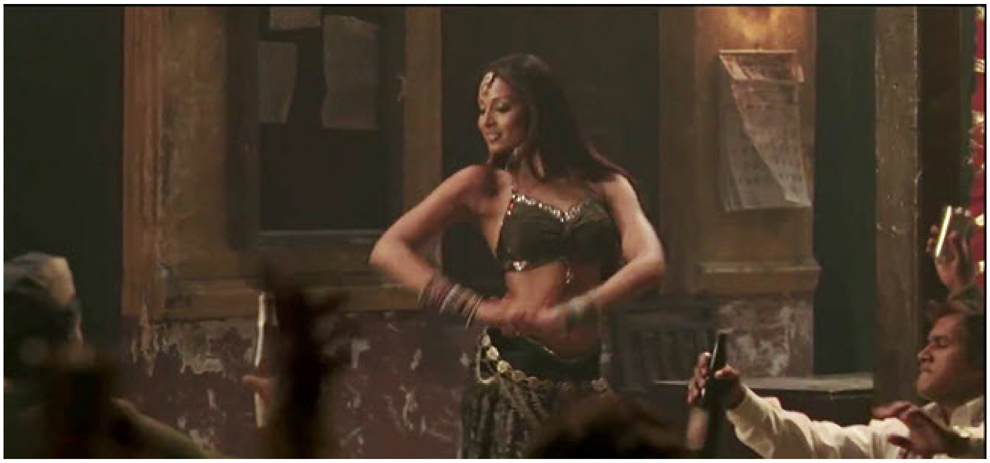

Figure 9. The Namak Dance: Interior, Police Headquarters

The *Namak* song also begins with a very identifiable idiosyncratic flourish by its lyricist, who often references the moon in his lyrics: *Main chand nigal gayi hai daiyya re* [I swallowed the moon, my goodness!]. Even though the dance sequence in the film deletes nearly a whole minute of the song, all audio versions of the song include it. The rest of the song is strewn with colloquialisms such as *tej tha tadka* [the seasoning was spicy], *phat se* [at once], *dali bhar* [large amount], along with the pronunciation of the word *ishq* [love] as *isk*, using the "s" sound instead of the "sh" sound, all of which are typical of the UP-Bihar, northern-rural belt of India. Gulzar is particularly known for juxtaposing such commonly used terms with high Urdu in his poetry. Furthermore, Bhardwaj's music underscores this regional variation in the rhythm and the use of different pitches in the song. The audience's pleasure would include a recognition of the regional elements as well as the literary and poetic flourishes of the song. The lines of this song also contain images and phrases that extend beyond the context of the song: *Sabhi cheden hain mujhko, sipahiye baanke chamiye / udhaari dene lagen hain, gali ke baniye baniye* [Everyone teases me, these policemen romantic gentlemen . . . I am getting loans from all the merchants down my street]. The shift from the *zamindaraana* (feudal) system to semi-urban manifestations of capitalism has imposed its own chains of command and exploitations.

These nuances of the backdrop and the various cultural-historical sources that the songs draw upon get lost in cursory readings. Both the songs and resultant readings would benefit from being analyzed with a much closer eye to detail and history, taking into account their inconsistencies, the oscillations between realism, star appeal, recognition of stylistic flourishes, and the fulfilment of generic expectations, all of which can be identified as crucial elements in the pleasure such songs generate.

The songs' relationship with the narrative is not "logical," but they inflect the narrative in specifically visual ways. The *Beedi* song, for example, is preceded by two complementary scenes of commitment between the two couples, Billo and Kesu and Dolly and Omkara. Kesu proposes to Billo and is laughingly brushed off by her, while Omkara gives Dolly a heavy metal waist ornament, studded with jewels and layered with filigreed chains, which is the equivalent of the handkerchief in *Othello*. In *Othello*, the handkerchief is a gift from his mother, ostensibly memorializing his parents' personal romance, while within its delicate folds lurks a darker cultural history. Similarly, in *Omkara*, the waistband's elaborately wrought glittering surface conceals a complicated history. It is a family heirloom from his father's side of the family. Omkara's mother's claim to the heirloom is tenuous because she is not his father's "legitimate" wife, which is also why Omkara is considered a "half-caste" in his community. It is a family heirloom that carries with it the burden of tradition and family honor, as Omkara explicitly and proudly points out to Dolly, exhorting her to keep it with care. This is particularly ironic, as his own mother, who is considered a "prostitute" by his father's legitimate family, is excluded from the tradition that Omkara inherits and finally perpetuates in his treatment of Dolly. In the middle of the rambunctious song-and-dance sequence of the *Beedi* song, the camera cuts to an intimate scene between Dolly and Omkara, tracking Dolly's silent walk down towards the bed, wearing the waist ornament for the first time as Omkara gazes at her, anticipating their first love scene. At this early point in the film, the intercutting, exterior shots of Billo as the object of desire, surrounded by a crowd of men, and the interior ones of Dolly, as the object of Omkara's gaze, serve to highlight their contrasting positions. Yet, such visual juxtapositions inevitably suggest an underlying comparison that gradually gathers force by the end of the film.

The waist ornament is, once again, positioned visually at the center of Billo's second song-and-dance track. She is sent as a decoy to the police station to trap the members of a rival gang that is plotting against Bhaisahib. She wears the waistband that Kesu has given her, and Omkara recognizes it immediately as he comes into the police station disguised as a police officer. The numerous shots of her waist, framed by the waistband, amongst a crowd of policemen with their eyes trained on her and lusting after her, provide a visual symbol of female sexuality, both exploited as well as literally policed (see figure 10), as she dances against the background of a rather appropriately named "control room" (transliterated in Hindi, see figure 11) in the police headquarters.

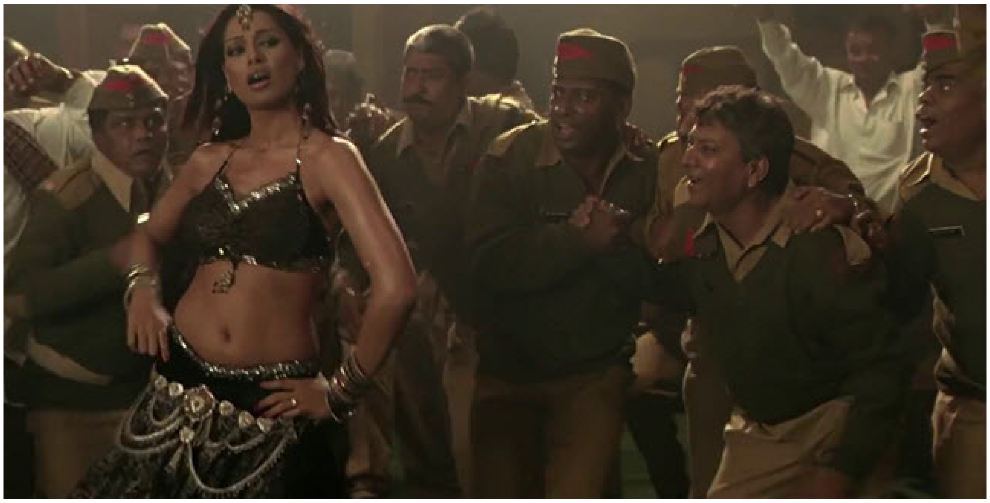

Figure 10. The Namak Dance: Scopophilia/policing

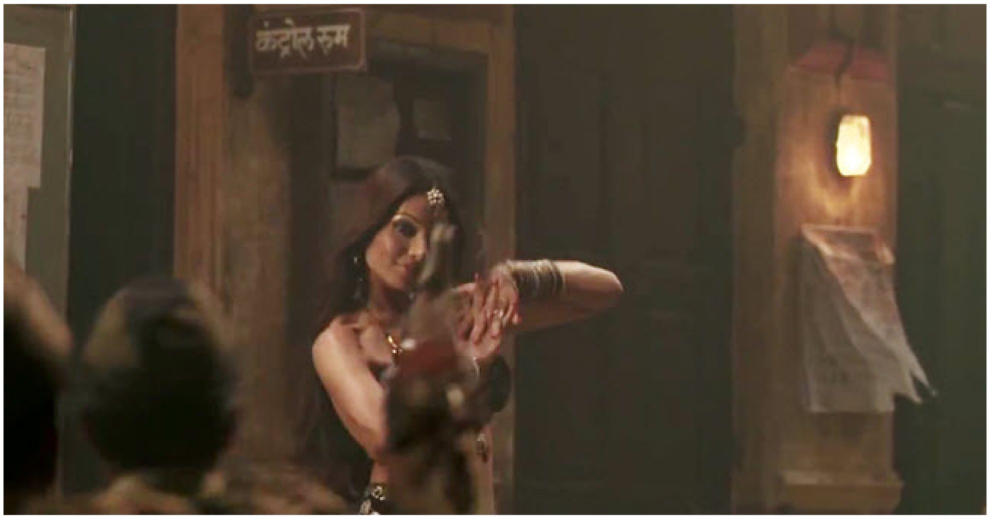

Figure 11. The Namak Dance: The interior control coom transliterated in Hindi

Omkara, disguised as a police officer "looking" at Billo, finds the "ocular proof" of Dolly's guilt and visually participates in the exploitation at this turning point in the film, as the sexual pleasure of "looking" takes on the darker hue of "policing," triggering the film's escalation into violence. This becomes clearer in the scene immediately following the song when Langda Tyagi regales his group with crude details about how he had been a reluctant witness to Billo and Kesu's lovemaking, when Billo had been wearing nothing but the waistband in bed. For Omkara — who has just seen Billo wearing that ornament in the song, thus confirming his suspicions about Dolly's affair with Kesu — Billo becomes interchangeable with Dolly. Both Tyagi and the audience are keenly aware of this as Tyagi plays his psychological game with Omkara in front of his gang. Omkara's demand for "ocular proof" has just been satisfied by Tyagi's lewd narrative, which intertwines Billo's and Dolly's sexuality, perverting both of them in the process. The various elements of "looking," involving pleasure, perversion, and violence, coalesce here with the gradual erasure of the difference between the onlookers, identified here as the male crowd, Langda, Tyagi, and Omkara. This association of the male characters is anticipated visually in the *Namak* song when Langda Tyagi and Omkara, disguised as cops, merge with the dancing crowd at the end of the song.

Omkara effects an important visual register shift when it transforms Desdemona's handkerchief into a heavy and elaborate waistband. The beautiful, ostentatious symbol passes through several hands in the film and is present in various scenes in the movie, gathering, in the process, a range of associations about female sexuality, its perversion, and the ominous aspects of its monitoring in the name of tradition and familial honor. The waistband is worn by all three of the women in consequential and highlighted shots in the film and is particularly central to both the song-and-dance sequences. In this sense, the dance sequences themselves can be viewed as microcosms of the film-watching experience, in which the dancing Billo and the waistband become interchangeable objects of desire, both celebrating the audience's pleasure and reflecting its darker desire to control the object of pleasure, a desire that can easily escalate into violence and destruction.

Bhardwaj's adaptation gains strength from presenting closely observed visual details of clothing, customs, and architecture and through its use of shockingly crude, rustic language that evokes a very specific socio-cultural milieu. This intensely realized milieu is closely structured on *Othello*'s plot and is interspersed with linguistic equivalences from the Shakespearean text, along with other extant cultural and religious practices of India, which are made to inform contemporary gender concerns and thus provide immediacy to the plot. The songs and dances in the film function tantalizingly on the outskirts of the logic of the plot, incorporating contending elements of region-specific "realism," generic coding, star power, glamor, and commercial and artistic investment while bearing the distinct signature of the lyricist and the auteur-director. Operating through parallel logic and holding these disparate elements in tension, they provide a familiar site that both gratifies the audience's expectations and interrogates that pleasure.

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The Concord of This Discord: Adapting the Late Romances for the Ballet Stage

ELIZABETH KLETT, UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

ABSTRACT | DANCING DISCORD: LEONTES AND PROSPERO | CREATING CONCORD: THE YOUNG LOVERS | REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

This essay engages with Alan Brissenden's claim that Shakespeare uses dance as a metaphor in his last plays to indicate a complex interplay between concord and discord, virtue and vengeance. While Brissenden deliberately does not address the ways in which this interplay might have been embodied through movement on the early modern stage, this essay analyzes two recent ballet versions of *The Tempest* (American Ballet Theatre, 2013) and *The Winter's Tale* (Royal Ballet, 2014) to demonstrate how choreographers can realize this dramatic conjunction through dance. Choreographers Alexei Ratmansky and Christopher Wheeldon emphasize the destructive anger of Prospero and Leontes, and both ballets end on notes of sadness, longing, and loss. Yet each also incorporates harmony and hope, primarily through the redemptive relationships between the young lovers.

In *Shakespeare and the Dance*, Alan Brissenden argues that Shakespeare uses dance imagery in his last plays to symbolize both harmony and discord, bringing together the various meanings he had deployed throughout his career to illuminate the tragicomic mode. "By this connection with both concord and disorder the dance contributes to the distinctive tone of the plays, in which the apparently tragic is transmuted into a state that, while not always of serene and utter joy, nevertheless holds optimistic promise for the future" (Brissenden 1981, 76). Brissenden's book, still the only monograph to date that examines dance in Shakespeare's plays, concentrates primarily on dance as a metaphor, with analysis of the literal dances included in some of the texts that relates them to issues of theme and genre. He reads the dance of the satyrs in act 4 of *The Winter's Tale*, for example, as "the culminating preparation for Polixenes' action . . . [and] emotional wildness" (94). Similarly, he relates the performance of the nymphs and reapers in act 4 of *The*

Tempest to "Prospero's anger [which] is also a destructively discordant element" (102). In both plays, Brissenden argues, dance functions as an important image and dramatic device to highlight the conjunction of order and disorder, virtue and vengeance.

Brissenden's book purposely does not engage substantively with the material reality of dance as an embodied practice. In this essay, I reveal how Brissenden's thesis can be applied to live performance. I consider two recent ballet adaptations of Shakespeare's late romances: Alexei Ratmansky's *The Tempest*, choreographed for American Ballet Theatre in 2013, and Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale*, set for the Royal Ballet in 2014. Both choreographers create tragicomic works that bring together concord and discord. They articulate the destructive anger of their male protagonists, Prospero and Leontes, and both ballets end on notes of sadness, longing, and loss. Yet they also incorporate harmony and hope, primarily through the redemptive relationships between Miranda and Ferdinand and between Perdita and Florizel. My analysis of these ballet adaptations attempts to bridge the gap between textual and performance studies of Shakespeare and dance by showing how a thematic interpretation can be realized through the dancers' bodies and the stages on which they move.

In examining how contemporary choreographers have reimagined Shakespeare for the ballet stage, I avoid assuming that such works are clichéd poetry in motion, that they somehow "translate" verse into movement or find gestural equivalents for textual language. Nor am I interested in appraising how supposedly faithful a choreographic work is to the "original." This is particularly important to assert in the case of Shakespeare. Since his plays are so often vaunted in Anglo-American popular and literary cultures as containing timeless and universal meanings and values, adaptations of his works are usually held to a stringent standard by critics. Apollinaire Scherr, reviewing Ratmansky's *The Tempest* for the *Financial Times*, faulted his portrayal of Caliban for failing to translate the character's "most vivid verse" into anything more than physical "grunts" (Scherr 2013). Similarly, Judith Mackrell, reviewing Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* for *The Guardian*, was concerned with how well the choreography seemed to convey Shakespeare's verse. She wrote, "It's clear how much attention [Wheeldon] has paid to Shakespeare's language . . . In the first act, as the toxin of Leontes's jealousy gets to work, the wrenched distortions of his movement mimic the unraveling syntax of the original verse." She critiqued the final act on the same grounds, writing that "Wheeldon strains to find choreography to match the piercing drama of the simple stage direction 'Hermione comes down'" (Mackrell 2014). In responding to dance versions of Shakespeare, critics often assume that the playtext carries the ultimate authority, while the adaptation stands or falls on its presumed similitude to this putative original. Like Linda Hutcheon, I counter this tendency by viewing an adaptation as a work in its own right: as "an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work . . . Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative — a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing" (Hutcheon 2013, 8-9). In analyzing the choreographic explorations of concord and discord in Ratmansky and Wheeldon's ballets, I emphasize the "palimpsestic" nature of these works, thinking through their relationships with Shakespeare, but not assuming that the Shakespearean texts control or dictate the transition from language to movement.

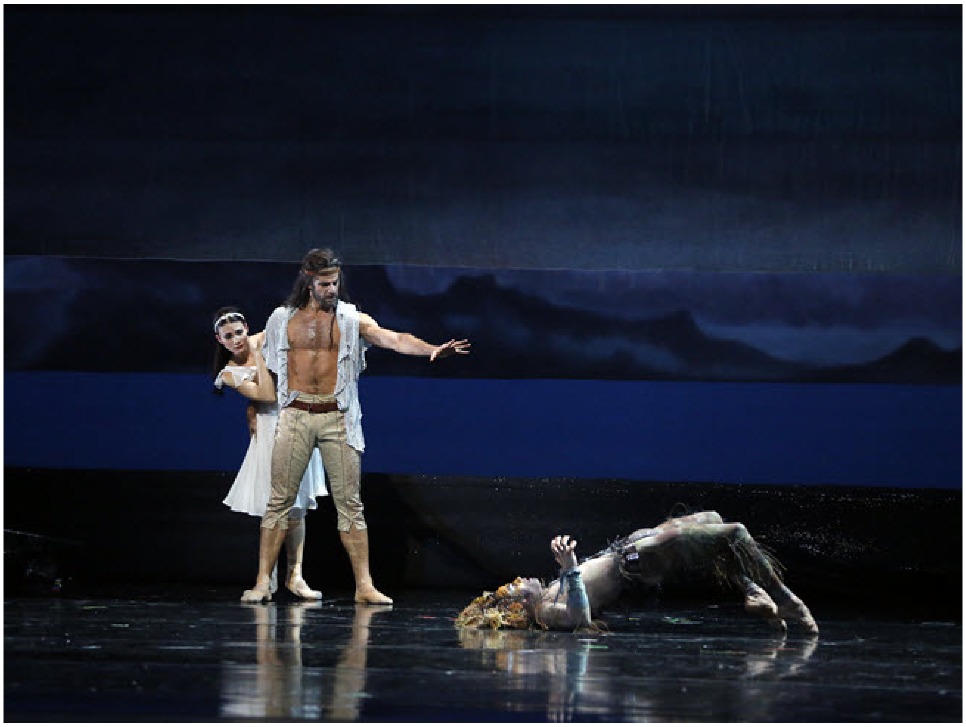
Despite what I will argue is a similar thematic focus, Ratmansky and Wheeldon made fundamentally distinct choices in adapting *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* for ballet. Ratmansky chose a play that had been done repeatedly as a dance work, most recently by Michael Smuin (1980, San Francisco Ballet), Rudolf Nureyev (1982, Royal Ballet), and Crystal Pite (2011, Kidd Pivot). Created while Ratmansky was an Artist in Residence at American Ballet Theatre, *The Tempest* is a one-act ballet, running about forty-five minutes, choreographed to incidental music written for a production of the play by Jean Sibelius in 1925. It premiered as part of a program of one-act ballets in October 2013, and ABT revived it, along with Frederick Ashton's *The Dream* (a 1964 one-act adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth in June 2014. Ratmansky's work is thus part of a longer tradition of reimagining *The Tempest* through dance. Like Ashton, he compressed the narrative into a shortened format, which demanded economy. Wheeldon, by contrast, deliberately chose a play that had never been adapted for the ballet stage. He created an evening-length work for the Royal Ballet with a prologue, three acts, and two intermissions, which allowed him to explore fully the characters and events of the play. He worked with a commissioned score by Joby Talbot, which also permitted him a greater degree of artistic control over the content of the piece than if he had been working from a previously-written piece of music. Both works are linear, conveying clear and coherent narratives (in contrast, for example, with Pite's postmodern *The Tempest Replica*, and both focus on the thematic clash of harmony and discord.

DANCING DISCORD: LEONTES AND PROSPERO

As in Shakespeare's plays, one of the primary ways in which these ballets introduce the element of discord is through the destructive anger and desire for control of the male protagonists, Leontes and Prospero. Brissenden rightly notes that the first image of dance in *The Winter's Tale* is negative: Leontes, in articulating his suspicion about the relationship between Hermione and Polixenes, says in an aside that his "heart dances; / But not for joy, not joy" (1.2.112-13). Dance, so often associated with romantic harmony in the comedies, is here linked with jealousy and anger; Leontes' "*tremor cordis*" (1.2.112) is an uncontrollable bodily impulse, rather than an expression of happiness, and ultimately it "extends through his court and out into the universe" (1981, 87) as Brissenden argues. Wheeldon creates a visually triangular relationship between Leontes (Edward Watson), Hermione (Lauren Cuthbertson), and Polixenes (Valeri Hristov) in the Prologue, which presents the story of how the friendship between the two men is disrupted by the intervention of marriage. Although Hermione literally comes between Leontes and Polixenes, they work together to partner her, lifting her often between them. In both the Prologue and act 1, Polixenes seems to be unmarried; he not only dances with Hermione several times, but also with a number of Sicilian court ladies, who flirt with him openly. As he is dancing alone with the now-pregnant Hermione in act 1, Leontes watches them, turning toward the audience and revealing a disturbed and covetous look on his face. He intervenes in their dance, and the two men briefly partner her again. Hermione stops dancing abruptly as the baby kicks, a joyful expression on her face, and she places first Leontes' and then Polixenes' hands on her stomach so that they can feel it. They freeze in this formation, Hermione in the middle, Polixenes on her right, and Leontes on her left, a beautifully symmetrical image that conveys her affection for both men, which is ruptured by Leontes' paroxysms of jealousy. He breaks out of the formation to perform a solo, while the rest of the stage remains frozen and unmoving: a dance that articulates the poison of his jealousy and suspicion. He removes his hand from Hermione's belly and moves it like a spider, wriggling the fingers and moving them close to his face. Talbot's score likewise incorporates creeping sounds, with the strings skittering up and down multiple octaves, counterpointing his tortured movements. Leontes alternates hunched and elongated movements throughout his solo, contorting his body wildly. One moment he performs a sharp leap, his arms beseechingly lifted to the heavens, and the next he collapses inwards, clutching his face and manically pounding his thighs with his fists. These movement motifs, introduced in his first solo, recur throughout act 1 to further articulate his jealousy and anger.

Wheeldon highlights the fact that Leontes is the agent of discord in an otherwise contented Sicilia by having this first solo take place while the rest of the stage is immobile, emphasizing that the fears and suspicions are creations of Leontes' mind. This solo might seem comparable to Leontes' first aside in act 1, scene 2, when he finds the interaction between Hermione and Polixenes to be "too hot" (110). Yet if anything, the movement incorporates a reference to a later public speech that Leontes delivers to his lords in act 2, scene 1. Leontes' creepily wriggling fingers recall the textual Leontes' conviction that "there may be in the cup / A spider steeped" (41-42). Wheeldon is not creating a one-to-one relationship between his ballet and Shakespeare's text; rather, he takes an image associated with Leontes in the play and develops it as a visual motif for the character's movement. Similarly, he invents a non-Shakespearean scene to explore more fully Leontes' jealous fantasies about the (imagined) sexual relationship between his wife and best friend. The set includes four large statues that initially are placed to the sides of the stage, their backs turned toward the audience. Hermione takes Polixenes on a tour of the art gallery, and the statues move forward into a line across the stage. As Hermione and Polixenes move from stage right to stage left, looking at the statues one by one, Leontes hides behind the statues, watching them intently. The audience sees a series of visions taking place in Leontes' mind during this scene. In reality, Hermione is innocently leading Polixenes through the gallery; in Leontes' frenzied fantasy, they are using the private space as an opportunity for a sexual liaison. The lights change to a sickly green every time we enter the realm of Leontes' mind, and Hermione and Polixenes begin kissing and fondling each other. Leontes watches grimly, from behind and at times on top of the statues, turning each statue to face the audience as they move across the stage, revealing that each seemingly innocuous back conceals a lascivious image. The further they traverse across the stage, the more intensely sexual Hermione and Polixenes become. She reclines against a statue with her head thrown back; he finally ends up on top of her on the ground. The lights and movements snap back to reality and they exit, leaving Leontes to perform another anguished solo, again articulated through alternations of elongated and hunched movements. As with the spidery hand, Wheeldon takes a motif from Shakespeare's play — the statue — and uses it to create an entirely new iteration of Leontes' jealousy, based in movement and striking visual imagery.

Ratmansky's Prospero is generally more benevolent than Wheeldon's Leontes; yet he, too, is often unable to control his emotional outbursts. The initial image of Prospero (Marcelo Gomes) is of a controlled and controlling magus; he enters in a lightning storm and stands center stage, feet planted wide apart in a commanding stance. Miranda (Sarah Lane) helps him into his magic robe and hands him his staff, which he raises powerfully over his head and then points at the ship to create the wreck. His relationship with Miranda is nurturing; although he refuses to yield to her supplications to spare the ship from the storm, he gently shows her that the occupants are still alive. His partnering of Miranda tends to infantilize her, as, for example, he lifts her into his arms, her knees drawn up to her chest, and spins her around. He then puts her down and pulls her into an embrace, her head on his chest, and kisses her forehead. Prospero is similarly controlling with Ariel (Daniil Simkin), albeit in a more forceful way, picking him up and throwing him around in denying Ariel's request for liberty. Prospero forces Ariel to replicate the embrace he previously performed with Miranda, taking Ariel's head and placing it on his chest, revealing that Ariel must be made to be affectionate with his master, unlike Miranda, who performs the motion voluntarily. Prospero is even more physically violent with Caliban (Herman Cornejo) than with Ariel, also lifting him and throwing him around the stage, and finally forcing him to the ground and onto his back, his body contorted into a painful, trembling arch.



Miranda (Sarah Lane), Prospero (Marcelo Gomes), and Caliban (Herman Cornejo) in The Tempest

In these early scenes, Prospero reveals his anger at both Ariel and Caliban, and his frustration with Miranda's pleading for the ship and its occupants, but he is always in control of his emotions.

Later in the ballet, however, he loses control at several key points, most notably in his reunion with Antonio (Sascha Radetsky) and his final solo, in which he confronts mutability and loss. Ratmansky interestingly cuts the act 4 betrothal masque (the only significant portion of Shakespeare's play that includes dance) and proceeds from the "harpy" scene (act 3, scene 3, in which Ariel terrifies the lords) directly to the revelation of Prospero. As in the beginning of the ballet, Prospero appears to the lords as a strong and powerful magician, garbed in his robe and holding his staff. As the lords cower in shock at seeing him, Prospero goes directly to Gonzalo (Victor Barbee) and embraces him fondly; Gonzalo responds joyfully, slapping Prospero on the back heartily. Prospero is less effusive with Alonso (Roman Zhurbin) and Sebastian (Daniel Mantei), but does shake their hands cordially. Antonio, however, stands stiffly stage left, deliberately not looking at his brother. Prospero strides over to him and raises his fist over his head; he freezes for a moment, his fist trembling dangerously, as Antonio shrinks away. Prospero manages to regain control of himself and does not strike him; instead, he brusquely demands the ducal crown, which Antonio takes off and hands to him grudgingly. Prospero puts on the crown and turns his back on his brother; there is no further reconciliation between the two of them.

Before ushering everyone back to the ship in anticipation of their return to Milan, Prospero performs a solo, which articulates both his re-attainment of power and his sense of loss: of Miranda, of Ariel, of his life on the island, of his magic. His solo follows directly after Ariel's joyful celebration of liberty, and Prospero's movements are similar to Ariel's in that they both incorporate virtuosic leaps and turns. Yet they are also distinctive in that they combine buoyancy with heaviness. Prospero imitates Ariel's soaring jumps, but his mortal body cannot ultimately transcend the earthly plane. He lands from his turns into poses of balance and suspension, alternating allegro with adagio, communicating both his power and his burgeoning sense of frailty. Ariel has gone, Miranda is now partnered exclusively by Ferdinand (Joseph Gorak), and ultimately Prospero's body collapses as he grapples with these losses. His legs give way beneath him, and he slumps to the ground, where he remains, trying to rise but having difficulty. Although he eventually gets up and leads the company to the ship to depart the island, his solo sets the mood for the ending, which is elegiac rather than triumphant. Caliban remains behind as the rest of the characters slowly depart, climbing up on top of the huge set piece center stage, looking back at the island as they leave. Despite the union of Miranda and Ferdinand, Alonso's reunion with his son, and Prospero's attainment of his crown, their departure is tinged with sadness, indicated by their slow-motion movements and frequent contemplative gazes back at the island. Caliban adds a further note of discord to the final moments: he crosses to look at Prospero's magical book, which has been left behind. He turns the pages in frustration, as he cannot read it, and angrily tears out a page, crumples it up, and throws it vengefully on the ground. He crosses back to the other side of the stage, watching the departing figures, and stands up straight, raising his arms over his head in a gesture of power and defiance. He is briefly triumphant, "king o'the isle" (5.1.290), but his mien is also sad, as he registers that he is left all alone. The lights come down on his solitary figure, leaving the audience with a sense of melancholy even in the seemingly harmonious resolution.

Wheeldon also chooses an elegiac ending for *The Winter's Tale* that combines both concord and discord. While Leontes and Paulina (Zenaida Yanowsky) are initially garbed in black and are continually mourning for Mamillius (Joe Parker) and Hermione, the entrance of Perdita (Sarah Lamb) and Florizel (Steven McRae) literally changes the scene. Leontes' reunion with his daughter (whom he identifies by her possession of a necklace that once belonged to Hermione,) and his blessing of her marriage, change the mood from tragic to comic and romantic. Everyone dons white and green clothing for the wedding, the scene is liberally draped with flowers, and a sense of spring-like rebirth dawns, bringing the vitality and hopefulness of Bohemia into Sicilia. Even Paulina changes her dour black dress for a pale green one, and after the wedding scene she re-awakens the "statue" of Hermione, effecting her reunion with her husband and daughter. Yet Paulina is also the character who reintroduces the tragic mode at the very end of the ballet. Although Hermione's statue has come back to life, Mamillius' statue remains, and Paulina does a formal obeisance to it, kneeling on the ground, bowing her body forward, and sweeping her arms slowly across the floor. Earlier in the act, she was the one who continually drew Leontes back toward the statue, forcing him to remember the death of his son. By the end of the act, she is the only one who is still mourning, reminding the audience of the terrible cost of Leontes' jealousy and anger. Although not overtly stated, Paulina's role as mourner is appropriate to the narrative, since her husband Antigonus (Bennet Gartside) has also died (near the end of act 1) and she is alone. Unlike in Shakespeare, Wheeldon does not have Leontes effect a marriage for Paulina at the end, partly because Camillo (Thomas Whitehead) is a less-developed character (in fact, he is unnamed, called only "Polixenes' Steward"), and partly because Wheeldon clearly wanted to end the ballet on a note of sadness and loss.

Creating Concord: The Young Lovers

The marriages of the young lovers in both ballets provide the primary means of invoking concord, harmony, and hope for the future, with which dance was conventionally associated in early modern England. As Brissenden notes, "the cosmic dance, the rhythmic movement of all things in relation to one another lasted until the eighteenth century beside the great chain of being and music itself as a commonly accepted metaphor of order" (1981, 3). Shakespeare's comedies, in particular, for the most part "move from initial disorder to happy resolution and the dance offers . . . a strong visual image of concord" (34). *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* are not comedies, but they each present us with a pair of young lovers whose unions are initially opposed and ultimately endorsed by parental authority, their stories moving from potentially tragic to joyfully comic. (While Prospero only pretends to oppose Ferdinand's attachment to Miranda in order to test his devotion, Polixenes acts is in earnest when making a violent "divorce" [4.4.405] between his son Florizel and the supposed shepherdess Perdita.) Wheeldon and Ratmansky fully articulate the redemptive nature of these characters in their ballets. Act 2 of Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* is devoted entirely to exploring the romance of Perdita and Florizel (roughly corresponding to a single scene of Shakespeare's play, act 4, scene 4), their mutual happiness at the shepherds' festival, their connection with the larger rustic community, and their evasion of Polixenes' anger. Because there are fewer narrative elements contained in act 2 than in act 1, this part of Wheeldon's ballet focuses more on pure movement, both *pas de deux* for Perdita and Florizel, and group dances involving a large corps de ballet. The connection between dance and concord in Bohemia is joyfully apparent, creating a strong contrast with the colder, more static Sicilia of act 1.

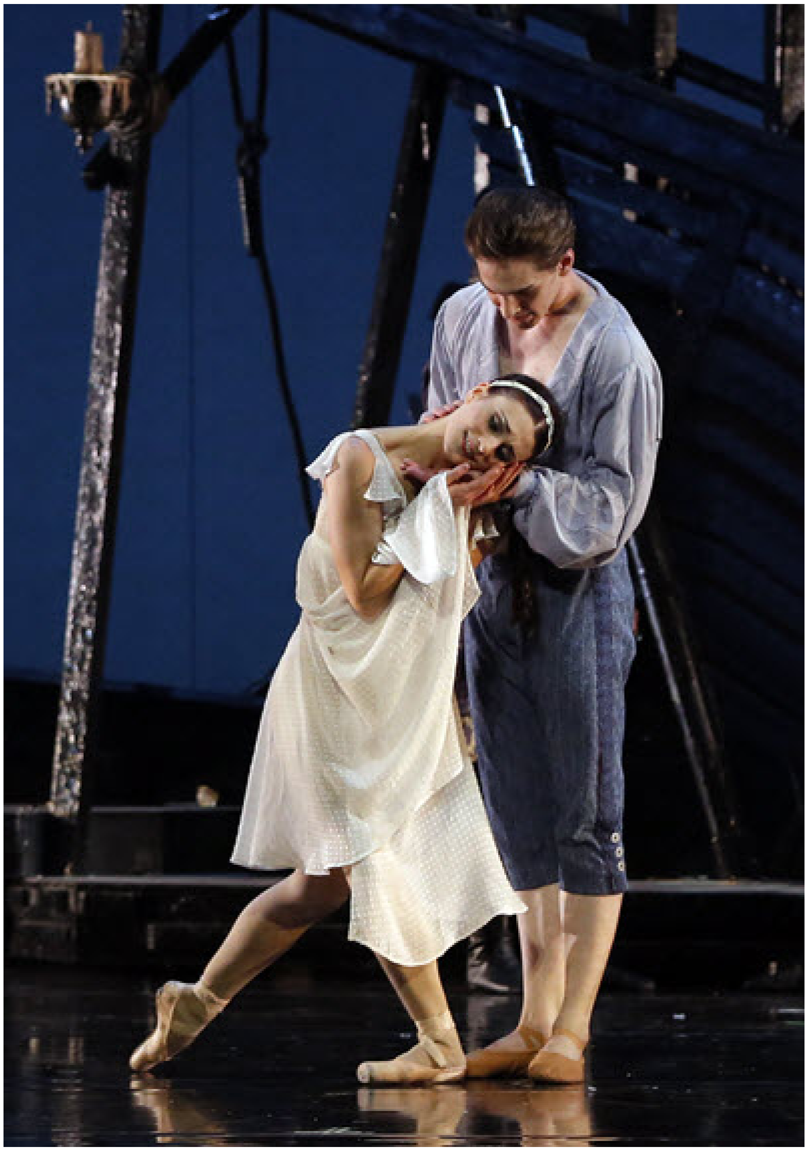
Just as the statues visually dominate act 1 of *The Winter's Tale*, contributing to the atmosphere of chilly repression, an enormous larger-than-life tree fills the back half of the stage in act 2, reinforcing the focus on vibrant and buoyant vitality with which Perdita and Florizel are strongly associated. The tree is stunning: a deep, jewel-toned green, with huge craggy exposed roots that spread around its base and create places for characters to climb and sit. It is decorated with hundreds of colorful ornaments that hang from the branches, denoting the festival atmosphere. The vision of this tree — at once real and fantastic — connects directly with the young lovers, who are full of life and love. Florizel is seated in the tree's roots at the top of act 2 and watches Perdita admiringly when she enters and dances by herself. Although nothing in the movement suggests it directly, the viewer might imagine Florizel's commendation of Perdita's dancing in Shakespeare's play:

> When you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that, move still, still so,
> And own no other function. (4.4.140-43)

Perdita is also connected visually with the tree: first, when her adoptive Father Shepherd (Gary Avis) gives her Hermione's necklace, a deep green jewel on a green ribbon that matches the color of the tree and its ornaments; second, when her father dresses her as the "mistress o' th' feast" (4.4.68) in a crown and waistcoat covered in dangling ribbons that again evoke the tree's ornaments.

Although a good deal of act 2 consists of the joyful partnering between Perdita and Florizel, which is replete with playful jumps and romantic lifts, Wheeldon deliberately effaces eroticism from their relationship and its expression in dance. He creates a distinctive movement vocabulary for the Bohemian rustics, incorporating flexed feet, turned-in legs, and clogging-inflected steps. Perdita and Florizel employ all of these movements in their *pas de deux*, which tend to convey vivacity rather than sexuality. Even when they perform a more extravagantly romantic movement, such as a lift that they repeat several times in which she wraps her legs around his head with her face close to his and they kiss, it feels impressively acrobatic, not sensual. Wheeldon creates an essentially chaste physical relationship between Perdita and Florizel in act 2 to distinguish them from Leontes' excessive erotic fantasies of Hermione and Polixenes in act 1, and perhaps to echo Florizel's assertion that "my desires / Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts / Burn hotter than my faith" (4.4.33-35). Although they are styled to evoke these parental figures (Perdita wears a dress in the same shade of purple as Hermione; Florizel initially wears a long embroidered jacket similar to Polixenes'), the movement insists emphatically that their love is innocent and incorruptible, providing hope that their marriage will undo the destructive jealousy and anger of Leontes' marriage to Hermione.

Ratmansky creates a similarly chaste physical relationship for Miranda and Ferdinand in *The Tempest*. Ariel engineers the meeting between them, leading Ferdinand in and touching Miranda lightly with a fingertip to make her turn around and see him at the same moment that he sees her. Their attraction is immediate and mutual: they run to each other joyfully and dance together playfully and innocently. The choreography is replete with romantic lifts and swoons for Miranda, with Ferdinand mostly in the dominant position, supporting and displaying her as a prized and desired object. Yet Ratmansky also provides agency for Miranda, having her at times set the pattern of their steps and lead Ferdinand through a sequence of jumps and turns. At the end of this first *pas de deux*, they stop and face each other, holding hands and gazing in reciprocal adoration into each other's eyes. Prospero enters sternly to confront Ferdinand and separate them; yet Miranda loyally defends Ferdinand and helps him in his arduous tasks, such as shifting rocks and carrying logs. The costuming of Miranda and Ferdinand emphasizes their youth and innocence: she wears a simple, flowing white dress, while he wears a blue shirt and trousers.



Miranda (Sarah Lane) and Ferdinand (Joseph Gorak) in The Tempest

Their unadorned clothing contrasts sharply with the sumptuous Renaissance garb worn by the Italian lords and the glittering, otherworldly costumes of the island spirits. The simplicity and purity of the young lovers provide an opportunity for hope and redemption, even as Prospero confronts mutability and loss.

Dance adaptations of Shakespeare, like Wheeldon and Ratmansky's ballets, have no words with which to communicate their engagement with their source texts. They rely on choreography, the visual imagery of scenery, costumes, and lighting, as well as music to create their worlds, much as Shakespeare depended primarily on his language to indicate character, narrative, and genre. The gap between words and movement might seem insurmountable; yet since dance provides a powerful recurring image of harmony and disorder in Shakespeare's plays, dance adaptations are an especially apt way of responding to and re-envisioning those plays. The last plays, in particular, are redolent of the conjunction between concord and discord, and Wheeldon and Ratmansky bring these thematic concerns to their ballets. They even go further than Shakespeare in their willingness to depict the clash between order and disorder, since the closing images of both ballets emphasize loss rather than restoration. Their works realize the plays in new ways, and rather than being derivative of the Shakespearean "originals," they make us think through their characters and narratives as products of physical and visual cultures.

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Image 1. Miranda (Sarah Lane), Prospero (Marcelo Gomes), and Caliban (Herman Cornejo) in *The Tempest*. Photo: Marty Sohl. Reproduced by permission of American Ballet Theatre.

Image 2. Miranda (Sarah Lane) and Ferdinand (Joseph Gorak) in *The Tempest*. Photo: Marty Sohl. Reproduced by permission of American Ballet Theatre.

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Hermione Sessions: Dancing, *The Winter's Tale*, and the Kinaesthetic Imagination

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Andrea Downie, EnhanceDance

Abstract | Introduction: *The Winter's Tale* and Thinking with the Body | Diary Entry: Hermione Sessions #1, What You Carry | Erasure, Reification, and the Persistence of History | Diary Entry: Hermione Sessions #2, Breathing Stone | Breath, Dynamism, and the Negative Hermeneutics of Refusal | Diary Entry: Hermione Sessions #3, Ambush | Modern Dance and Embodied History | Diary Entry: Hermione Sessions #4: Language Lined with Flesh | Notes | References

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Abstract

This essay traces the development of a solo modern dance interpretation of the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*, in which Hermione "awakens" to be reunited with Leontes and Perdita. Part diary, part dialogue between dancer and choreographer, the essay, like the dance itself, also conducts a critical analysis of Hermione's embodied history in order to understand the moment of choice and agency revealed in her final gesture, the open hand. Engaging with Shakespeare's play from the perspective of dancer-researchers, we take up Ann Cooper Albright's assertion that dancing is "physical thinking" and that the "kinaesthetic imagination" is a powerful interpretive tool. We draw on phenomenology and the history and philosophy of modern dance in order to explore the ways in which dancing, as an art that exists dynamically and ephemerally in time and space, opens up the possibility of feminine agency through a resistance to the reification and erasure that characterizes Hermione's representation in the play. The insistence of the body counters the power of Leontes' reifying language. To breathe in and as Hermione is to emphasize the insistent expression of her suppressed, embodied self.

> *[The dance of life] is an expression that touches me deeply, for the instrument through which dance speaks is also the instrument through which life is lived — the human body. It is the instrument by which all the primaries of life are made manifest. It holds in its memory all matters of life and death and love. — Martha Graham*

INTRODUCTION: *THE WINTER'S TALE* AND THINKING WITH THE BODY

In March 2015, at the age of forty-seven years and some days, I danced my first solo. The modern dance piece, performed to Zoe Keating's "The Sun Will Set" (2005), was an interpretation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, in which the disgraced queen Hermione appears to her reunited family as a statue. Her "resurrection" completes the shift from tragedy to comedy in a moment of forgiveness and reintegration. What follows here is part diary, part dialogue, part critical analysis arising from the experience of engaging with Shakespeare's play from the perspective of dancer-researchers. Along with my choreographer, Andrea Downie (Enchainement Dance Centre), I will trace the process of making the dance and the ways that we were able to use the dance to demonstrate Ann Cooper Albright's assertion that dancing is "physical thinking" (2010, 110). The "kinaesthetic imagination" (103) is a powerful interpretive tool that allowed me to explore an aspect of this play that I had not considered before I began to breathe like Hermione. As Ros King notes, to attend to the experience of the body when engaging with Shakespeare's poetry, to use that attention as an interpretive tool, is to understand "[t]he difference . . . between observing a state and experiencing a process" (2007, 394) and "demonstrates a lasting answer to the old philosophical question as to whether it is possible to observe human consciousness from within a conscious human body" (399). Roland Barthes insists that kinaesthetic experience is integral to the pleasure of the text, "the language lined with the flesh" (quoted in Turkle 2007, 146). Together, Andrea and I embarked on the solo project with the aim of exploring the analytical potential of dancing and of kinaesthetic learning.

Suspected of adultery with her husband's best friend, Hermione, as both wife and subject of King Leontes, cannot escape her husband's reading of her pregnant body as proof of her guilt. Her own self is suborned to testify against her moral integrity, and her protestations of innocence are likewise unable to save her from Leontes' all-powerful, reality-defining assertions. Ultimately, it is only her death that convinces him of her innocence. But in the final scene in which she is reintroduced to the living world in a bit of theater — as a statue come to life — her transformation leaves the question of her status tantalizingly unanswered. As Lynn Enterline observes, "the one thing that the audience *cannot* do is 'go and see.' The truth of Hermione's body — its innocence and death — is always held from view" (2000, 214).

But, while seeing is believing in this play, it is proven to fall short as means of accessing "the truth of Hermione's body." After all, as Leontes protests, "I saw her, / As I thought, dead" (5.3.139-40).[1] James A. Knapp notes that seeing as a form of epistemological mastery is not in itself enough to ground a claim to truth, for it is defined by distance: "Shakespeare's tragic figures stand above, flattening the images they experience, unable to descend to the world of the living" (2012, 387). To the eye, Hermione's statue is a *trompe l'oeil*, a visual joke that asks Leontes to "see life as lively mocked as ever / Still sleep mocked death" (5.3.19-20). Sleep can only be mistaken for death at a distance. In presenting Leontes with Hermione's statue, Paulina acknowledges that, while an artistic representation might counterfeit life to the eye, it cannot lie to the touch. To touch it is to dispel the illusion: "[G]ood my lord, forbear. / . . . / You'll mar it if you kiss it" (5.3.80-82). It is only when Leontes touches Hermione — "O, she's warm!" (5.3.109) — that kinaesthetic learning can replace the instability and untrustworthiness of the kind of signs that have, until now, so tormented the jealous king and led him to embrace horrors: "Leontes's redemption in response to Hermione's living image is figured as a break with conceptual mastery, a return to the world of experience, a return to the phenomenal" (Knapp 2012, 387). Knapp finds in the language of phenomenology a model of kinaesthetic participation appropriate to Leontes' moment of redemption: "The body unites us with things . . . which are themselves not flat beings but beings in depth, inaccessible to a subject that would survey them from above, open to him alone that, if it be possible, would coexist with them in the same world" (Merleau-Ponty, quoted in Knapp, 387). While it is true that, as Enterline asserts, Hermione's voice has the "power to unhinge her husband's sense of the world itself" (2000, 207) by making him doubt his place in it, it is the warmth of her hand that sets his world to rights again and re-places him within it.

This desire to find the body and to locate the body's knowledge is apropos to an analysis of Hermione, whose bodily reality is both emphatically at *the heart of the matter* and radically absent for the entirety of the play. As a form of expression that exists in time and space and whose ephemerality defines it "as that which continually plunges into pastness — even as [it] presents itself to visibility" (Lepecki 2004a, 127), dancing offers a particularly interesting way of exploring the tensions in the play between absence and presence, death and life, certainty and ambiguity, stasis and motion. Dancing Hermione's moment of awakening, I find that the insistence on her history and body reality exploits the ambiguities of the play's final scene to posit an alternative narrative that liberates Hermione from patriarchal reification and releases her into the dynamic motion of her own story.

DUALITY
Duality underlies the movement principles at the heart of the great modern dance techniques and dramatic concepts found in the choreography of their founders. Martha Graham stressed breath and the movement that results from the contraction and release of tension. Doris Humphrey highlighted equilibrium and the resultant fall and recovery as one submits to and defies gravity. Such dualities provide a framework for exploring the infinite movement possibilities that lie between the extremes. — *AD*

DIARY ENTRY: HERMIONE SESSIONS #1, WHAT YOU CARRY

"Take a breath. I want to see where it goes in your body."

It's the first day of choreography. I take a deep breath and Andrea watches how the air shapes me. This is the moment where I will find Hermione. This is what I bring to the studio on the first day:

1. My favorite line from *The Winter's Tale*: *"O, she's warm!" (5.3.109), Leontes says. In a play that is so robust with language, in love with it to the point of lugubriousness sometimes, Shakespeare hits peak genius in one three-word line. In the progression through those three syllables, Leontes, whose mad jealousy has led to the ruin of both his family and his kingdom, realizes that, against all hope and expectation, he has been redeemed. I love this moment because it's about making a terrible, terrible mistake and living with it. It's about finding oneself again through an act of grace. Leontes is saved by, well, perhaps by magic, certainly by art, and by his true repentance, but really by his wife's capacity for compassion and forgiveness.*

AWAKENING
Although Lisa initially balked at my suggestion that she was ready to learn and perform a solo, she slowly warmed to the idea and (with some gentle nudging) decided to take on the challenge. She arrived at our first choreography session with a line from Shakespeare, "O, she's warm!" and relayed an intriguing story about Hermione and her "awakening." I was eager to explore the experience of awakening — both Hermione's and Lisa's. I decided the piece needed to begin with a simple breath for two reasons: 1. When we are born, and when we awaken, we take a deep breath. It seemed the logical place to start. It is how Hermione first knows that she is indeed alive; 2. Because Lisa was so nervous at the prospect of dancing a solo, I wanted her to feel competent in the first movement of the piece. I began with breathing because it is so simple and natural. I asked Lisa to take a breath to see how and where she initiated the breath. I observed its path so I could discover where we should go next. — *AD*

2. Print-outs of pages from Gilbert Austin's early nineteenth-century treatise on rhetorical gesturing,*Chironomia* (1725): *As I am a rather literal and pictorial thinker, the series of gestures depicted in the treatise provides me with a bridge between language and the body, a vocabulary that is both conceptual and physical.* Invito, *the upward-facing palm and curled index finger that invites the audience to engage.* Explodo, *a clapping and opening of palms to show angry repudiation.* Despero, *the drooping hands that express desolation and despair. (As the process of building the solo develops, these are the gestural keys that will allow me to shift my focus eventually away from Leontes and his experience of redemption to Hermione and her visceral confrontation with her history)* .

3. Cerebral bias: *Watching video of my past performances, I can see myself thinking all the time. I have a cerebral bias. Dancing is not unthinking — there's plenty of thinking going on all the time — but the paradigm shift I'm seeking is from thinking in the head to thinking in the body, to get to "physical thinking." Ultimately, the idea is to create a smooth relationship between the brain and the body, in the heart, construed as both figurative ("heart") and the undeniably phenomenal (heart). To get to the heart of the matter, so to speak, is to allow knowledge to originate in the bones and muscles and the connective tissues that, in so many ways, also structure the metaphors and images that are, for those obsessively intellectual like me, the "natural" language of thought.*

AWARENESS AND CONSCIOUSNESS
Lisa's movement, at times, lacks flow. Part of the reason for this is that she is a novice. In the early stages of learning, sometimes known as the "cognitive stage" (Fitts and Posner 1967, 12 and *passim*), much conscious cognitive effort is required to execute complex motor skills like dance choreography. When attending to the step-by-step execution of choreography, movement is slower and tends to be abrupt. At the same time, some of Lisa's *unconscious* habitual movement patterns get involved. Inefficient patterns can impede the ability to dance effectively. I encouraged somatic learning by bringing Lisa's awareness to her soma, "the body as perceived from within by first-person perception" (Hanna 1986). In this way we could make conscious what is habitual and begin the process of altering inefficient patterns. The next step was to encourage the new movement patterns and choreography to become smooth and automatic through practice and repetition. My goal was to enable Lisa to attend to the experience of being Hermione, rather than thinking about the mechanics and sequence of the movements. I wanted her danc*ing* instead of doing a dance. — *AD*

ERASURE, REIFICATION, AND THE PERSISTENCE OF HISTORY

On the very first day of choreography, Andrea's interest in the breath made visible to me my particular orientation toward the core story of *The Winter's Tale*, that being the sacrifice of a woman's story for the purposes of her male counterpart's spiritual *bildungsroman*. I had assigned to Hermione's silent gesture — holding out her hand for Leontes to touch — a pre-given value that *has* value only insofar as it ratifies the masculine story: Hermione's forgiveness is the final sign of Leontes' moral triumph. He has learned his lesson and is therefore rewarded. To be sure, this reading has ample support in the text, but it also enables the perpetuation of an erasure that begins for Hermione in the early scenes of the play when she, and indeed all women, are identified as the agents that introduce death into the homosocial, prelapsarian world. There, a man, trading "innocence for innocence" (1.2.69) with other men, could aspire "to be boy eternal" (1.2.65), had not women entered to "trip" men out of Eden and into the sinful world of carnal desire. Hermione forestalls the story Polixenes tells of this idyllic time with his friend, Leontes: "Of this make no conclusion, lest you say / Your queen and I are devils" (1.2.80-81). The only way to conclude a story that includes women is to demonize them. Thus, Hermione is doubly absent, exiled from the innocent existence that would be available to men "Had we pursued that life" (1.2.70), and is instead offered an existence that is predicated either on being a motivating antagonist in a masculine divine comedy or having no "conclusion" at all.

This association of Hermione with absence continues through her trial on charges of adultery, where her only defense is to point out that her words have no power to defend her: "It shall scarce boot me / To say 'not guilty'; mine integrity / Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it, / Be so received" (3.1.24-27). Enterline argues that Hermione is the voiceless ground upon which Leontes projects his own subjectivity: "Nothing she says to Leontes diminishes the force of his projections; the language she 'understand[s] not' limits the field of her possible responses; and any answer she makes must still be read by him, a reading she cannot control" (2000, 233). Even the question of her death is informed by her absence from her own story, as she dies offstage, and appears later as a "ghost" but only in a dream reported by Antigonus (3.3.17-36). In the play, Hermione is always already absent, always already receding from view, always already dead. Throughout the play, she is the "cipher" that multiplies in the homosocial economy, "With one 'we thank you' many thousands more / That go before it" (1.2.6-7); that is, she is the zero that adds to the narrative of masculine identity its mathematical magnitude.

As Peggy Phelan notes, "the absence of women in our persistent myths informs our response to the absence we call death, the signifier of absolute alterity" (2004, 15). The feminine in this formulation is a sort of stillness, a negation of life, or, one might go so far as to say, a living woman rendered as a statue. In the final scene in which Hermione is "resurrected," her identity *as* Hermione is dependent upon her inability to talk back. Leontes fears that her statue will "chide" him for believing it to be Hermione indeed, but it is the statue's inanimate — and therefore speechless — nature that proves it to be his wife: "or rather, thou art she / In thy not chiding" (5.3.25-26). The crisis of the first half of the play turns on Leontes' inability to stabilize his wife's being, to reify it as either "guilty" or "not guilty." Paradoxically, in the scene of redemption and reconciliation, to be Hermione and not a statue, Hermione must remain statue-like. To be Hermione indeed, she must ratify her husband's fancy, and her innocence and reintegration into the living world are predicated on her absence, figured here as statue-like silence.

Knapp asserts, however, that "[f]alse images in Shakespeare are false because they are static, inviting the illusion of conceptual mastery and leading to misguided action" (2012, 386). In the realm of dance we find a similar linkage between reification and mastery in the concept of dance notation or recording, where the attempt to subject movement to documentation, "in its optical-descriptive obsession[,] withdraws dance from the flow of its own materiality. All documentation provides is a stiff body" (Lepecki 2004a, 133). Such translations of "movement into cognitive systems," Cynthia J. Novak argues, "subsume the reality of the body as if people's experiences of themselves moving through the world were not an essential part of their consciousness and of the ways in which they understand and carry out their lives" (2010, 169). As a pictographic representation of affective and relational states integral to rhetorical disputation, Austin's illustrated handbook of gestures, *Chironomia* (1806), substitutes stasis for process, enclosing each gesture within its own discrete box. Likewise, the early modern transcriptions of choreography by, for example, Thoinot Arbeau (1589) and Pierre Rameau (1725), represent, Lepecki argues, a "project of dance's regulation and registry" rooted in "a perception of dance as unproblematically translatable from code to steps, and from steps back into code again" (2004a, 127). In a similar epistemological move, Leontes' reification of Hermione as an exemplary version of herself (that is, as a statue that cannot "chide") atomizes and makes available to scrutiny a lived experience that is otherwise elusive in its dynamism. The "innocent" or "guilty" wife, like the statue, is an object of mastery.

While she can be subsumed into her husband's comic redemption, the "warm" wife is, however, much more elusive. In the play, it is unclear whether Hermione is truly a statue or has been hiding in Paulina's house for sixteen years and only pretends to be a statue for reasons that are never made clear in the text. From a certain patriarchal perspective, there is no practical difference between these alternatives. Being a shut-in is not that much different from spending sixteen years in magical suspended animation, *if* we begin with the assumption that a woman's life is meaningless or non-existent unless and until she enters the sphere of patriarchal and familial duty. Indeed, Hermione returns to "life" in a scene in which all of the play's disturbingly eccentric, inappropriately vocal, disguised and "disappeared" women are reintegrated into the patriarchal economy: Perdita's true lineage is ratified by her marriage to Florizel; Paulina, a "boundless tongue" (2.3.91) and "mankind witch (2.3.67) who "late hath beat her husband" (2.3.91), is safely yoked to the honourable Camillo, at which time her "worth" is "justified / By us, a pair of kings" (5.3.144-46); and Hermione is brought again into the royal family as mother and wife.

The choice between readings becomes more pointed if we consider that a Hermione in Paulina's house might experience a whole history of her own in those intervening years, or that history changes her even in a state of so-called suspended animation, and that it must be dealt with on the moment of waking. We are told that the statue bears the marks of time's passage, but, in the play, the ownership of this evidence of Hermione's own bodily history is rather bestowed upon the masculine sculptor who, in his "excellence" "lets go by some sixteen years, and makes her / As she lived now" (5.3.30-32). Hermione herself sidesteps the question of her mysterious persistence after death. She informs Perdita that she has "preserved" herself on the understanding that the oracle has predicted her daughter's safe return (5.3.125-28), but the means of this "preservation" are ambiguous and might as well refer to a life in hiding as to the "excellence" of a magical transformation. Unlike the patriarchal reading that collapses the difference between seclusion and dis-animation, hiding and solidification as a statue, there is something protected in this ambiguity that Hermione offers as her "explanation," something that refuses reification or reduction to a patriarchal narrative of feminine value. For Lynn Enterline, Hermione's silence on the matter is strategic: "After her theatrical metamorphosis, Hermione does not speak to the man who doubted her to the brink of annihilation. Her voice once triggered a terrible response; now she evades the problem by saying nothing to Leontes" (2000, 199). But she does not, in fact, say "nothing." She offers Leontes a gesture, an extended hand. To ignore this bodily speaking is to forget what Hermione cannot: the "some sixteen years" that "make" her "[a]s she lived now." We know what this gesture means to Leontes and in Leontes' story. The question we asked in building our solo piece was: What does it mean to Hermione? The conundrum for me and for Andrea, then, was how to honor Hermione's history without giving in to the reifying desire to pin the ambiguity of her existence to a definite concept ("really" a statue or "really" in hiding, "really" innocent, "really" dead). If you imagine a history for Hermione, the space between "Music; awake her — strike!" (5.3.98) and "O, she's warm!" (5.3.109) becomes alive with unexpressed agency.

DIARY ENTRY: HERMIONE SESSIONS #2, BREATHING STONE

So, the very first movement of the solo will be the exhalation and suspension of breath for a full eight counts, followed by a sharp inhalation and a slow exhalation. In that is a story.

I was explaining to Andrea what I love about that moment in The Winter's Tale *when Leontes touches Hermione's "statue" and says, "O, she's warm!" She listened intently while the music played over and over in the background. She took notes. Then she said: "You've talked a lot about him finding his wife alive after sixteen years. But what about her? What does it feel like to wake up after sixteen years and find yourself back in the world?" We talked then about whether she was "thawing" or "escaping" from something like plaster or stone. We settled on "escaping." And then we got up and started to explore what that would be like, to move back into this particular world after sixteen years.*

DIALOGUE AND DISCOVERING HERMIONE
Improvising and dancing are holistic processes that engage dancers physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. When we improvise movement, we can discover and access all that we know, are, and have experienced. We can also engage in dialogue. Lisa and I asked questions about dancing and Hermione, and we discovered surprising answers. Sometimes we began with cerebral questions that found answers in movement. At other times we began physically, with movement questions that led us to cerebral answers. The dialogue of discovery happens easily in both directions and languages. Through it we began to find our Hermione. — *AD*

The long exhalation creates stillness, allows the abdominals to cinch in for core support, and creates the need for breath. It creates a sort of impetus and imperative for the first breath, the waking. At the very extreme edge of that suspension, waking up is as necessary as breathing, part of the momentum of living. In "On Breathing," Irene Dowd says: "you can't commit suicide by holding your breath because after a certain point you pass out and start breathing in spite of your will" (1981, 1). The second exhalation is slower, more resigned, pulls the body from its momentary rise into a shallow contraction, the sternum falling inward as the memory of the world comes back.

"Oh, I'm here again," Andrea said as she demonstrated the motion. Carried into the world by the insistence of breath, Hermione has to decide how to respond.

The first moments of that response are about seeing herself as alive, beginning with one hand closely inspected, and then using that hand to clear the clay from her eyes. In doing so, she peers out into the audience and invites them in with a gesture: Invito. *At that point, the music changes and Hermione "swallows" her story, "births" it again with a gesture, a child stolen from her, her own vibrant life solidified into a posture of loss. What will she do now? How does she move on from this? How does she get to* forgiveness?

Now I see the problem with the images I've clipped from Austin's Chironomia. *They convey states of being but cannot reveal transitions. They are static. What I need to know in order to understand Hermione is* how to get from there to here.

DANCING THE ARC

Doris Humphrey proposed in her book on choreography, *The Art of Making Dances*, that dancing is the transitions, the movement that exists in the "arc between two deaths" (1959/1991, 106): between standing still and balanced and lying on the floor motionless. Austin's images in *Chironomia* provided us with some visual stimuli, the beginnings and endings of arcs waiting to be discovered. — *AD*

I had never before thought of Hermione this way. I had always thought of her either in hiding from the world or as enchanted into a statue, in both cases waiting for Leontes to get to the point where he can accept the forgiveness she has to offer. I never imagined her from inside the statue or in the long years of her exile, or considered what is at stake in that moment when she begins to breathe, or that the breathing into life might be an imposition, an imperative that takes hold of her in spite of her will. I had always seen that moment as always already written, the forgiveness already formed. It never occurred to me that Hermione had a choice to make about how to be in this world.

I found a much more complex Hermione in the breath.

Breath, Dynamism, and the Negative Hermeneutics of Refusal

For us, the answer to the conundrum of Hermione's history was to see the dance as a moment that liberates Hermione not *from* her story but *into* her story. To do this, we had to take for granted that Hermione had a history that was expressed in her bodily experience. Again, dance, an art form that exists *in the body* and *in time* and *in space*, offers a powerful mode of expressing the ambiguous suspension between life and death, motion and stillness, presence and absence, dynamic indeterminacy and the solidity of documentation and definition. Phelan captures this suspension in the figure of the comma, "the grammatical symbol that marks the space that separates and joins thoughts" (2004, 19). She observes:

> The subtle caesura that opens between the end of one movement phrase and the beginning of the next claims our attention because it seems both to promise and to threaten our restless longing to be still. Dance, like all living art forms, emerges from the oscillation of our desire to be animated and our desire to cease to be. (18)

Impelled into the world, Hermione must recognize that the world she re-enters is not that much different from the one she left ("Oh, I'm here again"), for all its comic resolution. To step into her role, to be Hermione "indeed," is in some ways to accept the injunction not to "chide." The "how" of Hermione's "preservation" is not told in this play but remains "to be questioned" (5.3.139), deferred to some offstage space and another time, "Lest they desire upon this push to trouble / Your joys with like relation" (5.3.129-30). The "joys" of the comic resolution are, it seems, dependent upon the silencing of Hermione's history. At the same time, however, the ambiguity that remains at the play's conclusion is akin to what Knapp identifies in the kinaesthetic experience as a "constant source of wonder" (2012, 386) that evades the reifying desire for a single answer. "We never are what we are," John D. Caputo writes, summarizing Foucault's "negative hermeneutics of refusal" that values "a certain capacity to resist the identities that are imposed upon us" (2000, 34) and raises the possibility of "being-otherwise-than-the-present" (35). In the refusal of a single answer, "something different is always possible" (35). This possibility of "being-otherwise-than-the-present" seems in some ways to chime with the experience of dancing, which is, by definition, always on the way to being something "otherwise" than it is in any artificially atomized moment in time.

In the dance, we considered what it would mean for Hermione to process in three minutes, or sixteen years, the experience of her own history. To make the assumption of a history that cannot be forgotten because it is lived in the dynamism of her bodily experience is to begin from the premise of agency that is embodied in the breath: "The intake of breath, which is normally an unconscious movement, can sometimes become a gesture in its own right, consciously signaling an intention to start speaking or to impart emphasis" (King 2007, 389). Propelled into the world by the breath, Hermione must choose how to move forward. Will she remain a cypher, a statue-like woman who steps, unchiding, out of her own history into that of her husband? Will she leave her past behind and unspoken? Is the patriarchal comic resolution that is effected by her resurrection a feminine tragedy?

I did not want to leave Hermione in the tragedy. I wanted to keep her in the suspended place of dancing. What she offers Leontes in her outstretched hand is more than forgiveness; it is history; it is something different; it is a story that is always in the process of telling, always already moving on. Karmen MacKendrick reminds us: "As Martha Graham was fond of noting, all dance begins as a continuation rather than as origin, each class opening on the *and*: 'And one . . . '" (2004, 151).

Diary Entry: Hermione Sessions #3, Ambush

We were working on a new section of choreography. Andrea was trying out this and that (She goes "inside" at these moments; it's very interesting to watch her thinking with her muscles, seeing but not looking). Sometimes she'll ask me: "Which foot wants to move first here?" I'll repeat the latest phrase of steps and allow the momentum of it to carry me over the end of the phrase, this way or that way, so that I can answer: "Left foot wants to go backward." We move on, building the next phrase. While that is happening, sometimes we'll talk through the narrative of Hermione's journey from grief to forgiveness, seeing how the movement, the imperatives of shifting weight, balance and counter-balance follow or lead the ideas.

"I could go this way," I said to Andrea in answer to her question. "We haven't moved into this area of the stage yet."

"Hmm. True." Andrea paused, disagreeing in the Canadian way. "I know that typically choreography makes use of the whole stage but sometimes I like to impose a constraint by limiting the movement." Another thoughtful pause. "Like, maybe Leontes is over there," she said, pointing downstage right.

LIMITATIONS AND LEONTES

Sometimes limitations are naturally present. For instance, the current abilities of a performer or the size of the performance space may limit my movement options and influence my choreographic choices. Sometimes I impose limitations to give form to an idea or to prevent myself from being overwhelmed by the near-limitless movement possibilities. The creation of a structure/framework for improvisation and choreography provides me with a manageable number of movements with which to experiment and manipulate. According to Frank Chimero, "limitations allow us to get to work without waiting for a muse to show up" (2012, Chap. 3, n.p.). Occasionally, however, a limitation ushers in the muse. Such was the case when I decided to have Lisa work with a spatial and focal pull toward the downstage right (established by the facing of the opening statue-like pose), only to discover Leontes standing there quietly waiting in the shadows, just as Hermione had been. — *AD*

BOOM! Suddenly, the motivating element, the seductive/repulsing well of gravity that shapes the piece was there, and the entire emotional logic of the movement space was made viscerally present to me. The expansions and retreats that characterize the piece already had a grounding psychology for me: Hermione's grief, the story that she needs someone to see, impels her outward, but her fear of reprisal and rejection, and her fear of the intensity of her own emotions and memories cause a recoil; her limbs twining protectively around her, she retreats, becomes small and silenced, even as her anger and her own sense of self urge her to take up space, to move in larger, more expressive ways. Now that Leontes was placed on stage (figuratively, invisibly), there was an external interlocutor added to that internal struggle of centrifugal and centripetal forces, and the lines of travel and extension I had been following made so much sense. Here, Hermione's resistance breaks through constraint, but a glance to the right sends her collapsing backward, but the arc of that retreat brings her closer to Leontes. Every retreat also impels her back outward on the force of her story, closer and closer to confrontation. She looks over her shoulder, finds him there, retreats in confusion only to face him with a magnified explodo *(the rhetorical gesture that signifies an over-riding energy, a repudiation) that turns her entire body into a wide-open, screaming mouth. She collapses to the floor and rises again slowly to stand fully in his view:"See, this is the child you abandoned on foreign shores. This is the one you killed with grief and shame. This is me, who was your wife. This is me." Then, a swiftly traveling series of spins and rolls that culminates finally downstage right, with a repetition in brief of her own narrative and the main motions of the dance, arms reaching up and plunging into the past, pulling out the story and presenting it on palms turned outward: "This.* All of this. *And . . . " The hand extended on the final unresolved notes of the "8-and" count is not a rejection of this history, but an invitation. The insistence on a history that comes with her into the world turns her gesture into a true act of grace.* All of this, *and nevertheless, forgiveness.*

RISK-TAKING AND RISK-MAKING

Lisa found this section of choreography particularly challenging. I had her fall into a roll, only to quickly rise again for a dizzying series of continuous turns that ended in a sudden moment of near-stillness. She worried about stumbling and losing her balance or orientation. For me, this section was about Hermione furiously reliving her story and building the momentum and courage to take a risk. Could she forgive Leontes and move forward *with* him? She decided it suddenly with what an old runic saying would call an "empty-handed leap into the void." I wanted Lisa to feel off-balance and to embrace the possibility of stumbling and falling. I wanted to make her dizzy so that performing the final open-handed gesture would feel risky. — *AD*

MODERN DANCE AND EMBODIED HISTORY

As a form, modern dance is particularly apropos to such an exploration of a woman's embodied history, as the form carries in its own history just this desire. At its inception as a critique of the regulation and extreme idealization of the feminine body in nineteenth-century pictorial ballet, modern dance was female-centred and grounded (more than metaphorically) in the affective mode: "[Practitioners] inherited no practice; the techniques and the choreographic forms they developed were maps and reflections of the possibilities and propensities of their own originating bodies" (Dempster 2010, 229). While there developed a vast range and variety of styles, some of which focus on the external possibilities of shape and space, "[c]ommon to these contrasting styles of dance . . . is a conception of the body as a medium and vehicle for the expression of inner forces" (229-30). In our dance, both the inward and external forces are at play. The psychological and social contradictions that shape Hermione's grappling with her history as she moves into the present moment of choice reflect as well the ethos of modern dance, where "the body registers the play of opposing forces, falling and recovering, contracting and releasing. It is a body defined through a series of dynamic alterations subject to moments of surrender and moments of resistance" (230). The "dynamic relationship with gravity" (230) that defines the form of modern dance is conceptually and psychologically mirrored in the push-pull of despair and resistance in our dance as Hermione struggles with both her own internal conflict and with the invisible Leontes, the dark matter gravitational body that simultaneously drags her into the world and demands her absence from it as a condition of her "innocence."

As the play of internal and external forces in the dance reveals, this emphasis on the kinaesthetic is no encomium to the body as a pure and "natural" site uncontaminated by language, culture, or history. Rather, just as Hermione's own affective experience cannot ignore the influences of the patriarchal world through which she moves when dancing, bodies are mobilized as a means of thinking and representing cultural experience. André Lepecki situates the phenomenological experience and embodiment of the dancer in the dynamic world of history:

> [Dance] proposes a body that is less an empty signifier (executing preordained steps as it obeys blindly to [sic] structures of command) than a material, socially inscribed agent, a non-univocal body, an open potentiality, a force-field constantly negotiating its position in the powerful struggle for its appropriation and control. (Lepecki 2004b, 6)

Trapped by a system of gender relations and political power that renders her voiceless, Hermione is also an agent whose agency does not find expression in the discourses that govern her world, but is available only as a trace or disturbance, such as the perturbation of her husband's jealous mind or the revelation of the patently unjust operations of the justice system in her trial scene. Beginning from inside Hermione, the dance speaks to her indelible, irreducible, if officially negated, presence. Dancing in and as Hermione, I could *not* be absent. Accessing her story through dancing does not entail a simple "translation" of Shakespeare's words into movement, but rather engages with the materiality of her otherwise silenced self. As W. B. Worthen argues, this is the irreducible quality that defines theater: "Theater goes well beyond the force of mere speech, subjecting writing to the body, to labor, to the work of production" (2002, 9). Shakespeare's insistence on the materiality of Hermione's touch in the resolution of the play is a gesture toward what makes theater: the bodies that live knowledge into being, bodies that carry within them the traces of their own histories.

As a dynamic process, furthermore, the dance works against reification. In her discussion of her recreation of the works of the famous serpentine dancer Loie Fuller, Anne Cooper Albright emphasizes the critical efficacy of such "physical thinking": "The dance . . . taught me how to write history from inside the vibrations of its ongoing motion" (2010, 102). In choosing to engage her own dancing body "as a research tool or guide," Albright finds that she must "grapple with the relationship of [her] body to history" (107). In taking up Hermione's part but not her words (a topic for an entirely different essay!), I am forced to encounter her on different ground, one that mobilizes the "negative hermeneutics of refusal" relative to the powerful discourses that shape the possibilities of her spoken language. If, in the play's economy of language, "female voices indicate that they are betrayed by the very words they speak" (Enterline 2000, 207), one could posit the dancing body as a dynamic presence (the dance of life) and not an artifact, writing rather than something that is passively written-upon.

As a dynamic system of movement, dance is always and foremost the expression of the relationship between the past and the present; its ephemeral nature as an art form expressed only *in time* and movement *though space* means that the dance is predicated on and chased by its own disappearance: "Mostly movement disappears, [sic] it marks the passing of time. Movement is both sign and symptom that all presence is haunted by disappearance and absence" (Lepecki 2004a, 128). For Knapp, the rational codification of the world cannot fully engage with its living dynamism. "The image in this [dynamic] sense is not comprehensible," Knapp asserts, nor is it "able to be reduced to a concept (a bush or a bear), but instead proves a constant source of wonder: it is the something that 'grows' 'brief as lightning,' able to 'unfold both heaven and earth'" (2012, 386). To dance Hermione is to confront her history, her materiality and her agency in "always irretrievable, never fully translatable motion" (Lepecki 2004a, 127). *Take a breath. I want to see where it goes in your body*, said Andrea at that first meeting in the studio. In attending to the imperative of the breath when dancing, it is impossible not to put Hermione at the centre of her own narrative, a shift into the body that consequently opens a path of movement through an alternative narrative, one in which Hermione can present her story.

Diary Entry: Hermione Sessions #4: Language Lined with Flesh

I don't know if Leontes had been there, downstage right, the whole time Andrea was building the piece, or whether his presence was created or revealed by the lines of force, weight-shifts and counter-balance in the movement, but he's there now and my solo has become in my mind a duet (Aha! There's something I wouldn't have noticed had I been typing instead of writing cursive: "duet" is just one crossed line from "duel." Not an original observation, but a fun one).

But I'm glad that Leontes only appeared so late in the process of building the dance. Because this is not his story, and while his invisible presence adds a new dimension to my understanding of the movement, he is not the point, and Hermione's story, while caused by him, is not his, is not about him. I don't want her to be just a reaction. Much of her story in the play is a reaction to things that are outside of her and beyond her control. In my mind, this appears in the movement in the way that, at a key moment that represents her thoughts about her lost children, the shifts in stance — grief, to avoiding, to giving in — all happen after the big emphases in the music, in the transitional spaces, as if in response to a series of blows. But the story is about owning a story and moving with it, ahead of it, bringing it along but not being lost to it. For this reason, I'm very happy that the dance begins with Hermione's awakening. First, she notices herself, the miraculous quickness of her limbs; then, as she wipes the dust of sixteen years from her eyes, she sees the audience. She offers them invito *with a slowly opening hand and a beckoning curl of the fingers: "Come. Listen. See." And with a great gasp of breath, we all dive into her story together.*

Running through the piece in my mind, in my car, listening with earbuds in while waiting for sleep to dawdle my way in the wee hours, I often find myself weeping. The stage actor Paul Scofield famously once said about showing emotion on stage that "the emotions are mine, but they're not real" (quoted by Hiddleston 2013). I feel myself in those moments, in my mind where my balance is more perfect than it ever is in real life, widening upward, arcing on cantilevered demi-point through the magnified explodo *gesture and Hermione is there in the tension on the arch of my supporting foot, and in the spaces between the ribs that expand as her rage expands and her whole body opens like a huge howl: "This! This, Leontes, you have done to us!" The idea of Hermione becomes a person who, for that moment, uses my body to be. "This is me."*

Notes

1. All references to *The Winter's Tale* are to the edition of Stephen Orgel (Oxford University Press, 1996).

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Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: An Archival Discovery

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ABSTRACT

This note describes and analyzes a full-length, archival recording of Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970) long thought to be lost, but recently rediscovered by the author. Now preserved on DVD, it is available to scholars at the Royal Shakespeare Company Archives, housed at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Peter Brook's 1970 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has an iconic place in the stage history of that play and of Shakespeare's plays as a whole. Sally Jacobs's set, a white box with simple doors and a balcony on three sides, exemplified Brook's celebrated concept of the stage as an "empty space."[1] The actors, when not on stage, peered over the balcony or sat with their legs dangling over the sides of the set, watching the action along with the audience but from above, much as the fairies might do. The design and blocking of the production were likewise elemental and abstract. Gone were leafy bowers, gauzy fairy wings, and Mendelsohn's romantic music. The lovers wore modern simple frocks or flowered shirts with white pants, while the fairies wore voluminous satin and taffeta gowns or baggy jumpsuits in brilliant colors — purple for Oberon, emerald for Titania, yellow for Puck. Finally, and perhaps most memorably, the blocking and stage business featured acrobatic circus elements. Oberon and Puck appeared on trapezes; Titania's bower (decorated with crimson ostrich feathers) was hoisted aloft when she slept or enticed Bottom to her bed. Once charmed to sleep by Puck, the lovers awaited the arrival of Theseus and Hippolyta draped on canvas swings, swaying gently fifteen feet above the stage. In addition to trapeze work, the actors balanced spinning plates on wands and walked on stilts. Many critics and directors, including Gregory Doran, current artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, have referred to Brook's production as a "game-changer" in the history of Shakespeare performance, infusing modern performances with simplicity and greater physicality via the influence of the Chinese circus and Noh drama, among others.[2]

For many years, scholars thought that the archival video made of this production was no longer extant. It was reportedly made in (or taken to) Japan and then lost. Brook himself is no fan of recorded versions of his work, and so there the matter rested, in the minds of most researchers.[3]

In early August 2016, however, I visited the Royal Shakespeare Company Archives, housed at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon. When I asked if there were any recordings of this production, I was handed a set of three DVDs containing the "lost" video footage. The archives have apparently held it for some time, but it has only recently been approved for viewing by scholars. The DVDs appear to be a complete record of a single performance, from the noisy entrance of the company (accompanied by drums and other percussion instruments) to the equally boisterous choreographed curtain call.[4] A single camera, placed in the center of the theater at some distance from the stage, captures the on-stage action, the aerial work, and the participation of the actor-spectators on the balcony over the set. The recording is grainy and often out of focus; some of it is jumpy, slightly off track, but it allows one to get an idea of the blocking and the general feeling of the production. Missing from this black-and-white recording is the role of color in the design, especially the vivid contrast between the jewel tones of the fairy costumes and the white box set. This aspect of the production can be glimpsed in the approximately thirty still photographs held in the RSC archives. It was also on display in the *Shakespeare in Ten Acts* exhibition at the British Library, April-September 2016, which included Titania's green gown, the feathery bower, and images of Puck's voluminous jumpsuit and blue beanie. There are no close-ups or second camera shots in the recording, and the quality of the sound is poor, so the actors' facial expressions and vocal delivery would be difficult to study in detail. Aside from Ben Kingsley as Demetrius, I could not have identified them without the help of the program or other published sources.

While it is a pale record of Brook's achievement, this archival recording allows one to view the stage-space in use and is invaluable for appreciating the physical aspects of Brook's direction and the energy of the audience's response (amply represented on the soundtrack). Scholars who are interested in this production and its influence on stage history have an important new aid to their research.

NOTES

1. In the opening sentences of *The Empty Space*, Brook states, "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (1996, 7). The creation of the balcony for the actors' use when they are not on stage seems a clear embodiment of the second necessity for theater — an audience watching — here doubled, with one onstage and another in the theater.
2. Gregory Doran, remarks at the welcome reception, Ninth World Shakespeare Congress, International Shakespeare Association, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 31 July 2016.
3. For a fresh and full account of this production, its precursors, and its heirs, see Peter Holland, "'The revolution of the times': Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1970" (2016). This book is a companion to the splendid *Shakespeare in Ten Acts* exhibition at the British Library in honor of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death; it ran from 15 April to 6 September, 2016.
4. James Ranahan, Collections Archivist for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, reports that it appears to be a copy of a BETACAM cassette recording of a performance at the Aldwych Theatre, London.

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