



Shakespeare Bulletin **Performance Review Guidelines**

The critic could be retrained as a data collector, confined to the production of objective statements, and encouraged to redeem himself in a society for which [...] he has served as a morally disruptive, and aesthetically destructive, influence.

Glenn Gould, *The Glenn Gould Reader*

The next generation of reviewers might adopt a position that is anti-bardolatrous, iconoclastic and fearlessly experimental as they learn to speak of themselves—as we always must—*à propos* of Shakespeare.

Paul Prescott, *Reviewing Shakespeare*

The questions of what contemporary Shakespeare performance is and who gets to define it remain unanswerable.

Peter Kirwan and Kathryn Prince, *The Arden Research Handbook of Shakespeare and Contemporary Performance*

The nature of Shakespeare performance has arguably become more “unanswerable” than ever in recent years. Performers have increasingly entered digital spaces out of exploration and necessity, and continue to reshape and redefine what contemporary Shakespeare performance can be. More established and traditional performance spaces have persisted, often influenced either consciously or unconsciously by the innovations happening alongside them.

In light of this continuing unanswerable-ness, *Shakespeare Bulletin* defines both performance, and how to review it, widely. There are as many different ways of responding to a performance as there are audience members. The performance reviews section of *Shakespeare Bulletin* offers a snapshot of international responses to productions of (or rooted in) the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries; this is an archive not of the performance object, but of experiences and reflections.

The journal welcomes reviews of theater productions, live or “as live” theater broadcasts, digital theater, films, television series, web series, audio drama, and performance art that reinterpret early modern drama for today’s audiences. These audiences may be diverse geographically or linguistically, in age or composition, in mode of reception or experience of Shakespeare. This list is not exhaustive, and *Shakespeare Bulletin* is open to proposals for reviews of any event which can be considered to offer a performance of Shakespeare or early modern drama. The journal seeks to continually expand and redefine the parameters of “Shakespearean performance.”

Theater reviewers are the makers of tomorrow’s theater history; the accounts in

Shakespeare Bulletin will, we hope, be of value to future explorers of performance history as well as those triangulating their own responses to productions they have just seen. But no review can be exhaustive, just as no experience of a production can be comprehensive. We encourage reviewers to embrace their own subjectivity and focus on those aspects of a production that *matter* to the reviewer's interpretation. While reviews will give the descriptive detail that provides the basis for interpretation, the reviewer's own emotional and intellectual response to event and context will shape their choices of focus and argument.

We encourage reviewers to take each production on its own terms—for *Shakespeare Bulletin*, there is no “right way” to “do” Shakespeare; nor is there a right way to write about Shakespeare. Different kinds of production will require different kinds of response, and in the tradition of our predecessors (Kathryn Vomero Santos, Peter Kirwan, Roberta Barker, Paul Prescott, Jeremy Lopez) we invite reviewers to tailor and experiment with the form to suit the response, exploring how the ephemeral experience of the performance can be best captured on paper.

Please format the beginning of your review like this:

Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad

Presented by the **Iraqi Theater Company** at **Riverside Studios**, London, in partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company. 27–30 June 2012. Adapted and directed by Monadhil Daood. Set and lighting design by Jabbar Jodi Allabodi. Costume design by Fadel Qazzaz. Music composed and directed by Ali Khassaf. With Sami Abdulhameed (Teacher), Ahmed Salah Moneka (Romeo), Sarwa Rasool (Juliet), Fikrat Salim (Mercutio), Maimoon Abdalhamza (Montague), Haider Monathir (Capulet), Allawi Hussein (Paris), Ameer Hussein (Benvolio), and others.

KATHERINE STEELE BROKAW, *University of California, Merced*

“The night should be for lovers,” lamented the Father Lawrence-like “Teacher” as the play’s opening sounds—sirens, bombs, machine guns—still rang in the audience’s ears. So began *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad*, an Arabic adaptation only loosely based on Shakespeare’s play. The RSC commissioned the Iraqi Company to write and perform this work as part of the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival, and in the weeks before the Olympics the company traveled from Baghdad to Stratford-upon-Avon to London. *Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad* was their first play since the official end of combat in Iraq, and scars of war as well as fresh wounds from continued violence formed the context for both artists and characters. As director and adapter Monadhil Daood’s program notes explained, “I am the legitimate son of tragedy... Understand that we live in a place where terrorists break our home over our heads.”

GENERAL GUIDELINES

LENGTH: 1000–1500 words, inclusive of header.

CRITICAL VOICE: “I” in preference to “we.” As a general principle, try to avoid speaking for anyone’s experience (other than your own) without their express consent.

TENSE: As a default, please write about live performance (theater, live broadcasts) in the *past* tense, and recorded performance (film, television) in the *present* tense.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION: Use the American style for spelling, periods, and commas throughout the review. Switching your spellchecker to US spelling will automatically alert you to US spelling conventions. Closing quotation marks normally go outside punctuation.

STYLE: Please refer to the journal’s [style sheet](#) for full guidance on formatting your review.

REFERENCING: If quoting from secondary material, please use in-text citations (Jones 20) and include a bibliography (titled Works Cited) at the end of your review (see the journals’ style sheet). There is no need to provide references for theatrical ephemera (programs, cast lists, post-show talks etc).

QUOTATIONS: We use the Arden Shakespeare *Complete Works* (2021) as our standard source for Shakespeare quotations. Please use in-text citations with parentheses: (5.1.62–3).

LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

ARRANGING TICKETS: You are welcome to request complimentary tickets from theaters, as long as the review has been commissioned and agreed, but we cannot guarantee that theaters will offer comps, especially for popular productions.

IMAGES: Please include a high-quality image with your review (300 PPI), if possible. We must have permission to publish, so please obtain images directly from the theater/company press office, and if you need assistance please ask the performance reviews editors. **DO NOT** copy photographs from websites without explicit permission from the rights holder(s). Please supply images as separate files along with your review.

Image captions should be formatted as follows:

Claudius (Nicholas Farrell) and Hamlet (Tom Hiddleston) in *Hamlet*, dir. Kenneth Branagh. RADA, 2018. Photo by Johann Persson, courtesy of RADA.

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