

Early Modern Literary Studies

***Troilus and Cressida, Romeo and Juliet, Henry V, As You Like It,
Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella and The Very Merry Wives of Windsor, Iowa, performed
by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, February-November 2012.***

Geoff Ridden
Southern Oregon University
riddeng@sou.edu

Troilus and Cressida. Director: Rob Melrose. With Raffi Barsoumian (Troilus), Tala Ashe (Cressida), Michael Elich (Thersites), and Barzin Akhavan (Pandarus).

Romeo and Juliet. Director: Laird Williamson. With Alejandra Escalante (Juliet), Daniel Jose Molina (Romeo), Jason Rojas (Mercutio), and Tony DeBruno (Friar Laurence).

Henry V. Director: Joseph Haj. With John Tufts (King Henry), U. Jonathan Toppo (Pistol), and Jeffrey King (Fluellen).

As You Like It. Director: Jessica Thebus. With Christine Albright (Celia), Erica Sutherland (Rosalind), Peter Frechette (Touchstone), and Kathryn Meisle (Jacques).

Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella. Directors: Bill Rauch and Tracy Young. With Christopher Liam Moore (Lady Macbeth), Jeffrey King (Macbeth), Miriam A. Labe (Medea), and Laura Griffith (Cinderella).

The Very Merry Wives of Windsor, Iowa. Director: Christopher Liam Moore. With David Kelly (Senator John Falstaff), Catherine E. Coulson (Miss Quickly), and Robin Goodrin Nordli (Francie Ford).

There was less offstage drama at the 2012 Oregon Shakespeare Festival than there had been in the previous year: no cracks in theatre roofs necessitating performances in unusual venues. There were, however, several changes in the casting brought about by illness and surgery: it was not until halfway through its run, for example, that *Troilus and Cressida* was performed entirely by its published cast. *Troilus and Cressida* and

Henry V both made good and stimulating use of doubling, and were my preferred productions among the four Shakespeare plays staged in Ashland this year.

Troilus and Cressida

This is my eleventh season as an audience member at the OSF, and my fifth season of reviewing the Shakespeare productions for *EMLS*. This *Troilus and Cressida* was quite simply the best production of a Shakespeare play that I have seen here. I can only hope that the audiences improved; it was nowhere near full when I saw it early in the season, but with Helen in a bikini and the representation of US troops taking drugs, this might not have been a version of Shakespeare for the more conservative audiences: it was certainly a Shakespeare without heroism.

This was only the fifth production of the play in the history of the OSF, although the director of this 2012 production had previously directed the play at the Roble Studio Theater in Stanford, California in May 2010, in a collaboration between the Stanford Department of Drama and the New York Public Theater; there is a complete video of a live performance of that production available at *Vimeo.com*.

There is no definitive record of any performance of *Troilus and Cressida* in Shakespeare's lifetime, but we can be confident that had it been performed his contemporaries would have known about the Trojan Wars, and would have had no difficulty in distinguishing Trojan from Greek. In contrast, more recent productions have to work to ensure that the audience knows which side is which; for example, in the 1999 National Theatre production, directed by Trevor Nunn, the Trojans were mostly played by black actors whilst all the Greeks were white. In his 2010 production, Melrose had costumed both sides in modern battledress and it was not always easy to distinguish one army from the other, but this was not a problem in his 2012 production: the OSF *Playbill* described its setting as the "looting of the Baghdad Museum during the U.S. invasion of Iraq" and so it was very clear that there was a defending force and an invader. The contemporary resonance in the depiction of a war which had gone on so long that the invaders were unclear whether they should still be there was as clear here as it was in the National Theatre of Scotland's production of David Greig's *Dunsinane* in 2011. The Iraqi/Trojans were not always in uniform, whereas the invading US/Greek forces always were.

Moreover, the set allowed the Trojans to have scenes indoors, whereas all the scenes in the Greek camp took place in the open air. This indoor/outdoor contrast was achieved very simply and with no impeding of the flow of the action. The audience was positioned on three sides of the New Theatre and when we came in there was a

cyclorama on the fourth wall, mostly of sky and sand, with an erector-set bridge in front of it and rocks beneath it. However, those rocks could be raised so as to fill in the gap under the bridge with walls to create an interior space, or, in Act 5, Scene 3, a trellis could be dropped between the bridge and the cyclorama, so that bridge and trellis became a mosque and Hector was discovered at prayer.

Directors of this play have considerable latitude in determining the genre to which it belongs, but one OSF press release made it clear what Melrose thought about it:

The overwhelming feeling from *Troilus and Cressida* is ‘war is hell’ or even ‘the absurdity of war,’ much like *Apocalypse Now* or *Catch 22*... And, he adds, one of the reasons he’s been drawn to the play for the past 20 years is its wicked sense of humor.”¹

Melrose decided that the play was a black comedy, perhaps along the lines of *M*A*S*H*, and this generic choice was evident even in the pre-show announcement asking for cell phones to be switched off, which was played over a military-style walkie-talkie radio (in fairness, it is hard to do these announcements without some sense of a humorous tone). The comedic features of the play itself were manifest in the emphasis on bawdy and in the two overhearing scenes (2.3 and 5.2); in 2.3, the asides by Nestor, Diomedes and Ulysses about Ajax were played to the audience, whilst the staging and performing of 5.2 (the scene in which Troilus and Ulysses watch Diomedes’s wooing of Cressida, and are, in turn, watched by Thersites) might have come straight from *Twelfth Night* or *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The cast was on stage on the battlefield set ten minutes before the start of the play, and we watched the Greek/US army occupying themselves with physical exercise and in dancing to loud rap music. There was considerable doubling in this production, with some fourteen actors playing twenty five named roles, and some of that doubling was very thought-provoking: Pandarus and Menelaus, Hector and Calchas, and Nestor and Priam were all doubled, and the effect was to suggest that there were real similarities between the two sides. The cast was outstanding and particular credit should be given to Barret O’Brien who came in at the last moment to take on the role of Agamemnon, when both the original actor and his understudy had to pull out.

¹ ‘Troilus and Cressida Joins OSF Rep; Opens 3/31.’ *BroadwayWorld.com*. 31 Mar 2012. <
<http://portland.broadwayworld.com/article/TROILUS-AND-CRESSIDA-Joins-OSF-Rep-Opens-331-20120330>>

The Prologue was delivered by a female Greek soldier. She was 'arm'd' in the sense of wearing a bullet-proof vest. As soon as the Prologue was over, the scene was changed to an interior by raising the three sets of rocks underneath the bridge to become walls, and bringing on a chaise longue and a table and chair. We were introduced to a surprisingly youthful and vigorous Pandarus who played up the bawdy nuances of the bread-making metaphor (1.1.17-26), and the scene ended with Troilus throwing himself on the chaise longue and kissing it.

There was more bawdy in the exchange between Pandarus and Cressida in which Pandarus compared Hector and Troilus: when he asserted that 'Hector is not Troilus in some degrees' (1.2.69-70) it was plain that he was comparing their penis size. The comic tone continued in the later part of this scene as the bridge became the platform from which Pandarus and Cressida reviewed the Trojan troops returning from the battle (the middle rock/wall panel was taken down so that it formed a gateway): Pandarus encouraged audience participation by urging us to shout for Troilus and to applaud at his imminent arrival. When he did arrive there was more laughter, as he entered just as Cressida had spoken of the 'sneaking fellow' coming 'yonder' (226) who proved not to be Deiphobus at all, but a very timid and shy Troilus.

At the end of 1.2, the panels were all lowered once more for the first scene with the Greeks. This was heavily cut to bring Ulysses's speech on degree to a much earlier position. However, Ulysses was upstaged by two soldiers behind him, one of whom was hitting golf-balls from the rocks towards the cyclorama, whilst a second stood on the bridge and tried to shoot the balls with his machine gun. This invading force also seemed to be significantly older than the leaders of the Trojan army, and each had his name spelled out on his battle fatigues.

Although the entire cast had American accents, the accents of the Greeks were much more pronounced than those of the Trojan camp. In this scene, Aeneas was pronounced as Ehneas by Agamemnon (245), perhaps an ironic parallel of the US tendency to pronounce Iraq as if it were 'eye-rack'. To cap all this, Helen in 3.1 clearly came from the South – her 'lord' at line 83 was a two-syllable lawud.

In his 2010 production, Melrose had presented a Thersites who was frequently high on drugs, carrying his paraphernalia of aerosols and paper bags. Melrose extended this notion at the OSF, so that Thersites not only took drugs himself, but also supplied them to others, notably to Achilles in 2.3. His first scene with Ajax (2.1) was very physical: the two men rough-housed until Ajax broke wind in Thersites's face; cue more laughter

from the audience. The proclamation became a newspaper, and Ajax very clearly could not read.

The Trojan council of war (2.2) was again an interior scene, and the wall in this scene had a picture on it which just might have been the Trojan Horse. Helenus, the “brother priest” (37) wore a *taqiyah*, whilst Hector wore a suit. Cassandra wore a *hijab*, and her prophetic voice in this scene was given extra resonance, quite literally, by the use of a microphone and echo: in her later scene (5.3) she was unamplified in her conversation with Andromache, Priam and Hector but the microphone came on again when she prophesied (80ff).

Thersites began 3.3 on the bridge, and was very like Caliban in his fury at those who were exploiting him. Ajax had a stammer which became more evident in this scene as he became excited and agitated: the stammer became an extra feature for Thersites to parody in 3.3. There was one movement of a line: Ajax’s “A word, my lord” (89) was shifted so that he continually tried to interject as Agamemnon spoke to Patroclus (112ff). Helen’s scene (3.1) was again an interior, but this time a downward projection converted the room into a swimming pool, complete with a discotheque for Pandarus’s song. There was a sense of decadence here, and the representation of Paris as a rich Middle Eastern prince/playboy came dangerously close to being a racial stereotype. Early in this scene, after Pandarus’s sparring with the servant, he bribed him to tell him the truth (29). Pandarus’s song was cut short, and then the first lines of the next scene were played on the bridge, so that the transition could be made to 3.2, in the orchard, played with the walls raised and using the doors in the two outside panels. Ranks of petals were lowered from the roof and a circular mosaic fountain with water was brought on. Pandarus’s line to Troilus, “Come, draw this curtain” (lines 46-7) became a reference to the veil that Cressida was wearing. The intermission was taken at the end of 3.2, as Melrose had done in his 2010 production.

The second half of the play opened with Calchas’s only appearance onstage. Bernard White played both this role and that of Hector: he wore a wig as Calchas, and was also made older by the simple device of wearing the belt on his trousers too tightly, so that his padded paunch hung over his waistband. Although Thersites performed a good impersonation of Ajax in 3.3 (it won applause from the audience at the performance I attended), the potential for a pun on ‘Ajax/a jokes’ at line 245 was lost: perhaps it is just too archaic a joke to pull off in the twenty-first century.

The second orchard scene (4.2) featured falling petals, and some neat business: Troilus left behind his jacket and his shoes when he exited at line 41, and Pandarus put them on

whilst pretending to Aeneas that Troilus had not been there. Pandarus's cough, which had been scarcely noticeable in the first half, increased as the play went on, preparing for his later confession of having a "tisick" (5.3.101). When Aeneas delivered the news that Cressida must be surrendered, Troilus's line "Is it so concluded?" (66) was played over Aeneas's speech.

The bridge was brought into play again for the short 4.3, before Troilus bid his farewells to Cressida and gave her his sleeve at line 70 (in this case, actually a handkerchief which he produced from his back pocket), and it was used again in 5.2, with Thersites on the bridge listening to Cressida and Diomedes while Ulysses and Troilus hid behind the rocks.

The scene in which Cressida was 'welcomed' by her Greek captors (4.5) was not played for the violence with which it has been accompanied in some productions, perhaps because the spectacle of US soldiers mistreating an Arab women was felt to be a step too far for the potential audience. There was certainly nothing approaching what happened in the National Theatre's 1999 production in which "Cressida was subject to the abusive kisses of a group of powerful white men, and was touched during her exotic dance among them".²

The battle effects in the final act managed to be impressive without terrifying the audience, but there were a number of anachronisms in the battle, some of which I found jarring. In 5.3, Troilus was invited to 'let go thy harness' (a modernised version of line 31), but he did not have one. Similarly, at 5.8.4 Hector said 'Rest, sword' but was carrying a gun. It was strange also that the armoured figure which enters at 5.6.26 really was a figure in armour rather than in battledress. But these are really minor quibbles in what was a *tour de force* by the director, the designers and the cast.

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet was staged in the Angus Bowmer Theatre, the larger of the two indoor theatres at the Festival. The director, Laird Williamson, chose to set this production in Alta California in the mid-1800s, just after the U.S. Army had taken the area from Mexico: thus the Capulets and Montagues were landed Spanish families and the Americans an occupying army (including 'General Prince' and 'Captain Paris'). The costumes were entirely appropriate to that period and place. An adobe wall curved around the back of the set, above which beautiful back-projections indicated the passage of the day. At the centre of the stage was a rounded dais, and the adobe wall was fronted

² Frances A. Shirley (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 74.

by a fence constructed from what looked like wood lath on bare studs. There were doors set into the wall which allowed a range of entrances and exits. In accordance with the setting, the forms of address include 'mujer' and 'cabellero' but accents were inconsistent from actor to actor, and it was often hard to determine which actors were intended to be Spanish and which English speakers. The apothecary was represented by what the Playbill described as 'an Ohlone medicine woman'.

My query is whether this Californian 1800s setting mattered at all. The Prince and Paris were part of the US occupying force, and, in order for there to be any connection between the Prince and the Spanish Californios, he was supplied with a wife, Valentina, who was Mercutio's sister. Valentina had a credit in the Playbill, but no lines: if you had not read the Playbill you would not have known her role or function. Furthermore, the setting, as with *Troilus and Cressida*, had overtones of colonialism and imperialism that are not present in Shakespeare's play and which took the focus away from the lovers.

I felt that the set also detracted from the production rather than added to it. With some exceptions towards the end, the set did not change, except for blankets thrown on the central dais. This certainly helped with the pace of the production but at the same time it eroded any sense of distinction between interior and exterior scenes. Thus, any sense that Romeo and Juliet led very different lives, and that, for the most part, Juliet never saw the open air, was entirely lost. The production failed to observe any difference between public and private scenes.

This was a relatively young cast, perhaps, in some cases, too inexperienced to carry the weight of their roles. I saw the production early in its run, and found the actor playing Benvolio very weak. In contrast, Jason Rojas, as Mercutio, could act all of his contemporaries off the stage, or at least was capable of dominating every scene in which he appeared. He played his part with vigour and gusto, getting maximum mileage out of every bawdy innuendo, and using his bottle and his whip handle to maximum phallic effect. The net result was, of course, that the play felt flat after his death: this is a problem inherent in *Romeo and Juliet*, and one that can be solved only if Romeo and Juliet can carry the second half of the play. In this production they could not.

The more senior characters were not played by old actors. The Capulets were youthful parents, and Elijah Alexander, as Don Capulet, was particularly passionate. In accordance with this, the references to 'old Capulet' were replaced by 'Don Capulet', and the references to crutches in 1.1 were cut, together with the reference to the Capulets being 'past our dancing days' in 1.5.

The production made good use of characters overhearing dialogue in scenes in which they are not usually on the stage: for example, Mercutio overheard the dialogue between Romeo and Benvolio in the opening scene (although, at that stage, we did not know he was Mercutio), and Juliet's father listened in on the conversation between Juliet and her mother in 1.3. This developed into a nicely-embarrassed sex lesson. Juliet proved an able student, because, by the time we reached 2.2, she was able to get considerable mileage out of the reference to 'any other part / Belonging to a man'.

The ball was already taking place upstage when Mercutio delivered his Queen Mab speech in 1.4 and there was no balcony in 2.2: Juliet was simply on top of the wall at stage right, with Romeo below on the other side of the stage. There was a considerable distance between them in the scene, and no chance that they might be able to touch one another. I felt that their interchange had more to do with wit than with love, and this was true of their relationship throughout the play - I really hoped for some sign of chemistry, but it was not there. In 2.5, the reference to the Nurse obtaining a ladder for Romeo was excised, because the relevant scene (3.5, after the intermission) was to be played centre-stage.

The intermission came after the death of Mercutio in III.i, and the second half of the production struggled without Mercutio's presence. Fortunately, Tony DeBruno, as Friar Laurence, proved an admirable anchor at this point. There were some interesting decisions in this second half. For example, when, at the exit of Romeo in 3.5, Juliet's 'ill-divining soul' gave her a vision of Romeo 'As one dead in the bottom of a tomb' (line 56), two ghost-like figures emerged from the vomitorium on stage left and dragged him off; sadly, this was not visible to a number of members of the audience. There was a similar balletic touch when Juliet slid off the shoulders of her corpse-bearers at the end of 4.4 and kissed Romeo to awake him from his dream as 5.1 began. The music in 4.5 was played off-stage, so the musicians' roles and lines were cut.

The most significant change to the set occurred when the fence was moved downstage so that the tomb could be placed behind it. The movement was managed by robed figures with death's-head masks, who were then required to stay onstage for the remainder of the play.

I was not entirely taken by this production. Whereas the production of *Measure for Measure* in the 2011 season made excellent use of a tension between white and Latino communities, I felt that the Hispanic references in *Romeo and Juliet* did little to enhance

the production, and the lack of real contrast between external and interior scenes was, for me, a major deficiency.

Henry V

Henry V was presented on the Elizabethan Stage. This production followed the stagings of *Henry IV Part One* in 2010 and *Henry IV Part Two* in 2011, and was by far the most successful of the three parts of that trilogy.

One of my criticisms of outdoor productions last season was that the replica tiring house was not left alone. This year the set for *Henry V* was almost entirely unadorned, with just a simple curtain drawn from time to time across the inner stage, and with good use of the upper level, occasional use of the platform over the vomitorium downstage left and of one extra entrance for the Governor of Harfleur way up on upstage right.

Henry V, like *Troilus and Cressida*, made extensive and imaginative use of doubling, with twenty-two actors playing the more than forty roles named in most editions. York, Warwick and Salisbury were taken out of the ranks of the English nobility, whilst the French lost several Dukes (only Bourbon and Orleans remained with the Constable and Dauphin) and Mountjoy carried out all the roles of the Ambassadors. Some doubling choices were especially significant: the actors who played Scroop, Cambridge and Grey were later transformed from English traitors to French Lords; then, in 4.1 they would become English yeoman. The actors playing Nym and Bardolph also took on the roles of Jamy and Macmorris, with appropriate kilts and accents.

The cast included the deaf actor Howie Seago as Exeter; throughout the production, Christine Albright spoke and signed Seago's lines, and signed the lines of others to Exeter. This had some interesting effects. In his first scene, Henry had an effective pause after the revelation of the tennis balls that was perhaps given added effect by the signing of Exeter's line. Later, when Exeter visited the French court, he was accompanied by Albright, but when the Dauphin asked what message Henry had for him, Seago rejected her offer to speak his lines, and signed his contempt for the Dauphin clearly and directly.

Each of the two parts of *Henry IV* in previous seasons had started with a dumb-show recapitulation of English history. This production did not; the performance began with all the cast onstage in grey, taking turns to speak the lines of the Prologue. The choruses preceding each Act, as well as the Epilogue, were spoken by different individual members of the cast. Some Choruses were split and re-positioned, and the Chorus before Act 5 was cut completely.

The costumes were eclectic; the English wore camouflage while in battle, and Alice wore a short skirt in the final scene. Most striking, however, was the contrast in costuming between the English and the French: the English looked ready for the battlefield from the very beginning, whereas the French wore gorgeous costumes before the war and during it. This contrast paralleled the difference between the Trojans and the Greeks in *Troilus and Cressida*; once again we had a 'home team' at their leisure and their ease, and a military force of occupation.

The first part of the Chorus before Act 2 was spoken by Lisa Tejero, and delivered from the platform over the vomitorium downstage left. As it was spoken, the curtain was closed and a bench and table were raised up from below the stage for the tavern scene. I was slightly perturbed by the fact that, although Pistol asserted that his 'cock is up / And flashing fire will follow' (52-52), he actually drew a sword rather than a gun. For the final lines of the scene, Hostess Quickly was positioned on the upper level.

The second part of the Chorus before Act 2 (from line 12 onwards) was spoken by Christopher Jean before 1.2, as an introduction to the treachery of Scroop, Cambridge and Grey. It was at this point that use was first made of the percussive effects by the musician on the upper level. These effects were deployed at several points during the longer speeches by the King in the first half of the play, and proved extremely powerful in maintaining the pace though these lengthy monologues. Once again, Christine Albright did sterling work in signing the scene for Exeter and speaking his lines, except that the words of arrest were voiced by the actors playing Bedford and Gloucester. The next Chorus, spoken by Brooke Parks, was placed before 2.3 and consisted of the first twenty four lines of the Chorus which usually preceded Act 3. It was accompanied by ship noises from the percussionist, and placed to precede 2.3. This scene, in which the death of Falstaff is reported, was played on the upper level, and Hostess Quickly's speech was played seriously, for the most part.

Judith-Marie Bergan spoke the Chorus to Act 3 lines 25-35, and we were pitched into battle at Harfleur. The staging here, on the lower level, eschewed complex and sophisticated theatrics, and relied instead simply on red lights and smoke. Henry's rousing monologue was punctuated with drumbeats from above. The King faced downstage, with his troops facing him, and the reference to 'good yeoman' (line 25) was specifically directed at Pistol and his friends. The scene ran straight into 2.2 with Nym, Bardolph, Pistol and the Boy, yelling their words of charge while running away from the breach. I have a minor cavil here: the Boy was left alone on the stage, complaining about Nym, Bardolph and Pistol, but, when the actress referred to Bardolph, she gestured to the opposite side to that at which he had just made his exit!

That part of the scene after Gower's entrance (line 54) was taken as a separate unit, and played on the upper level. Henry's long speech in 3.3 was again punctuated by drumbeats, but this time there were also unison cries of 'Ha' from the troops downstage as the beats sounded out. The Governor of Harfleur had his entrance at the highest possible level in the auditorium – way up on upstage right, almost above the tiring house façade. As the English troops made their exit, the Boy was the last to leave the stage.

For 3.4 the Princess and Alice rose up from under the stage, with the Princess in a bubble bath – a piece of business which was applauded at the performance I saw. The scene was played in full, with all its risque puns, but these may not have been fully grasped by the audience. The French court appeared on the upper level in 3.5, and that was to be its primary location for most of the rest of the play.

The intermission was taken after 3.6, which was played on the lower level and in which Bardolph not only had his crime referred to, but was actually brought on stage with his hands tied. The rope binding his hands was untied by the King, who then throttled Bardolph with it. All of this was done quite slowly and in silence. At the end of the scene, as the English troops marched away, Henry was the last to exit, still carrying the rope.

There were some minor changes to the set in the second half of the play: braziers were placed downstage, and the lighting altered to produce corridors on each side of the inner stage. This half was opened by a chorus spoken by Robert Vincent Frank which was drawn from the first 22 lines of the Chorus to Act 4. The French were now camped on the upper level, in every sense: they had camp chairs and their mannerisms and delivery were so arch that they might have been confused with English aristocrats.

Richard Howard delivered the next part of the Chorus to Act 4, ending on line 47 ('A little touch of Harry in the night'). When, at line 85 of 4.1, Henry moved across the battlefield to Bates, Court and Williams (played by that same trio of actors who had played the English traitors and the French lords), he found them on the inner stage, and rain fell upon them all. I did not feel that this was altogether a necessary effect, especially as it made some of the lines difficult to hear. However, in this second half of the play, there was much less gilding of the long speeches, no drums, and no comic business; the director relied instead upon the skill of John Tufts as King Henry, and Tufts rose to that challenge admirably.

After the quarrel with Williams, both the King and the soldier wore the exchanged gloves in their belts rather than their caps, and their lines were amended accordingly;

moreover, after Williams met the King again in 4.7, there was no involvement of Fluellen in his gulling, and so 4.7 and 4.8 were run together.

The next French scene (4.2) was radically pruned so that it ended at line 37, and Salisbury was excised from 4.3, although he was at least referred to in the list of those who would be remembered (line 34). Mountjoy delivered his lines in this scene from the platform on top of the vomitorium. The final, short piece of Chorus, spoken by Christine Albright, was then transplanted from the Chorus before Act 4 (lines 48 to 53) to come before 4.4, the scene in which Pistol encounters a French soldier.

4.5, the final scene of the French at battle, was played on the upper level, and 4.6 was cut, so that we went straight to the outrage of Fluellen at the killing of the boys and the luggage. There was no comic mitigation in this scene because Fluellen's comparison of Henry with Alexander was cut too, and the scene went from line 10 to the entrance of the King at line 55, with the Boy in his arms. As Henry read out the names of the English dead, his troops knelt and faced the King, who was upstage of them, and the drumbeats once again accompanied the speech. The *Te Deum* was begun by Rodney Gardiner, and taken up by the whole army.

The Chorus to Act 5, with its reference to Elizabeth's Irish wars, was cut entirely, and 5.1, in which Pistol is forced to eat a leek, was played downstage on the lower level in front of the curtain. This was by far the funniest of the comic scenes in this production. At the end of that scene, the splendid French court was discovered behind the curtain, with the Princess dressed in a shimmering white ball gown. Henry, however, was costumed as plainly as he had been at the beginning of the play. He took off his crown at line 149, and looked for reassurance from the servant Alice as he spoke his halting French (line 216). His query 'Can any of your neighbours tell me, Kate?' (196) took in the audience, and they reacted with pleasure, as they did to his scurrying across the stage on 'Here comes your father' (279-80).

It fell to Jeffrey King to speak the Epilogue, now without his Welsh Fluellen accent. That speech, and the accompanying percussive effects, brought this fine production to a close.

As You Like It

In sharp contrast to *Henry V*, *As You Like It*, also presented on the outdoor Elizabethan Stage, had a complicated set which almost obscured the tiring house, and precluded any extended use of the upper level. In consequence, this production had many more scenes

on the platforms above the vomitoria than I have seen before. In a number of ways, the production suffered from a concept that was not clearly articulated.

The production opened with a white-costumed goddess entering above, and then three similar figures entering below, each with a babe in her arms, singing a song about care, the first of several songs included in the production which did not derive from Shakespeare. Orlando, Rosalind and Celia then approached the three women holding the babies, and the dumb show continued, as the exile of Duke Senior was represented: the tabards of the courtiers changed from harts to lions, and the banners were similarly altered. The Playbill told us that the women were the Graces of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, but it would have required a very perceptive audience to grasp that fact. Relatedly, the upper stage was decked with cogs and pulleys and clouds and dominated by a huge clock. The sprinkling of leaves from time to time seemed to suggest that the director had it in mind that the play encompassed the passage of time across the seasons: indeed the Playbill referred to Rosalind experiencing 'the cycles of nature'. But, falling leaves apart, there was no other sign of the changing season; indeed the line on feeling the seasons' difference was cut from 2.1, and, as Orlando tells us in 3.2, 'there's no clock in the forest', so it was hard to see why there was one here.

The Playbill also told us that the production was inspired by the 'genius of Arthur Rackham', but the costumes seemed to be a cross between Elizabethan and the traditional English pantomime: the drunken Duke Frederick, in particular, looked as if he could have stepped straight out of *Aladdin*, whilst Touchstone (the excellent Peter Frechette) could have passed for Harlequin. In the first Act, Rosalind and Celia wore hooped skirts which led to a nice comic touch when Celia suggested 'Let us sit' (1.2.31) and this proved very hard to do. Other aspects of the design were unclear too. There was an octagon of wooden decking on the floor at centre stage, and ranks of bushes at both sides: these were there throughout the performance and not just for the forest scene. I could see no reason for the decking, and the bushes seemed to represent a heath rather than a forest.

The production featured more than one cross-cast role although the nature of the cross-casting was inconsistent. Charles the Wrestler was played by a woman in drag, with a beard and a low voice. Jacques, however, was played by Kathryn Meisle as a woman, in her manner, voice and costume. OSF frequently casts against gender and race, but this casting carried some consequences which were, perhaps, not fully thought through. Firstly, her presence in the forest meant that the Duke's company was not an all-male troupe, and I think that makes a considerable difference: part of the folly of the Duke is the folly of the King in *Love's Labour's Lost*: the belief that it is feasible to live without

women. The impact of having a female Jacques is comparable to having a female Berowne in a production in which the other lords are played by men. The second consequence of this casting decision was that, since not all the audience for this production would have known that this role is written for a male, there were some members of the audience who told me that they had expected Madame Jacques to marry Touchstone.

Despite the unclear production choices, Rosalind was well played by Erica Sullivan, and her performance included some neat touches and some fine timing. The first of these came in 1.2 when she saw a gesture from Orlando which nobody else had seen (largely because he had made no gesture) and shouted with delight 'He calls us back' (252). Sadly, these comic moments did not receive any reciprocation from the actor playing Orlando, and there was little sense of chemistry between these lovers, either when Rosalind was a woman or when she became Ganymede. For example, when Rosalind's enumeration of the characteristics of a lover caused her to touch Orlando's face on 'a beard neglected' (3.2.375), she reacted, but he did not, and he was similarly unresponsive when Rosalind contrived a manly slapping of him on 'she will breed it like a fool' (4.1.176). There was a great deal more of a sense of a relationship between Rosalind and Celia.

As in *Henry V*, this production featured the deaf actor Howie Seago, who played Duke Senior and whose lines were signed. This produced some interesting effects. In 1.3, Rosalind defended her father from the capricious Duke Frederick – 'My father was no traitor' (63), and she signed the speech in addition to speaking it, even though her father was yet to appear. In the scenes involving Duke Senior, Rodney Gardiner (as Amineo) was the principal signer, and he also voiced the Duke's lines. Perhaps the most poignant consequence of this casting of Duke Senior came with Jacques's speech on the seven ages of man in 2.7, which she signed as well as spoke, and which proved a very moving moment.

The production as a whole was cut extremely heavily, and several scenes were lost or moved. The order of the scenes in the second Act was altered, so that 2.3 came first, played on the floor in front of stage right. 2.2 was then played on the platform above the left of the two vomitoria, and finally, we moved to 2.1 and the Forest of Arden. The banners were taken out, the clouds moved in, and the bushes brought closer to the central octagon, as a song was sung by the Graces: 'Stretch out golden wings'. Some lines from 2.1 were cut, so that we had no reference to Jacques or to the killing of the deer (indeed this was a production with no deer carcass in sight). Furthermore, the

decision on whether to have, at line 5, ‘feel we not the penalty’ or ‘feel we but the penalty’ was resolved by excising the line completely.

In 2.4, Touchstone carried Celia into the Forest, and Corin and Silvius were accompanied by sheep – that is by actors dressed as sheep; in later scenes we would have actors dressed as goats, and as white harts popping up behind the bushes. This might explain the absence of carcasses. And when, at line 95, Celia declared that this was a place in which she could willingly ‘waste my time’, she got a laugh from the audience – perhaps a laugh which Shakespeare’s contemporary audience would not have given, because, in the Elizabethan period, ‘waste my time’ simply meant ‘spend my time’.

With an audible and visible turning of the clock, we moved to our first sight of Madame Jacques. When, in 2.7, Orlando brought in Adam to the Duke’s banquet, he did not carry him, as is so frequently the case, but simply walked ahead. The Duke joined in the singing in this scene, signing the words, whilst a deer wandered in the background. Act Three was also played with an unconventional order of scenes: 3.1 was moved so that it came after the intermission and was played on the platform above the stage left vomitorium. Instead, 3.2 closed the first half, and, at its outset, scrolls of poems were dropped from the roof. Touchstone performed a comic dance as Celia read out the verses she had found.

A lighting change during the intermission produced the effect of a dappled wood across the top of the tiring house, but the set was otherwise unchanged. Audrey was accompanied by actors dressed as goats (there would be actors dressed as sheep and as deer elsewhere in the production) and her accent, like that of other Arden folk, was noticeably rural. There was no Sir Oliver Martext in 3.3, and therefore no mock-marriage of Touchstone and Audrey. The exchange between Rosalind and Jacques at the beginning of 4.1 was also cut, and, just as an opportunity for intertextuality had been missed in *Henry V* with the cutting of the reference to Cressid 2.1.76; see above), so another went by the board in this production when Rosalind’s mention of Troilus was cut (4.1.97).

4.2 was also cut, and so we had no celebration of the killing of the deer; instead, we had a dumb-show representation of the story of the snake and lion to be recited by Oliver in the scene which followed. The reactions of Rosalind and Celia to this narrative were beautifully performed and expertly timed, and, when the eyes of Celia and Oliver met, as they picked up the swooning Rosalind, there was, at last, the sense of a couple in love.

After all this cutting, it was necessary to remove the opening lines of 5.1, with their reference to the 'marriage' of Touchstone and Audrey, but the first two scenes of the final Act were otherwise played in their entirety, with Rosalind leading Phoebe, Silvius and Orlando in a circle around the octagon at the end of 5.2 as they proclaimed their love. Cutting returned, however, in 5.3, which resulted in the loss of what is possibly the best known song in the play: 'It was a lover and his lass'. Instead, lights were placed in the bushes in preparation for the final nuptials. Touchstone's lengthy joke about the seven causes of quarrel (5.4, ll. 50ff) was cut, and the lines of Hymen were given to the four Graces. The 'other' de Boys brother, called Jack in the production, made his entrance across the platform above the stage left vomitorium, rushed on to the stage, and all misunderstandings were resolved.

This was a production which played down the darker sides of *As You Like It*, and I regretted the omission of those aspects. By having the deer, sheep and goats played by humans, the director looked to emphasise the fairy-tale qualities of the play, but, at the same time, that made it impossible to include the cruelty of the hunting scenes, or the implications of cuckoldry which are carried in the references to horns.

Other plays

The season also included two works which were, in some measure, derived from Shakespearian originals. *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* (M/M/C) was staged in the Angus Bowmer Theatre, and *The Very Merry Wives of Windsor* on the outdoor Elizabethan Stage. The former attempted to draw parallels between three narratives by Euripides, Shakespeare, and Rodgers and Hammerstein, while the latter was an adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy set in a contemporary Midwestern US town in which gay marriage is not only legal but encouraged, to the point of being the norm.

M/M/C has been a project of Bill Rauch since late 1990s. It is perhaps also part of OSF's pre-occupation with *Macbeth*: the Scottish play was produced here in 2009; it was part of *Equivocation* in the same year; it was staged as *Throne of Blood* in 2010; and now, here it was again. The production had a mixture of styles to match the three kinds of drama: the Greek part was presented with masks and chorus; there was an all-male cast for the Jacobean third; and music and dance for *Cinderella*. Of the four recent versions I have seen here of *Macbeth*, this was probably the best, and Christopher Liam Moore was a wonderful Lady Macbeth. Towards the end, the costumes, which had been sharply delineated in period, all came together in a uniform black, perhaps to suggest the commonality of the stories. This was a visually spectacular production, and there were some real points of interest (much was made of the overlap between the ugly sisters and the witches, while the Wicked Stepmother became Lady Macduff at one point; "when shall we three meet again" was the final refrain of *Medea*, *Macbeth* and

Cinderella) but I was not sure the experiment worked as a whole: it was as spectacular as Cirque du Soleil but did not have the depth one expects at a Shakespeare festival. In contrast, I was firmly convinced that *The Very Merry Wives of Windsor, Iowa* was a failure. As an adaptation of Shakespeare, it was far less interesting than *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, and its jokes were not on the same level. I think any members of the audience who were from the Midwest or who were lesbian, would have felt uncomfortable with the stereotypes and comic targets. When Ford (in this case Ms Ford) went to Falstaff in disguise, she went, not as Brook but as Dodge. And there was a truly awful joke at the expense of Catherine Coulson, who was featured in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*; at one point another actor asked her "Do you have a log, lady?" The OSF website had to be changed to make it clear that this was not a Shakespeare play, and that, in itself, was a surprising move, since it did include, from time to time, recognisable snatches from Shakespeare's own play: we had 'frampold life' from 2.2; 'the potions and the motions' and 'the proverbs and the no-verbs' from 3.1; and even being 'bowl'd to death with turnips' from 3.4. But this was a sad, and sometimes offensive updating of one of Shakespeare's less memorable comedies.

Conclusions

This 2012 OSF season included four Shakespeare productions, two of which I found highly successful. *Troilus and Cressida* allowed its director to build upon work he had done on this play in a previous production with a different company. *Henry V* had the advantages of making effective use of the Elizabethan stage, and also not requiring such a detailed knowledge of English history from its audience as did the two parts of *Henry IV* in previous seasons. I found the productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It* less successful, and it is just possible that we see *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It* a little too frequently, so that directors feel obliged to do something different – those innovations are not always going to work.

Perhaps most of all, however, this season demonstrated the strength of the OSF company. Not only could an actor like Alejandra Escalante take on roles as different as Phoebe in *As You Like It* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* and play each with equal skill, but the company also showed how well its understudy policy worked. This was brought into play, both early in the season when the cast of *Troilus and Cressida* was hit by a range of illness and accidents, and towards the end when an injury to Howie Seago took him out of *Henry V* and *As You Like It*. There are few companies who could cope with replacing a deaf actor with a hearing actor: OSF is among that happy band.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

Shirley, Frances A. (ed.), *Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

“Troilus and Cressida Joins OSF Rep; Opens 3/31.” *BroadwayWorld.com*. 31 Mar 2012.
< <http://portland.broadwayworld.com/article/TROILUS-AND-CRESSIDA-Joins-OSF-Rep-Opens-331-20120330>>