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### Constable, Neil, chief executive. Globe Player. Other

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memory.”<sup>5</sup> This particular archive’s potential, in the sense that it may add to the wealth of material it has already collected, is rather self-evident. There is indeed an impressive range of materials gathered here, especially considering that this is an entirely student-run project, much smaller in scale than other Shakespeare performance archives. It gives us intimate, behind-the-scenes glimpses at the plays in production, performance, promotion, and reception, as well as a broad sense of how performances of Shakespeare in the Philippines are situated within wider international and institutional networks. By shining a light on the different ways in which Shakespeare is staged, studied, and taught by Filipinos, the project could serve another purpose, providing an ideal starting point for those hoping to increase the visibility of—and initiate more conversations around—traditions currently underrepresented at international festivals and conferences, in publications, and in larger databases and archives. But one could also argue that its great potential lies in its framework, still raw but extremely promising as a means of mapping out Philippine Shakespeares that are not always monolithic, that are not confined to the stage, and that exist in a rapidly evolving elsewhere.

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**Constable, Neil, chief executive.**

**Globe Player. Other.**

London: Shakespeare’s Globe, 2015. Accessed 19 August 2020.

[globeplayer.tv](http://globeplayer.tv).

Theatre is one of the most transient of arts. Live performance is writ in water, and part of its appeal for aficionados is the unique experience of sharing with a particular audience at a particular moment in time a performance that, even when repeated the next night, will not be exactly the same. Yet theatres and theatre artistes have always sought to impart a greater degree of permanence to

5. Christy Desmet, “The Art of Curation: Searching for Global Shakespeares in the Digital Archives,” *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 11.1 (2017), [borrowers.uga.edu/783934/show](http://borrowers.uga.edu/783934/show).

their ephemeral art. In 1709, the Tonson editions of the plays of Shakespeare, the first to be illustrated, gave a picture of a moment in the play to accompany each text, beginning a torrent of illustrated editions that included ever wider ranges of portrayals, including some of the very best examples of the art of book illustration, such as Arthur Rackham's illustrations for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>1</sup> Critics have always tried to capture in their descriptions something of the electrifying experience of seeing a great actor in a great play. But whether it be visual, verbal, or rendered in marble or porcelain, the desire to capture performance is a phenomenon of long standing. There have been literally hundreds of screen versions of Shakespeare's plays created in dozens of countries over the last 125 years, but adapting a play as a film is a different thing from recording a play in performance. The arrival of television, and in particular the ability to record and store material on videotape, offered an opportunity to create records of stage performances.

Shakespeare archives exist all over the world. Understandably, most of these have consisted of documents, texts, paintings, illustrations, photographs, costumes, stage designs, and other tangible objects. Such archives allow the possibility for scholars or enthusiasts to imaginatively gain an impression of what a particular production might have been like. To see the very dress made from beetle carapaces worn by Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth, as immortalized in the John Singer Sargent portrait (1889), is a vivid experience, and one which in turn creates a yearning to see more of the production. While recordings of Terry, or for that matter Garrick, Kean, or Burbage, are beyond our reach until time travel becomes a reality, nowadays many archives contain digital records of stage performances. It is a moot point as to how closely these recordings recreate the performance, given that they are at best a pale shadow of the live experience, but the demand for such recordings clearly exists. In exploring some of the reasons for the creation of such recordings, and the uses to which they can be put, and by whom they are used, it is important to clarify the well-spring from which they are drawn. Digital captures offer at least a partial record of the live performance, although nothing can ever quite recreate the frisson of the live moment.

Companies may record live performances for archival purposes, but the screenings and DVDs which the public see are generally an entirely different

1. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, illustration by Arthur Rackham (London: William Heinemann, 1908).

thing. These are recorded in order to make money. A company might stream a performance live to other venues, greatly increasing the reach of a production, which can now be seen by millions all over the world rather than the thousands who can actually fit into one theatre in one locality over a limited period of time. An example of this would be the National Theatre Live screenings which, like those from New York's Metropolitan Opera, go out simultaneously with a live performance. These try hard to recreate as closely as possible the feeling of being in the theatre watching a live show, with the enhancements of close-ups and focus on detail. As an additional bonus, this gives a recording that can be used in other contexts, and it is from these recordings that the hugely popular screenings during COVID-19 lockdown have been drawn. Others, like the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe, sell DVDs, Blu-Rays, and downloads of the productions. These sales represent important revenue streams for all companies, but in the case of the Globe this is even more crucial than for the RSC or the National. The Globe does not have the sort of state-supported revenue funding that the other companies have. All of these companies operate websites that take different approaches to the collecting of content.

The Globe has not yet comprehensively covered the entire spectrum of Shakespeare's plays on DVD, and in the case of a popular play like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers two alternative productions. There is not at present any attempt to offer an alternative to the BBC/Time-Life series (1978–85), with one supposedly definitive production of each play. Instead, the Globe offers a gradually accumulating library of some of its productions, by no means all that are offered. Sadly, there are no productions from the Wanamaker Theatre, the Globe's indoor venue, which presents plays in a manner that echoes the Blackfriars Theatre in Shakespeare's time. But the productions staged in the Globe which have been recorded are offered via the shop as discs and via the Globe Player as downloads.

None of this is surprising, nor is it particularly earth-shattering. The productions are of varying quality, some good, some dull; they are all shot in a similar fashion, and none of those seen by your correspondent actually manages to really capture the atmosphere of a live performance at the Globe, where the asides, direct address and ad-libs to the spectators, and the close and intimate contact with the "groundlings" are what make the performances so memorable for audiences. One can scarcely imagine anyone wanting to build

an entire collection of Globe DVDs for the entertainment value of the shows themselves. Several of the recordings reflect very good productions, but not all of them do. Sadly, some of the best productions have not been made available. The commercial viability of the recordings as a product seems to be reasonably secure, and educational establishments all over the world buy them, even if only to sit in the library next to the set of thirty-seven BBC Shakespeares. For researchers and enthusiasts, these recordings have some interest, but the Globe Player has far more interesting material to offer.

The Globe has never lacked ambition, and with the four hundredth anniversary commemoration of Shakespeare's death in 2016, a number of projects were mounted, including the touring *Hamlet* which visited (nearly) every country in the world concluding at Elsinore. It was a more exciting idea than it was a production; yet what was fascinating, and what makes up a wonderful resource, is the series of recordings of the Globe to Globe Project in the same year, where productions of all of Shakespeare's plays, and also some poems, were performed, each by a company from a different country, in a different language. Whether a Korean *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a Turkish *Antony and Cleopatra*, a Cantonese *Titus Andronicus*, or a Zulu *Venus and Adonis*, the Player offers an extraordinary range of work. But the difference between the Globe Player and, for example MIT's Global Shakespeares (also reviewed in this issue), is that in the case of the Globe, access to these productions has to be paid for. This material is variable, but the best of it is very exciting, and as an insight into the role of Shakespeare in different theatre traditions from all around the world it is thrilling, but to rent all thirty-three different productions at £3.99 a time puts the cost beyond the reach of many students, scholars, and casual viewers around the world.

But not all of the content on the player is costly. Shakespeare Lives, a series of eleven short films, "reimagines some of Shakespeare's best-known works for a modern audience," as the landing page states ([globeplayer.tv/all](http://globeplayer.tv/all)). These shorts are creative responses to *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, etc. by a series of artists. They are free to view, offering a series of interesting contemporary explorations of themes and situations from the plays. *Twelfth Night* is recorded in the candlelit interior of the Wanamaker Theatre, where a succession of rappers play around the role of Shakespeare and his language. In *Macbeth*, an actress from a very dark and gripping TV drama series about unmasking police corruption performs Lady Macbeth's soliloquy from act 1 scene 5 ("The raven

himself is hoarse...”) and the film moves into a terrifying *Alien*-inspired physical decomposition in the style of what the site calls “Manga animation” as she calls up more of her demons. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has Titania restrained in a laboratory where Oberon is performing mind experiments upon her, and she envisions a surreal, transformative dance between herself and Bottom. *Romeo and Juliet* is set on an English beach during a feud between two rival ice cream trucks. The best of these are witty, inventive, entirely valid meditations. Not all are equally good, but all are worth watching. There is also the Sonnet Project, where Shakespeare’s sonnets are filmed in different contexts around New York City, a project mounted by the New York Shakespeare Exchange. The project page on the Player describes the films as “a tapestry of cinematic art that infuses the poetry of William Shakespeare into the poetry of New York City.” Quite frankly, it does exactly that. Again, the best are well-made and thought provoking, and all 154 of the sonnets are covered, but there is a lot to be gained from plunging in at random and wallowing in the content.

One of the most fascinating elements on the Globe Player is the *Muse of Fire*, a series of interviews with actors and scholars from a wide range of backgrounds, filmed by Dan Poole and Giles Terera. A film based on these interviews was made for television, but the actual source material, more than 130 interviews, is far more fascinating than any short digest of the material could be. These are substantial discussions, many around an hour long, and the interviewees range from legendary Oscar winners and theatrical stars like Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, and Ben Kingsley to leading lights of the rising generation, such as Jessie Buckley and Ruth Negga. There are directors like Sir Peter Hall and John Barton, and directors like Julie Taymor and Baz Luhrmann. There are academics like Harold Bloom, critics like Nicholas de Jongh, and, by way of contrast, actor Giles Terera himself, whose own concern as to his lack of knowledge regarding Shakespeare gave the genesis to the whole project. It is hard to find anything remotely comparable available anywhere else. Not all of the interviewees are equally stellar, but the vast majority of the interviews give fascinating insights into the position of Shakespeare in the Anglophone theatre and film industries as interviewees discuss Shakespeare’s role in their own lives and careers. To be fair, this is what it set out to do, but if it has a weakness it is in the lack of non-Anglophone interviewees. The number of Anglophone but non-Caucasian subjects is not much better. It seems churlish to criticize this extraordinary resource, which already goes so much further than other

collections, for not being even more comprehensive. Perhaps it will spur on others in different languages and cultures to create something of their own. Nevertheless, it is certainly disappointing that many highly talented artists of colour, some of whom undoubtedly have interesting and different perspectives to offer, and who have been working at the highest levels in the British or American theatre, are not interviewed. Of course, no outsider can know how hard they may have tried to get different interviewees to take part, but if the project were to continue and expand, these two areas would be welcome additions.

The Globe Player is an extraordinary resource for researchers and enthusiasts. It offers the Shakespeare aficionado a cornucopia of material that leaves most other digital resources in the shade. The productions of the main company, good though some of them are, are probably a slightly less interesting aspect of the site. What is gratifying is that the truly unique and valuable assets are all available for free.

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**Cimolino, Antoni, artistic dir.; Anita Gaffney, executive dir.; Ann Swerdfager, publicity dir.**

**Stratfest@Home. Other.**

Stratford: Stratford Festival, 2020. Accessed 23 November 2020.

[stratfordfestival.ca/AtHome](http://stratfordfestival.ca/AtHome).

The response of the international theatre community to the pandemic restrictions was initially a generous one. Large institutional theatres all over the world suddenly made recorded versions of their performances available online, for the most part for free. But as the crisis has evolved, so has the online provision by established theatres. As a long-time advocate of using digital performance resources in teaching and research, my response to the rapid rewriting of the online world in this area includes feelings of both excitement and frustration. Had it not been for the pandemic, I imagine that many of these online initiatives would have developed over the next five to ten years. However,