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AMERICAN DIRECTORIAL APPROACHES TO SHAKESPEARE, 1960-1976

by

WILLIAM L. PROSSER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1977

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Drama in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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W.L.P.

AMERICAN DIRECTORIAL APPROACHES TO SHAKESPEARE,
1960-1976

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This study examines the directorial approaches, principles and techniques of eight American directors of Shakespeare from 1960 to 1976. The study covers a variety of approaches during these years in which American Shakespeare Festivals and regional theatres have proliferated. The eight directors include Stuart Vaughan, Joseph Papp, Gerald Freedman, Allen Fletcher, William Ball, Edward Payson Call, Michael Kahn, and Nagle Jackson.

A chapter is given to each director, each chapter containing four parts: (1) creative history of director, (2) statement of director's principles of directing Shakespeare (all directors but Joseph Papp are interviewed), (3) investigation of one production for each director in depth, showing director's techniques in practice, and (4) evaluation of director's approach on "in depth" production. Productions examined in detail include the following: Stuart Vaughan's Hamlet (1960), Joseph Papp's Henry V (1976), Gerald Freedman's Love's Labour's Lost (1965), Allen Fletcher's King Lear (1963), William Ball's The Taming of the Shrew (1973), Edward Payson Call's A Midsummer Night's Dream (1975),

Michael Kahn's The Winter's Tale (1975), and Nagle Jackson's Richard II (1970).

A final chapter compares the directors, showing little similarity in principles but revealing certain polarities of Shakespearean directing. These polarities include visual directors vs. actors' directors, pre-blockers vs. free-blockers, real speech vs. poetic speech, and traditionalist vs. innovators. The influence of Stanislavsky as well as certain British directors including B. Iden Payne, Tyrone Guthrie, and Peter Brook is seen in nearly all of the directors. Each director is also seen as experimenting with production styles which may be termed "theatricalism" transcending the basically realistic, method-oriented American theatre of the 1950s.

The dissertation reveals a similarity in successful productions of tragedies and among successful Shakespearean comic productions. The productions of tragedies termed successful by the directors have always had extraordinarily strong actors in their leading roles. In the power balance between actor and director, in these productions the leading actors have had equal if not greater influence on the production, than the directors. Successful comic productions have been marked by ensemble unity, cast amity, and a festive rehearsal atmosphere.

The unifying element in most American Shakespearean productions lies not in production "concepts" nor in a theoretical approach to Shakespeare. American Shakespeare is most characterized by physical vitality and emotional warmth. Stylistic and conceptual considerations generally take second place to these qualities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Glen Loney and Patricia MacKay in The Shakespeare Complex, published in 1976, describe twenty-six American Shakespeare Festivals which exist in the United States in the mid-seventies. This "complex" of festivals demonstrates the importance Shakespeare has assumed in the American Theatre.

Whatever the motives for attending Shakespeare festivals, Americans and Canadians are increasingly involved in the Shakespeare complex. It has become a positive force in the life of North American Theatre. It is bringing live theatre into many communities which otherwise would never experience anything more lively than a TV special. It provides work for actors, designers, directors, and craftspeople. It has brought the work of Shakespeare to life for hundreds of Americans and Canadians who have in turn moved on to support and encourage a wider range of theatrical experiences.¹

In addition to Shakespeare's emergence in the festivals, he has become the most produced playwright of American universities and colleges. According to a study done for the Educational Theatre Journal of March, 1976, Shakespeare was the most produced playwright during the 1973-74 school year. There were 157 productions of twenty-seven of his plays. The three most popular were A Midsummer Night's Dream with twenty-two productions, The Taming of the Shrew with seventeen productions, and Twelfth Night, also with seventeen

¹Glen Loney and Patricia MacKay, The Shakespeare Complex (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1976), p. 8.

productions. One thousand eighty performances of Shakespeare's plays took place at universities that season.²

Statistics collected for other years are similar. In 1972-73 there were 1,089 performances, and in 1971-72 there were 1,584 performances. The actual figures are probably much higher since the poll represents returns from only 48.9 percent of the schools queried.³

Shakespeare is also a staple of professional regional theatres. He draws good houses and does not require royalty payment. According to the Best Play Series, the regional theatres in 1974-75 did forty-four productions of twenty-two plays of Shakespeare; in 1973-74 there were thirty-four productions of nineteen plays; and in 1972-73 there were thirty-one productions of twenty-one of the plays.⁴

The only theatrical arena from which Shakespeare has been consistently absent in recent years is the Broadway theatre. The activities of the Royal Shakespeare Company in Brooklyn recently, and of Joseph Papp in his various theatres, may have had a discouraging effect, but in 1975-76 there were no Broadway productions of Shakespeare; in 1974-75 there were two (As You Like It, the all-male National Theatre production, and Joe Papp's Much Ado About Nothing transferred from Central Park). There were no productions on Broadway

²Leighton M. Ballew, "The Good Old Bad Plays," Educational Theatre Journal, March, 1976, p. 101.

³Ibid.

⁴Best Play Series, Clive Barnes, ed., 1974-75; 1973-74; and 1972-73 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company).

of Shakespeare in 1973-74. This fact shows the dead end of a trend recognized in a 1941 dissertation written for Yale University by Natalie E. White entitled Shakespeare on the New York Stage. "From 1931 to 1941, the total number of Shakespearean productions was only 37, as compared with 152 in 1901-1911. The season 1934-35 saw no Shakespeare at all."⁵ In the thirties, four productions accounted for most of the Shakespearean performances on Broadway. These were John Gielgud's Hamlet (132 performances), Maurice Evans in Margaret Webster's Richard II (133 performances), Evans and Helen Hayes in Webster's Twelfth Night (129 performances), and Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre production of Julius Caesar (157 performances).

The 1950s American theatre was primarily concerned with realistic dramas and situation comedies. There were few attempts at classical repertory. Eva Le Gallienne's failure with the Civic Repertory Theatre in 1949 seemed to be part of an inevitable pattern. The Phoenix Theatre faced a continual struggle to stay alive. But there were roots being planted which were to blossom into the regional repertory theatres and Shakespeare festivals of the sixties and seventies.

While studies like The Shakespeare Complex have pointed out this recent growth of interest in Shakespeare, no accounts have described the productions being done during this renaissance. It is the purpose of this dissertation to analyze the Shakespearean production aesthetics of this period by concentrating on the approaches of

⁵ Natalie E. White, "Shakespeare on the New York Stage," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1941), p. 3.

eight prominent American Shakespearean directors who have worked in the years 1960 to 1976.

Past ages have seen themselves reflected in the type of Shakespeare they have staged. The English Restoration pruned and distorted the plays in order to make them conform to rules of decorum and neo-classics taste. The eighteenth century favored sentimental readings of plays like King Lear, happily reuniting Lear and Cordelia in Nahum Tate's popular version. The early nineteenth century thrilled to the star performances of Sarah Siddons and Edmund Kean, who were able to impress audiences with emotional fireworks. As the nineteenth century progressed, audiences looked for more realism in their Shakespeare. Sir Henry Irving's productions in England, Stanislavsky's in Russia, Saxe-Meiningen's in Germany, and Augustin Daly's in America offered "historically accurate" Shakespeare based on meticulous research with detailed, "authentic" visions of Rome, Venice, Verona, and Illyria. Around the turn of the century, William Poel in England revolted against this realism and attempted to reproduce Shakespeare's own methods of production, with the plays set in the Elizabethan period regardless of their historical time or geographical locale.

The twentieth century has seen two new kinds of Shakespearean production. One type of staging changes Shakespeare's setting to some other time or locale. Orson Welles' Julius Caesar in modern dress, emphasizing contemporary political problems, as well as his Haitian voodoo-inspired Macbeth, are examples of this kind of "transplant." Another type sets the play in no particular time or locale. Costumes and set reflect no specific period or may combine

different time periods and locales within the same production in non-realistic fashion. Peter Brook's A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1970 represented this kind of "abstract" Shakespeare.

Changes in production styles of Shakespeare tell us something of the ages in which they occurred. The purpose of this dissertation is similar to that of George Odell's historical study of the English stage, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving. It hopes to serve as a record and description of certain productions during the years 1960-76, while also attempting to ascertain trends and patterns within the period.

The years 1960-76 witnessed a new concern in the American theatre: the search for a specifically American approach to Shakespeare which has led directors to considerations of production styles distinct from the realism which dominated the American theatre of the 1950s. Directors searched for ways to express Shakespeare's poetic language and larger-than-life characters. In this they were often frustrated by the values and work habits of many American actors.

Tyrone Guthrie put it this way:

American actors seem to feel that the development of a technique of classical acting, which means among other things, learning how to manage great rhetorical speeches and to swish about effectively and without embarrassment in the finery of other epochs, is in no way related to themselves, the contemporary background and the local scene. . . . Moreover, for thirty or forty years the influence of the leading critics in America has been exerted in the same direction. They have despised and derided anything which seemed even faintly tinged with "ham," and only found that to be true which is naturalistic and life sized.⁶

⁶Tyrone Guthrie, A Life in the Theatre (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959), p. 244.

Margaret Webster, who also directed a great deal of Shakespeare in America, detected a reluctance and fear on the part of American actors to deal with Shakespeare's language.

We had to face a number of difficulties of which we only gradually became aware. There was, for instance, the minor one of accent. Several actors went so far as to refuse parts in the productions on the grounds that they either could not "speak English" or were afraid that by so doing they would endanger their chances of future employment as gangsters. We found that actors were frightened of Shakespeare, particularly the verse. Modern habits of speech, both English and American, incline us to careless enunciation, flattened inflections, and brief spasmodic phrasing. It is virtually certain that our Elizabethan forebears had a liveliness of utterance which we have lost.⁷

Changes have occurred in the United States since these accounts of American acting of Shakespeare were written. It is partly the goal of this dissertation to illuminate these changes by studying eight contemporaries who have been influential in producing Shakespeare.

One of the difficulties of this study is how to deal with the great number of Shakespearean productions during this period and their geographic dispersal. The regionalization of American theatre has made it increasingly impossible to define American theatre as New York theatre. My choice is to concentrate on directorial approaches to Shakespeare and consider directors who have worked in many parts of the country.

The criteria for selection of the directors have been the following:

1. The director is an American.

⁷Margaret Webster, Shakespeare Without Tears (New York: Capricorn Books Edition, 1955), p. 15.

2. He has directed at least five productions of Shakespeare at professional theatres or important Shakespeare festivals in the United States from 1960 to 1976.
3. Sufficient primary and secondary sources exist on the director's work.
4. He is alive, so he may be interviewed.

The eight directors who met these criteria are Stuart Vaughan, Joseph Papp, Gerald Freedman, Allen Fletcher, William Ball, Edward Payson Call, Michael Kahn, and Nagle Jackson. Two other directors were considered--Ellis Rabb and A.J. Antoon. Rabb was omitted because he could not be located for an interview and sufficient primary and secondary sources do not exist on him to permit analysis. A. J. Antoon was considered because of the success achieved with his 1974 production of Much Ado About Nothing, but he was omitted because, up to the present he has directed only one other Shakespeare play.

The work of these men represents a wide geographical distribution. The theatres where they have directed include the New York Shakespeare Festival, the American Conservatory Theatre, the Guthrie Theatre, the National Shakespeare Festival at San Diego, the Ashland Shakespeare Festival, the Association of Producing Artists, the Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Phoenix Theatre, and the American Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford, Connecticut. They personify a colorful variety of backgrounds and influences.

The leading questions to be investigated here are the following:

1. What have been the major influences on American productions of Shakespeare in the last sixteen years?

2. What aesthetic principles have guided notable American directors of Shakespeare in the last sixteen years?
3. What directorial practices have they used?
4. What kinds of results were achieved by these productions?
Did the directors achieve what they set out to do?
5. Are there any similarities among them? What are their differences?
6. Are there any discernible trends?

The chapters on the individual directors have been organized to respond to the above questions. Each chapter is outlined as follows:

- I. Creative history and background of the director.
- II. Aesthetic principles and guiding work on Shakespeare.
- III. Directorial practices as particularly evidenced in one production of director's choice when possible.
- IV. Critical reception of the production. Did the director realize his goals?
- V. Overall comparison of principles and practices of the director. Conclusions regarding the director.

A final chapter will deal with similarities, differences, and trends.

An outline of questions was followed in interviewing directors and in writing each chapter. However, not everyone found the same questions applicable to his work. Some effort has been made to suggest the individuality of each man. A director does not always reveal himself by what he says. Much of a director's individual power is communicated in his person. The director-actor relationship implies subtle and unspoken bonds. A director is not always even aware of how he affects actors. Nor does every director articulate clearly what he

is attempting to do with a certain production. Like many artists, he works to a certain extent on an unconscious level. The quality of a production often results from an unrecognized personal chemistry which the rehearsal process does not openly reveal. It is my hope that each chapter will contribute to an understanding of the personalities of these directors.

I asked each man to choose one Shakespearean production which he felt most satisfied his goals. Several responded to the question as asked; others found they could not or preferred to change the question in some way. In each chapter I will show how the director responded but regardless, one production for each director was investigated in depth.

Besides the personal interviews with the directors, some made available personal prompt books and unpublished papers. Interviews with actors, designers and technicians supplement the material gathered from directors on the productions they chose. I have seen all the directors at work with the exception of Stuart Vaughan. In several cases I had seen the production dealt with here. I have also studied with William Ball at the American Conservatory Theatre and am familiar with some of his ideas from contact with him during the summer of 1969 at the Summer Training Congress. By coincidence, Nagle Jackson was my acting teacher there that summer. I am familiar with Ed Payson Call's work at the State University of New York at Purchase since I was hired as a guest director in the spring of 1976 to direct Wycherly's The Country Wife with the same group of actors who had been directed by Call in A Midsummer Night's Dream the previous fall.

Also consulted were available published materials, books, magazine articles, and numerous reviews and criticisms of productions in newspapers from all over the United States. Clipping files on each director at the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts proved invaluable.

This dissertation subsumes a variety of approaches but one hopes it also gives a general picture of the American theatre in search of a style for Shakespeare in the United States of the twentieth century. This study also provides valuable records of whatever critical insights these directors contribute to an understanding of Shakespeare on stage. Shakespeare has often been examined for his literary merits alone. This treatment views Shakespeare as a producing playwright whose plays were intended to live on the stage and is best appreciated as a master of the theatrical profession. It is hoped that this dissertation will be of help to theatre practitioners seeking inspiration and guidance from the work of others.

CHAPTER II

STUART VAUGHAN

In the late fifties and early sixties Stuart Vaughan was the most prominent American Shakespearean director in the New York theatre. His background in university theatre marked him as a new type in the professional theatre--the university-trained director equipped with a college education in a profession which had traditionally trained its artists with practical stage experience.

Born August 23, 1925, Vaughan came out of a "lower-middle class home" in Terre Haute, Indiana.¹ He was a precocious child who was "fascinated with history as a kid" and played Prince Arthur in a grammar school adaptation of Shakespeare's King John. "My teacher was amazed that I knew all about King John and Prince Arthur when she told me Shakespeare's story."² His influences were regional and second-hand: books, records, and films; a college-cast Romeo and Juliet; recordings of Maurice Evans, Otis Skinner, and eventually John Gielgud. He remembers having read Arthur Colby Sprague's Shakespeare and the Actors while in college and becoming interested in Shakespearean theatrical tradition. "I really was a Shakespeare nut early on in my career."³

¹Stuart Vaughan interview, New York, New York, June 20, 1976.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

While a graduate student at Indiana State University, Vaughan directed his first production of Shakespeare, a main-stage Macbeth, with faculty members in his cast. Vaughan himself calls this a "landmark at Indiana University. . . . I guess I'm the kind of person people would always give responsibility to because I would get things done."⁴

After graduating from Indiana University, Vaughan went to England. He was one of the first students to be awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to observe and study repertory theatre in Europe. "I think I really created the fellowship in my application. I didn't want to study in just one school but wanted to move around and see as much theatre as I could. Also, I wanted to know why they had repertory theatres and we didn't."⁵ During his stay Vaughan saw Gielgud direct Much Ado About Nothing, visited many English provincial reps, and saw what he has called "perhaps the only definitive production of anything I've ever seen" in Peter Brook's 1950 production of Measure for Measure with John Gielgud, Barbara Jefford and Harry Andrews. When asked what was so remarkable about this production, Vaughan recalls the simplicity and manner in which the play "flowed from scene to scene in a Shakespearean way. The concept seemed to contain the whole play, with its variety, complexities, and contradictions."⁶

On his return to the United States Vaughan began to pursue a career in the professional New York theatre as an actor, appearing in two Broadway productions playing English character types. These plays were T. S. Eliot's The Confidential Clerk with Ina Claire and a tour

⁴Vaughan interview.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

of Shaw's The Millionairess starring Katharine Hepburn and directed by Margaret Webster. He directed his first professional "showcase" production, Paul Shyre's adaptation of Sean O'Casey's autobiographical I Knock at the Door at the YMHA Poetry Center in 1955. (Joe Papp was to see this production, a connection which later proved important.⁷)

In the spring of 1955, John Burrell, an English director who had worked extensively at the Old Vic, was hired to begin a class in Shakespearean acting for the newly-forming American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut. Out of this class, the first acting company for the Shakespeare Festival was to be selected.

Vaughan was a part of this group. He remarks, "I watched how Stratford, Connecticut was being done in the beginning and learned to hate it. It was a theatre conceived in dilettantism."⁸ Part of Vaughan's disillusionment may have stemmed from the fact that after the initial classes he was not asked to join the permanent company. But the theatre's early critical reception suggests that Vaughan correctly saw the early company as a strange mixture of American school-of-realism actors with star names, and a more permanent group of actors attempting English conservatory methods.

Vaughan had earlier been asked to be a part of Joseph Papp's then forming Shakespeare Workshop which met in a church basement in the East Village. He had been too busy to join and remembers having a negative impression of Papp on their first meeting. "He was rude to actors--a pompous little Napoleonic phony."⁹ This impression was to change when, in 1956, after seeing I Knock at the Door, Papp invited

⁷Vaughan interview.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

Vaughan to direct his group's first two outdoor productions, Julius Caesar and A Taming of the Shrew, to be presented at the Eastside Amphitheatre located on New York's East River. Vaughan has said,

When I first met him to talk about the Eastside Amphitheatre, I saw the other side of Joe. I saw someone really able, when he chooses, to listen to people, to see what their ideas are, and to go with them if he likes their ideas. He can be very supportive of creativity when he approves of the direction it's taking."¹⁰

Stuart Vaughan has given a vivid account of these productions in his autobiography, A Possible Theatre. Working for no pay, improvising sets and costumes, he worked in a close relationship with Papp to produce the first fully-staged outdoor productions of the New York Shakespeare Festival at the East River Amphitheatre.

The custom at the Shakespeare Workshop in the East Sixth St. Church had been to costume all the women in long black skirts and black blouses and the men in white open-neck shirts and black trousers. One look at the East River Amphitheatre (seating 2000 spectators) convinced me that the place required costuming more elaborate than that. . . . Joe had met a young actor named Chester Doherty whose parents owned a small costume company. . . . Happily, Chester . . . was a capable performer whom we could use in the company. Through his parents, we were able to get the use of Roman armor and other nonbreakable appurtenances for Caesar. With small contributions from the Papp and Vaughan family coffers, it was possible to purchase the fabric for togas and the few women's costumes. . . . So huge an acting area demanded some kind of Roman mob. We succeeded in recruiting some fifty extras . . . and the great trick in the mob scenes was to contrive to keep the stage from looking empty. . . . We solved this to some extent by having the oration delivered straight to the audience. . . . The job streamed in from the gates at the side of the acting area. Some sat in the first rows of the audience, and others stood, framing the platform. Light was directed only at the speakers.¹¹

¹⁰ Vaughan interview.

¹¹ Stuart Vaughan, A Possible Theatre (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1968), pp. 34-35.

Other unique features of the production included borrowed microphones and amplification systems, technical rehearsals in the driving rain, and neighborhood visitors to rehearsals, some of whom became part of the acting mob. "Some of them drifted in to become part of the crowd, and the natural comradeship of the theatre reached out to embrace the wild but willing youngsters in one of the healthiest manifestations of the free Shakespeare experience."¹²

Vaughan writes that the experience was a "vital one." The actors and management had united in a communal way to tax their energy in the beginning of the free Shakespeare for New York City. Vaughan remained with the Shakespeare Festival for the next three years. After the first summer and a production of Shrew that featured Colleen Dewhurst and J. D. Cannon as Katharine and Petruchio, Papp and Vaughan were determined to continue with the idea of free Shakespeare. Papp conceived of a mobile theatre with a stage on a trailer which could move around the boroughs of New York. In preparation for this second summer, Vaughan began, during the months preceding the summer of 1957, to meet with a group of about thirty actors in order to evolve an American methodology for acting Shakespeare. The theatre of the fifties was permeated by Lee Strasberg's version of the Stanislavsky method, and it became Vaughan's concern with his method-trained actors to find ways of applying this "method" to Shakespeare. He credits part of his learning and exploration at this time to professional classes he took with Harold Clurman at the Stella Adler studio. While firmly rooted in the Stanislavsky tradition from his Group affiliations,

¹² Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, p. 36.

Clurman was at the same time becoming aware of the limitations of a strictly realistic approach to all forms of drama, and was seeking ways to enlarge Stanislavsky's scope to include heroic and classical theatre as well as experimental, anti-realistic forms. In his interview Vaughan spoke of the influence of Clurman's classes.

I began to see from Harold's talking how there could be a fusion between the kind of acting I had seen in England and the method's way of breaking down a script with its more intellectual pursuit of clarity, the memory of emotion, and the personal truth which you could attach to a script.¹³

In the summer of 1957 Vaughan directed three productions: Romeo and Juliet, Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Macbeth. It was an ambitious season. The shows were originally planned to tour all five boroughs and Romeo and Juliet actually did so, with a stage that folded out from a "thirty-five foot trailer . . . equipped with a standing unit some seven feet tall in which posts, rising vertically from the truck bed, supported three connected platform surfaces comprising an upper stage."¹⁴ Arches were attached to a central stage on platforms, forming a stage similar to several Renaissance stages "particularly the 1539 Theatre at Ghent and the 1561 Theatre at Antwerp."¹⁵ But, after Romeo and Juliet Papp decided the touring was too strenuous and the last two shows were played permanently in Central Park.

With this season, Vaughan, Papp, and the New York Shakespeare Festival began to achieve some recognition from the critics. Romeo and Juliet received good notices and an especially prestigious review from Walter Kerr.

¹³Vaughan interview.

¹⁴Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, pp. 58-59.

¹⁵Ibid.

I never really believed that the best things in life are free, but I am practically convinced after last night. . . . This is in many respects the best production of Romeo and Juliet I've ever seen.

What's so good about it? Well, it is intelligible--not simply in a verbal sense. It is emotionally intelligible which is a feat very few Montagues, Capulets, and assorted Veronese have ever brought off.

That is to say, Romeo does not stand under a balcony serenading his lady with consciously liquid rhymes and a look of elaborate pain on his face. He is exhilarated. He can hardly contain himself. He all but falls down with the delight of what he is experiencing. He is having a wonderful time being in love, he doesn't give a hoot what all this leads to (an attitude that begins to make sense of the rest of the play), and his protracted farewells have a front-porch-at-midnight feeling about them that will remind you what a fool you made of yourself at that age.

Director Stuart Vaughan has, for instance, found a way to play the first family scene with Juliet--before the ball--so that it suggests a snug and protective little nest from which a fledgling girl may stray only at her own peril.¹⁶

The second production, Shakespeare's then rarely-performed Two Gentlemen of Verona, was equally successful with the reviewers, with especially good notices for Jerry Stiller as Launce. Paul V. Beckley for the Herald Tribune called the production a "very springtime of an interpretation . . . ingeniously staged" with "wonderful business" including "dancing bears, a strip tease, a weight lifter, bird cages, flower pots, and a two-handed sword too heavy for a knight to carry."¹⁷ Lewis Funke in the New York Times wrote, "Stuart Vaughan, who recently staged the troupe's immensely successful Romeo and Juliet has again used intelligence in bringing to life this antic on the foibles of love and romance."¹⁸

¹⁶Walter Kerr, New York Herald Tribune, June 6, 1957.

¹⁷Paul V. Beckley, New York Herald Tribune, July 23, 1957.

¹⁸Lewis Funke, The New York Times, July 23, 1957.

T. Edward Hambleton of the recently formed Phoenix Theatre brought Tyrone Guthrie to see Macbeth that summer. According to actor Eric Berry (the incident is related somewhat differently in A Possible Theatre), Guthrie recommended Vaughan as the artistic director of the Phoenix, based on Vaughan's handling of the first witches' scene in that play. Guthrie and Hambleton were prevented from seeing the entire production that night as a huge storm (which threatened during the witches' scene, doubtless adding great atmosphere) broke out and the rest of the performance was called off for that night. Vaughan's description of his staging of this scene in A Possible Theatre is worth quoting as an example of this director's dramatic imagination.

In Macbeth, the first scene seems to demand night, gloom--effects that only modern stage lighting can give:

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.
That will be ere the set of sun.

The reference to the battle being finished before sunset gave rise to the notion that the battle could be used to start the play--the battle in which Macbeth and Banquo defeat Duncan's enemies. Our Macbeth, therefore, began with a ferocious rush of armed men around the base of the stage up the steps, to meet and battle with other men coming through the center arches. The battle swirled around and left the stage as, with a change in the music, the three witches--old bearded hags with gnarled noses and cheeks, long fingernails, emaciated hands and arms--came lurching out from where they had been concealed. A wounded man tried to struggle to a sitting position. He was stabbed by one of the witches. Another witch went to a corpse and cut off a ring finger. After these pieces of business, designed to cover the retreat of the seething battle, the witches came together and spoke their lines.¹⁹

After seeing Macbeth, Brooks Atkinson wrote in the New York Times, "By now it ought to be apparent that Mr. Vaughan is an

¹⁹Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, p. 73.

uncommonly gifted director. . . . It [Macbeth] reminds the audience that Shakespeare knew how to write a headlong thriller . . . staged for excitement and sensation."²⁰

It is doubtful that any other American director has ever directed so much Shakespeare in so short a time and been received so enthusiastically by the press. For a long time it seemed as if Stuart Vaughan could do no wrong.

In the fall of 1957 Vaughan and Papp moved indoors to the Heckscher Theater to try to continue their luck. Vaughan directed Richard III and As You Like It. For these productions Vaughan used a relatively unknown actor in the roles of Richard and Jaques--George C. Scott. Scott and the productions were again well received.

A report on the first season in Central Park for the London Times summed up what is probably an accurate description of these early New York Shakespeare Festival productions directed by Stuart Vaughan:

The attack abounds in vitality and virility. This is not the Shakespeare of the academy but the Shakespeare whose plays had to compete with bear-baiting. If the poetry tends to be slighted, the sense of dramatic action is not.²¹

Julius Novick, one of Vaughan's spear-carriers when he was a young aspiring actor, gives a clear sense of the qualities of these productions in Beyond Broadway,

Vaughan's Central Park Shakespeare was for the most part, swift, intense, believable, and sexy, and it usually managed to avoid meretriciousness and artificiality. His stage business always had plenty of zing, and was usually relevant to the play. In particular he was a master of low comedy, though

²⁰Brooks Atkinson, "'Macbeth' in Park," New York Times, August 16, 1957.

²¹Quoted in Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 336.

he sometimes exercised this mastery in scenes where it was not needed. . . . The only important faculty in which Vaughan was occasionally deficient was restraint.²²

As a result of his success in the park, in the spring of 1958 Vaughan was invited by T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton to become the new artistic director of the already established Phoenix Theatre. The Phoenix was an attempt to establish an American repertory theatre and was having a modicum of success with such productions as Tyrone Guthrie's Mary Stuart and The Makropoulos Secret. The offer was attractive to Vaughan. The rigorous production schedule of the Shakespeare Festival, as well as the lack of financial reward coming from it, made the Phoenix offer seem like a forward step into a more secure position. Looking back at his decision to go to the Phoenix, Vaughan remarked, "The New York Shakespeare Festival at that time was primarily a summer operation that didn't generate much money for people, and there was no opportunity at the time, when I shifted my focus to the Phoenix, to make a living doing plays for the New York Shakespeare Festival."²³

In A Possible Theatre Vaughan makes some intriguing remarks concerning actor-director relationships which suggest that the reasons for his leaving the Shakespeare Festival to work primarily at the Phoenix may have been personal as well as economic.

Our work had been so well received and morale had been so high that, to some of the actors I had become a "hero" who could do no wrong. Because of my own need for recognition and attention no doubt I tacitly basked in this "love feast." . . . The opposite side of this coin, however, is not pretty. In time any hero will reveal himself to have

²²Novick, p. 337.

²³Vaughan interview.

feet of merely human clay. Decisions will be made which affront the actor's previous illusion of receiving special treatment and protection. . . . The man who has always been right will begin to emerge as a betrayer of the actor's trust. The director may himself feel betrayed by the actor's ingratitude. In any case, vindictive repudiation will come in exact proportion to the degree of previous false adulation. Tensions in this area were beginning to arise, exacerbated by the economic difficulties of trying to build a full-fledged Shakespeare company in off-Broadway conditions.²⁴

Before the start of his first season with the Phoenix in the fall of 1958, he returned to the Shakespeare Festival that summer to direct Othello. He had originally been slated to direct Twelfth Night as well, but finding this too much of a burden, he gave over the directional authority to Joseph Papp, who thus made his directorial debut in the Park.

The atmosphere at the Phoenix was distinctly different from what it had been at the Festival. Where he had been working primarily with younger, unknown actors at the Festival, the Phoenix had collected older, more established actors. The Family Reunion, produced in the fall of 1958, had a cast which included Florence Reed, Lillian Gish, Eric Berry, Fritz Weaver, and Nicholas Joy. Because of the complexity of the material, Vaughan felt it was necessary to read the play an entire week and spent much rehearsal time in discussion. Such an approach upset and confused the older actors who wanted to "get on with it." Eric Berry has related the frustration which the older actors felt with this "intellectual" young director whom they regarded as something of a "whippersnapper."

He was so young, you know. He used to give us long lectures as though we were back in school or something. He used to lead me to utter irritation. He just wasn't ready so we didn't pay

²⁴Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, p. 84.

any attention to him. We just went our own sweet way. He should have been a professor. But there's no time in the real theatre for all this professorial crap. The theory of the theatre is all very interesting, but it's the practice that matters. It's a bloody difficult craft. . . . What is a director but a traffic cop really? I know they think they're so much more.²⁵

During his first season at the Phoenix, Vaughan directed The Family Reunion, The Power and the Glory, and Farquhar's The Beaux' Strategem. It was not until the second season that he returned to directing Shakespeare with a successful production of Henry IV, Part I in the spring of 1960. This was so successful that he added Henry IV, Part II to the repertory. Eric Berry's Falstaff was a triumph as was Donald Madden's Hotspur. Other members of the cast included Fritz Weaver as Henry IV, Edwin Sherin as Prince Hal, Albert Quinton as Glendower, J. D. Cannon as Poins, Nan Martin as Lady Percy, and Gerry Jedd as Mistress Quickly. While Eric Berry recalls that there was much friction in rehearsals and denies any credit for the performance's success to Stuart Vaughan, in the public's eye and in the critic's reactions, it did much to reconfirm Vaughan's Shakespearean reputation. Of Henry IV, Part I, Brooks Atkinson wrote, "Stuart Vaughan is invariably in top form with Shakespeare. His production is visually inviting. . . . Mr. Vaughan has succeeded in eliminating most of the cant actors are inclined to assume when they play Shakespeare."²⁶

After the success with Henry, Vaughan invited Eric Berry to play King Lear the next season. Because of his personal animosity

²⁵Eric Berry interview, New York, New York, July 2, 1976.

²⁶Brooks Atkinson, "Theatre: Good Mood at the Phoenix," New York Times, March 2, 1960.

toward the director, Berry declined and Vaughan chose instead to give Hamlet with Donald Madden in the title role.

It is this production which Vaughan chose to be investigated in some detail by this writer. "I guess I was as happy with the Phoenix Hamlet as with anything I've ever done. Lots of people thought it the best Hamlet they had ever seen."²⁷ This production took place in 1960, and Vaughan's life since then has included much drama and not a little bit of sorrow. After leaving the Phoenix, he became head of the newly-forming Seattle Repertory in 1961. After two years he was let go because of difficulties with the board of directors of that theatre. He spent some time as a guest artist in various university theatres, and then became head of the New Orleans Repertory Theatre. Four years later he was fired from that position. While the story of these years is fascinating, it more properly belongs in a book on regional theatres. Joseph Ziegler in Regional Theatre writes in regard to the failure of the New Orleans Rep, "Another [reason] was Vaughan himself. His experiences in the far reaches of the West had not tempered his arrogance. Luxuriously subsidized by the federal government, he saw little need to relate to the community around him."²⁸ During these years Vaughan directed many more productions of Shakespeare, including King Lear as his opener at Seattle, another Hamlet, as well as Twelfth Night, and A Midsummer Night's Dream in New Orleans. None of the productions recreated the excitement he had generated in the earlier New York work.

²⁷Vaughan interview.

²⁸Joseph W. Ziegler, Regional Theatre (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), p. 81.

In 1970 he returned to the New York Shakespeare Festival to direct The War of the Roses for Joseph Papp. The mammoth undertaking included a cutting of Henry VI, Part I, II and III, as well as Richard III, starring Donald Madden. The event was used to dramatize the festival's vitality and its need for funds in an all-night performance on June 27, 1970, when all of the plays were presented in a performance beginning at sundown and lasting until sunrise. Vaughan's reviews for The War of the Roses were respectable. Clive Barnes wrote, "Mr. Vaughan's staging, straddled across Ming Cho Lee's most handsome and adroitly permanent scenery, a set for all seasons--stresses most understandably the action and the spectacle."²⁹ Jerry Tallmer wrote in the New York Post, "The director, Stuart Vaughan, has a very clear-sighted vision of the text. This is not for contemplation but should explode before the eyes of the audience. Speed and clarity are all."³⁰ Julius Novick, in the Village Voice, called the direction "vigorous, swiftly paced, and conventional." He seemed to reflect preoccupations of the experimental theatre of the late sixties when he noted that the production contained "no Brecht, no Grotowski, no Jan Kott," that in essence Vaughan had chosen to stage the plays as a "bang-bang-you're-dead pageant."³¹ John Simon in New York compared Vaughan's staging unfavorably with Peter Hall's 1963 production for the Royal Shakespeare. He wanted a more "relevant" interpretation, complained of "poor handling of the battle scenes," and wrote, "It helps . . .

²⁹Clive Barnes, "Shakespeare in the Park," New York Times, July 2, 1970.

³⁰Jerry Tallmer, New York Post, July 2, 1970.

³¹Julius Novick, "My Argument's in my Scabbard," Village Voice, July 9, 1970.

if you have an over-arching vision which in the case of Hall and his company was the sinister bestiality of war and absolutist politics."³²

In the time that Vaughan had been away from New York, taste in Shakespeare had changed; critics were demanding "relevant," radical re-interpretations. Vaughan's limelight had faded with changing taste.

From the preceding creative history we can see the following influences and apparent qualities in Vaughan's approach to Shakespeare:

1. His travel abroad exposed him to English productions of Shakespeare and stimulated a desire to create a classical repertory theatre in America.
2. Vaughan became familiar with the "method" through classes with Harold Clurman.
3. Joseph Papp's outdoor festival forced Vaughan to direct productions of Shakespeare which were necessarily broad in their appeal to a wide audience.
4. Vaughan's most successful productions displayed virility and vitality, exhibited in active productions and occasionally in broad comic business.
5. Vaughan's career declined after he left New York. When he returned, theatrical taste had changed while Vaughan's approach to Shakespeare had remained the same.

While Stuart Vaughan has written extensively and speaks articulately about his principles of producing Shakespeare, it is difficult to find specific statements or to elicit from him a statement on Shakespeare's vision of the world. He seems to have an innate dislike

³²John Simon, New York, July 20, 1970.

of such generalizations. One can see from his statement, however, that he views Shakespeare as a democratic entertainer and ultimately as life-affirming.

Part of Vaughan's impatience with heavily conceptual Shakespeare is that such productions assume the audiences are tired or "jaded" with Shakespeare's plays. He feels this is wrong, that Shakespeare's main objective was to entertain a widely diversified audience. In an article for a Playbill program in January, 1958, he pointed out the similarity between Shakespeare's audience and the audience at free Shakespeare in the Park.

. . . Last summer in Central Park their twentieth-century counterparts jammed together on the benches and the raised bleachers behind the benches, craning necks to see over two thousand heads. There they were--critics and Bohemians, garment workers and literature students, problem children and Madison Avenue exquisites, divided between the dedicated Shakespeare fans and the curious who came to be "entertained." One of our author's amazing strengths was his ability to reach his own varied public, and his own charm still works today with equal brilliance--if we let him speak freely.³³

In his interview Vaughan stated that he felt Shakespeare's vision of the world was fundamentally tragic. For him even the comedies seem to be filled with the knowledge of death. "We're all going to die. Nobody's going to get out of this alive."³⁴ But for Vaughan this knowledge does not lead in Shakespeare to a sense of futility and negation.

Tragedy, in the face of ultimate death, tells us that the task of life is to live so that one's life has dignity and purpose. The best tragedies are an affirmation of life and its best values, rather than futility. Lear is the

³³ Stuart Vaughan, "Some Thought on Shakespearean Production," Playbill, January, 1958.

³⁴ Vaughan interview,

ultimate affirmation to me. Even at the age of 80, through these reverses in his life, he is capable of learning. I think that's remarkable.³⁵

A Possible Theatre contains a moving document, a program note written by Vaughan's wife, Helen, who was killed in an automobile accident shortly before King Lear opened as Vaughan's first production at the Seattle Rep. He has written of the note, "It was as if she had left behind something to tell me."³⁶ I quote part of it here as it seems to sum up Vaughan's attitude toward Shakespearean tragedy.

This, then, is the theme of the great tragedies--of Oedipus and Job no less than King Lear. In all of them, a man is brought to the verge of collapse by intense--and undeserved--suffering, and somehow is not destroyed. Instead he emerges from the fire purged of human blindness, a new human being--that rare human being able to see things as they really are. . . . The truth is that all life is a gift--that life and health, air and food, love, beauty, excitement and joy, and the whole fantastic universe and each new day is a gift which we did nothing to earn and have no right to. The truth is also that all these personal qualities of which we tend to be proud--intelligence or beauty, talent or courage, or moral strength--these, too, are gifts which the curious, built-in blindness of Homo sapiens persistently fails to recognize.³⁷

Vaughan believes that Shakespeare is best produced by an ensemble of actors working within a repertory system. He believes it is the job of the repertory theatre to produce plays which are also great literature. It was his desire to found such a company which led him from Joe Papp to the Phoenix, to Seattle and New Orleans. At each he found difficulties which made the formation of such a company impossible: lack of financial backing at the early Shakespeare Festival a failure of strong differentiation between artistic

³⁵Vaughan interview.

³⁶Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, p. 177.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 178-179.

and commercial leadership at the Phoenix, and again problems of ultimate artistic authority at the Seattle and New Orleans theatres. "In America today there are no true ensemble repertory theatres. The regionals want to hire directors who conform to their desires, and Broadway is hopelessly commercial. There simply are no directors, free of commercial responsibilities, who hold ultimate authority in American theatres, and that's why we don't have good art theatre."³⁸

He believes that it is the job of the director of Shakespeare to communicate to audiences "the essence of Shakespeare's human meaning."³⁹ This he feels is best achieved through recognizing that the plays contain principles of theatre aesthetics which must not be violated in production. While he does not believe that it is necessary to try to reproduce the Globe Theatre with historical accuracy, there were certain aspects to that stage which he finds desirable in staging Shakespeare today.

My concern is to find the principles and theatrical assumptions underlying the structure of the plays and the stage for which the plays were written. . . . I would be looking for a scene design that lets the play proceed without any stops; even a five second stop is a stop. I would want a set that is architectural without specific locales in a theatre small enough for the unamplified sound of the human voice. You would need a good size forestage for circular movement. I think a procenium is less than good. The plays have spectacle, pageantry, and battles written in. I would tend to go for that.⁴⁰

Changing the period of the play, updating, or transferring the locales is anathema to Vaughan. In 1958 he declared, "The plays

³⁸Vaughan interview, July 20, 1976.

³⁹Vaughan, Playbill, January, 1958.

⁴⁰Vaughan interview.

presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival will always be done in period costume, whether the costume of Shakespeare's period, the costume of the period he describes, or some satisfactory compromise between the two."⁴¹ The frames of reference, the specific realities of the plays must be maintained before the plays can become universal. "In the theatre one achieves universality only by being really specific and detailed."⁴² Shakespeare's specific world was the Elizabethan Renaissance. For Vaughan the meaning of the plays is destroyed outside of that world. "Violate that time and you destroy the frame of reference in which the play has meaning."⁴³

From his remarks one can see that he wants the audience to relate to the events of the plays as real happenings. Shakespeare, for him, is a realist. He dislikes the director's hand to be too much in evidence.

I want the audience to discover the beauty of the play through what seems to be the unimpeded performance of the actors--in other words, I think any director who is visible ought to be fired. The production should seem a joyous collaboration between the actors, the audience, and the playwright. The director is really someone who works to have that take place and should not be in evidence himself.⁴⁴

While Vaughan recognizes the social importance of the theatre and contemporary relevance in Shakespeare's plays, he does not believe in underlining this relevance for an audience.

⁴¹Vaughan, Playbill, January, 1958.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Vaughan interview.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Things that are most true people don't want to hear. If you make the home truths you are getting at terribly clear, you'll encounter resistance and rejection. I think keeping the fantasy element in theatre is very important. . . . Plays are really about what happens in the heads of the audience. If they don't want to see something, they won't, regardless of how clear you make it and if they are open to those things in the plays, they will see them without being hit over the head.⁴⁵

One of his greatest achievements, Vaughan feels, was to develop an American way of speaking Shakespeare which eschewed intoning, or singing the verse. He wanted the audience to feel that they were watching characters who "seemed to be in the act of creating words"⁴⁶ rather than mouthing careful, artfully considered, memorized poetry.

In any play the audience must feel that the characters are speaking these words for the first time, so anything that contradicts the illusion of the first time is wrong. The characters in any play ought to be talking to each other. The verse must have a human tone, a human, connected sound. I don't much care for beauty in the theatre which is unconnected to meaning.⁴⁷

In trying to achieve this goal, the New York Shakespeare Festival actors were sometimes criticized for damaging the poetry of Shakespeare's language. Vaughan admits that his actors were sometimes "rough and ready" but denies that he ever consciously tried to introduce actors with bad diction or regional accents. "That is Pappville. Joe loves to use actors with Brooklyn, or Puerto Rican, or black accents. I never like that."⁴⁸

The ideal Shakespearean actor is someone "who has learned to speak well, who understands how the form of the verse is related to

⁴⁵ Vaughan interview.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

acting." This actor must also have certain physical abilities: he must "wear clothes well." For him "period dance is not a fright, and fencing is not a mystery." All of these technical skills must be combined with "emotional training and an American point of origin."⁴⁹

These, then, are Vaughan's principles of directing Shakespeare:

1. Shakespeare was primarily a tragic playwright with a tragic vision of the world.
2. Vaughan believes that Shakespeare must provide democratic entertainment.
3. Shakespeare is best produced by an ensemble repertory theatre.
4. Certain principles of staging Shakespeare should be adhered to:
 - a. open stage
 - b. continual flow of action
 - c. good-sized forestage
 - d. spectacle and pageantry
5. Shakespeare should always be set in the play's historical period or in Elizabethan dress and locale.
6. The director's hand should not be in evidence.
7. The speaking of American Shakespeare should be conversational and natural. The verse should not be sung or intoned.
8. As a realist, Vaughan wants the audience to believe that what they are seeing and hearing is happening for the first time.

⁴⁹Vaughan interview.

Pre-rehearsal work has always been of enormous importance to Vaughan. He likes to work at length on the script much in advance of the first rehearsal.

As a director I like to have a good time alone in which I work out things in advance. In terms of the internal workings of the play, I work it all out in advance before I do any staging at all . . . in a written way. I'll spend a couple of weeks working on the beats and the actions--what people are doing--before I ever do any staging, and then the staging all comes out of what I think is happening internally. I like to know as much as I possibly can before I ever meet any actors in rehearsal. Not so that I can put them down, but so that I can be flexible.⁵⁰

This writer was permitted to see Vaughan's Phoenix Hamlet prompt book, and a short section is included here to show how he works on the text. This section from Act I, scene ii, illustrates how Vaughan divides the script into Stanislavsky-like beats, "units of action." Between the beats, "transitions" of thought, changes of attitude and action occur. The illustrating scene shows five beats, which Vaughan numbers. The page opposite the text is divided into three sections: action, attitude, and blocking. Action is what the characters do, attitude is what they think, or "subtext," while blocking is the pattern of movement which will appear upon the stage. The work is detailed and extremely meticulous. Readers familiar with Constantin Stanislavsky's prompt books will recognize the method. Vaughan states that he learned this system from Harold Clurman.

⁵⁰Vaughan interview.

HAMLET, Act I, scene ii, ll. 159-188

-
- (Enter HORATIO, MARCELIUS, AND BERNARDO)
1. HOR. Hail to your lordship!
 HAM. I am glad to see you well. 160
-
2. Horatio!--or I do forget myself.
 HOR. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
 HAM. Sir, my food friend; I'll change that name with you.
 And what make you from Wittenburg, Horatio?
 Marcellus? 165
 MAR. My good lord!
 HAM. I am very glad to see you. (To BER.) Good even, sir.
-
3. But what, in faith, make you from Wittenburg?
 HOR. A truant disposition, good my lord.
 HAM. I would not have your enemy say so, 170
 Nor whall you do mine ear that violence,
 To make it truster of your own report
 Against yourself. I know you are no truant.
 But what is your affair in Elsinore?
 We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart. 175
-
4. HOR. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
 HAM. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student,
 I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
 HOR. Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
 HAM. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd meats 180
 Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
 Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
 Ere I had ever seen that day, Horatio!
 My father!--me thinks I see my father.
-
5. HOR. Oh, where, my lord?
 HAM. In my mind's eye, Horatio. 185
 HOR. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
 HAM. He was a man, take him for all in all,
 I shall not look upon his like again.
-

ACTION	ATTITUDE	BLOCKING
1. Ho to greet H H to beat it	Ho pleasant but suspicious of serious purpose of his visit. H caught--in no mood for court shit	HO B M Hand clasp or emb.
2. H to welcome some relief Ho to accept his welcome with grat. M. to acknowledge with respect.	H realizes who genuinely delighted--but can hardly believe his eyes amazed Ho modestly and lovingly greets him. 1. an open compliment 2. he's here-marvelous! 3. a warm relation M pleased and surprised H knows his name	H. & No
3.	H warm and simple--just the truth 2. what the hell are you doing here? Ho. playing hookey--a joke H out of his joy making more of this joke--glad to have somebody to talk to! 2. I hope you will stay and stay all visitors drink deep--like students	H & Ho. lean on column
4. Ho. to express sympathy H to name things correctly	Ho. delicate sympathetic--knows how Hamlet felt about Father H. quick irony--almost conversational Ho. embarrassed--he had thought this and doubted H. 1. mock explanation 2. deep expression of feeling 3. ? inner	B M exchange looks Ho H
5. B and M had expected this Ho. to prepare to tell him	B and M looks H sadly because his father is dead. Loss. Ho. to B and M: Now I shall tell him (covering) H. he's trying to get his mind around his father's death	

In addition to this moment-by-moment analysis of the text, Vaughan tries to find a statement, spine, or superobjective which embodies the through-line of thought or action. When asked about the spine of the Phoenix Hamlet, he answered:

As far as I can remember, it had something to do with my emerging thoughts on tragedy. Hamlet in the end is dragged kicking and screaming to his destiny, which is to take charge. He is somebody who has wanted to follow his own inclination and live a life of the spirit, who, through circumstances of birth and his father's death, is confronted with a different kind of life task, and he manages to live up to it.⁵¹

In the case of Hamlet, Vaughan's pre-rehearsal thinking was influenced by Donald Madden, the young actor playing Hamlet. "We had a young actor, but then I think Hamlet is a young man's play."⁵² Both Madden and Vaughan wanted to present Hamlet as a man of action, someone who loved his father. "Donald was very positive that he wanted to play a Hamlet who really cared about his father--a father that had been a good father and a hero to him. Therefore his obligation to the ghost was simple and direct. . . . Donald wanted to avoid any Freudian kinkiness, that he had really hated his father."⁵³ This interpretation was conceived in direct opposition to the Freudian interpretation of the Hamlet which had been made famous in Ernest Jones's Hamlet and Oedipus.

There was never any question of Hamlet's wanting to act. It was only a question of how he could act. The question of testing the Ghost to see if it's a real ghost--the Dover Wilson idea--we used to keep

⁵¹Vaughan interview.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

his search a material, active real search. He wasn't a man torn by doubt who couldn't make up his mind. He was "the glass of fashion, the mold of form."⁵⁴

Along these lines Vaughan decided that the madness of Hamlet was not real, nor therapeutic, but only "an antic device behind which to hide while, all alone in a palace of enemies except for Horatio, Hamlet proceeds to try to do what he has to do. The madness is a protective device to put people off the scent."⁵⁵

Interestingly, the soliloquies of the play are hardly analyzed at all in the prompt book. Hamlet's moments of agonizing introspection and self-deprecation are not broken down or discussed in the way the dialogue scenes are, nor do they seem to have been emphasized in the production. Perhaps Vaughan left the soliloquies totally up to Madden, or perhaps they just didn't fit into Vaughan's scheme. When asked about the soliloquies and their place in the play, Vaughan replied:

It's an active man, railing at himself for not acting better. I think the audience should sit outside and in a sense say, "My God, what does he expect of himself!" We watch him do everything that a person could possibly do. As the perfectionist and self-chider that he is, the superego-directed person that he is, he takes himself to task for a kind of hanging back that he's not really done.⁵⁶

The picture of Hamlet which emerged from my discussion with Vaughan was that of a rather perfect person, almost a hero from melodrama. When questioned about Hamlet's "perfection," Vaughan replied, "I think the business of expecting too much of himself and others is probably a flaw."⁵⁷

⁵⁴Vaughan interview.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

An interview with Donald Madden indicated that he also wanted to play a very active, physical Hamlet. "I think Hamlet's a very physical play. It's what I chose to do. I think that if I'd been out to set records I might have tempered some of the physical enthusiasm, which can be so demanding." Madden admits that his personal quality as a young actor of energy and vitality influenced many of his choices. "Hamlet is a very personal role and has to be. I agree with Barrymore who once said, 'It's the only part you don't play--it plays you.' No matter how much you try to hide and be objective about it, the thing takes over and, by God, you come out exhausted."⁵⁸

Madden also remembers that he and Vaughan wanted to present Hamlet as "a model Renaissance prince, 'the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, hand, tongue.' We felt that this was not a man crippled by ineffectiveness." He remarked that these decisions stemmed partly from a desire to present Hamlet in a new and different light. "So many of the Hamlets I had seen looked like they were going to die of ennui. He is not a lost cause. Apparently poor Booth almost never stood up."⁵⁹

In their extensive pre-rehearsal talks, Vaughan and Madden decided they wanted to present the play as a "mystery play," not a whodunit, but a "how's it gonna be solved?" They wanted to stress the suspense of the play and to approach it as if the audience did not know what was going to happen. "The fun of playing Hamlet is that you should never know and the audience should never know that

⁵⁸ Donald Madden interview, New York, New York, July 21, 1976.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

you're going to die, how the play turns out. . . . If you play each moment of that play as if you don't know that you're going to die, it makes it a hell of a lot more exciting. Why couldn't he win?"⁶⁰

Stuart Vaughan's discussions with his designers showed a preference for a simple, structural setting and realistic costumes. Peter Wingate, the set and costume designer, has stated, "It was all very simple: a series of gothic arches and some central platforms. Stuart likes very functional, nondecorative settings for Shakespeare."⁶¹

Vaughan's feelings about costumes reflect his desire for the non-decorative. "I think costumes should be clothes. They should have texture. I like things with weight--wools and metals. I don't like shiny things or tinsels. I hate satins."⁶²

The rehearsals for Hamlet followed Vaughan's usual procedure with perhaps less time than usual for discussions or reading rehearsals. Donald Madden amazed and annoyed some of his fellow actors by coming to the first rehearsal with most of his lines memorized. Being anxious to get on his feet, he influenced Vaughan to block the play quickly so that he could find the part in action. Normally Vaughan proceeds in the following manner:

I usually like to read the play for three or four days. At the first read-through, I read straight through without comment. Afterwards we talk for a while and I show the cast the set model and costume sketches. At the second reading I talk about each character: "Prince Hal is such-and-such a guy." At the next reading I set the tone of the scenes: "Pause here; this is a quiet scene." The younger

⁶⁰Madden interview.

⁶¹Peter Wingate interview, New York, New York, July 19, 1976.

⁶²Vaughan interview.

the cast, the firmer I am, and sometimes the better the result. After two or three days of this kind of reading, I block very fast, because it's pre-blocked anyway. I follow my notes and I get it up on its feet so the actors can see the design of the production. And then we run it.⁶³

Donald Madden has expressed his appreciation for Vaughan's preparation. "Stuart manages to create an atmosphere in which I can work beautifully and comfortably. He's a brilliant organizer. He does his homework--that's something I admire and see so little of in modern directors."⁶⁴

"A great deal of the blocking came from me," Madden says. "If the book is out of my hand, I can be very sure about where I want to go. Then he [Vaughan] would coordinate people around me."⁶⁵

Vaughan allowed that he gave Madden very free reign in the production, "partly because of the nature of the role and partly because I trusted Donald more than the others."⁶⁶ The excellence of the Madden/Vaughan actor/director relationship was due to similarities in work techniques and temperament. Madden prepared his homework as completely as Vaughan did. Both men are articulate and intelligent, conversant with Shakespearean criticism and interested in the history of the theatre. Vaughan's conversation is peppered with references to critical opinions on the plays, while Madden is

. . . interested in what other actors have to say, or what critics have to say about actors. I had seen every Hamlet within fifty miles of New York in my lifetime. I did honors work at City College in it at 17 and 18. I had

⁶³ Vaughan interview.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Madden interview.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

always wanted to play the part and still do. . . . The work to me is fun. I get great enjoyment out of reading what the seventeenth or eighteenth century did, what actors did in front of audiences, the schtick. . . . A critic can describe what Garrick or Kean did and this stimulates the imagination: "What a lovely effect!" All of this leads to a great deal of opening up for yourself.⁶⁷

His awareness, for instance, that Hamlet's recognition of the Ghost had traditionally been a moment in which an actor could win "points" led him to stage a "yell of recognition and a Jack Cole leap across the entire stage on my knees which frightened the hell out of the audience."⁶⁸ This was one case where reading about Garrick's famous turning pale at the same moment, caused an actor to find his own theatrically effective moment.

When one talks with both Madden and Vaughan, one is aware of personal similarities which, one imagines, allowed them to work well together. Intelligence and gentility are common to both men. Vaughan affirms these qualities in Madden as sources of his admiration for the actor. "Donald is extremely bright, extremely quick. He is also a gentleman and well-spoken. He doesn't stamp out cigarettes on your furniture or come to rehearsals in bare feet. He cares about what the acting looks like and sounds like as well as how he feels."⁶⁹ Acknowledging that his own intelligence has sometimes gotten him into trouble with actors (as Madden himself has sometimes been resented), Vaughan reveals a somewhat aristocratic attitude toward his theatre co-workers. "As most people in the world are mediocre, they're more

⁶⁷ Madden interview.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Vaughan interview.

comfortable with other mediocre people, and they find the bright people threatening."⁷⁰

The Phoenix Hamlet company was not a harmonious family. Vaughan had experienced his problems with older members of the company on his first production, The Family Reunion, and he never managed to create an ensemble which he considered ideal or unified. Problems within the company such as illness, casting difficulties, and interpretative disagreements persisted throughout the rehearsal period. Albert Quinton, who had originally been scheduled to play Claudius, became ill and was replaced by Alexander Scourby one week before opening. Vaughan himself has stated, "There were some castings that were not as happy as I would have liked."⁷¹ One controversial piece of casting was Patricia Falkenhain as Gertrude. Madden recalled: "There were a couple of casting disagreements. If I wanted a mother in Hamlet rather than a gorgeous floozy, it's because I don't buy the Freudian interpretation that says Hamlet is attracted to his mother. Before Freud, it was always played by the character woman, and suddenly, in the teens, it became fashionable to have a young woman play Gertrude. I wanted a more motherly type."⁷² The photographs of the production show Gertrude as heavily made up, quite attractive and sensual. Apparently this was not Madden's ideal.

Vaughan remembers "good work with Joyce Ebert as Ophelia, sort of dragging Ray Reinhardt, who was being particularly phlegmatic,

⁷⁰Vaughan interview.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Madden interview.

through Horatio. Ray wasn't particularly enjoying being Horatio to Donald's Hamlet. . . . John Heffernan worked very slowly on Polonius and was excellent, but it was a slow process."⁷³

Ted van Griethuysen, having played Hamlet at the University of Texas under B. Iden Payne and Laertes under Allen Fletcher at the San Diego Globe (with Bill Ball as Hamlet), was unhappy to be playing Laertes again, a part which he disliked. "Laertes is . . . one of the coldest fish in drama, a highly unlikable person. I never liked Laertes. He's so empty. He doesn't give a damn for anyone."⁷⁴

Peter Wingate, designer for the production and observer of some of the rehearsals, has noted "a problem with Hamlet companies which was not absent from the Phoenix. All the other actors in Hamlet resent the actor playing Hamlet because they wish they were playing Hamlet and feel their part cannot possibly get adequate attention."⁷⁵

One incident involving an interpretative disagreement is worth relating in that it sheds light on how intellectual disagreements are sometimes never solved in a production. Stuart Vaughan had decided that Hamlet and Ophelia had been lovers prior to the action of the play and that Ophelia was pregnant with Hamlet's child. "We had Ophelia play that she was pregnant, and that was part of the thing that might have driven her over the edge."⁷⁶ Vaughan padded Joyce

⁷³Vaughan interview.

⁷⁴Ted van Griethuysen interview, New York, New York, July 21, 1976.

⁷⁵Wingate interview.

⁷⁶Vaughan interview.

Ebert and tried to make this interpretation obvious to the audience. Madden always refused to accept this. "I didn't believe it. The one thing that drives Hamlet up the wall is that his mother was probably screwing around with Claudius before his father's death. If we take the attitude that Hamlet has knocked up Ophelia, where are Hamlet's values and truth?" Apparently Madden saw a sexual distaste in Hamlet which would not allow him to have slept with Ophelia. "If Stuart felt that, fine. It didn't affect the playing of my scenes."⁷⁷ From the reviews of the production, no one appears to have noticed the discrepancy.

In his book Regional Theatre Joseph Zeigler has written that Stuart Vaughan could be described as an "autocratic" director.⁷⁸ Vaughan himself implies that he sees the actors in a subordinate role to the director.

Rehearsals are my time in that I've got a plan and a certain amount of time to get things done. . . . Essentially I'm responsible to the producer for getting the play to work, so really, it's all my time. . . . I'm diplomatic, generally relatively quiet. I certainly tell people what I want in the moment. It's not a place where we all come and pool our talents to find out what we'd all like to do.⁷⁹

The director, for Vaughan, is chiefly responsible for seeing that the play has a single point of view, and therefore he must coerce or persuade the actors to do things his way.

As a director, try not to lose your patience and yell and scream, but just insist on doing what you want to do with

⁷⁷Madden interview.

⁷⁸Joseph Zeigler, Regional Theatre, p. 76.

⁷⁹Vaughan interview.

the rehearsal that day . . . and if they don't understand it, help them to understand it, and get them doing what you want them to do. . . . You've got to be willing to risk being called this or that, either in rehearsal or outside of it. You're involved in a painful process. To worry about getting the actors to feel comfortable is a trap too. They're not going to feel comfortable doing anything different, anything that's unfamiliar.⁸⁰

The following directing techniques may be seen from these rehearsals of Hamlet:

1. Vaughan pre-blocks. He likes to be as prepared as possible before he meets the actors.
2. He divides the script into Stanislavsky beats, determining blocking from characters' "actions" and "attitudes."
3. He likes to state a play's spine in words before rehearsals begin.
4. Vaughan consulted Donald Madden a good deal and gave him a great deal of freedom.
5. Vaughan stressed physical action in the production.
6. Vaughan used a simple, structural setting from designer Peter Wingate.
7. Vaughan blocked quickly from his prompt book. He got Hamlet on its feet immediately.
8. Vaughan and Madden used the history of acting performances of Hamlet to stimulate thinking.
9. Vaughan gave Madden preferential treatment over the other actors which was resented.
10. Vaughan tends to maintain a distant, autocratic relationship with his actors.

⁸⁰ Vaughan interview.

The critical reception to Hamlet was generally mixed. Walter Kerr appreciated the energy of the production but felt it lacking in maturity.

It is curious to see a Hamlet that seems to have been written in the springtime. . . . The frost is gone from the bustling and hot-blooded melodrama director Stuart Vaughan has mounted for the Phoenix, and everyone is dead long before twilight. What we are looking in on, at some risk to our equilibrium, is a young man's murder mystery. This young man has really just come home from college, he is swiftly and impetuously sickened as only a callow young man can be, and the fever he starts is bound to land on Denmark's front pages. . . . Across the rug scurries a pandemonium of recrimination, suspicion, and unmanageable energy. So much so that, indeed, that "To be or not to be" seems to have dropped in from another play; Donald Madden's outraged son has clearly never contemplated suicide, he is much too busy devising subtle tortures for his contemptible elders.

There is so much breathless fury in Madden's maddened vigilante that it is all he can do to enunciate the syllables with which he commands his fellow conspirators to swear silence. "What an ass am I!" is read panting from the floor, after he has fallen from his blind assault upon the proscenium arch.

. . . The swirls of omnipresent smoke (clouds on the battlements), the busy jungle of lanterns held menacingly overhead, the wild chase through the palace, after Polonius is rumored dead, the grey-green ghost whose armor has so lately mouldered--all of these effects keep the Gothic game of run-sheep-run clattering across the landscape at a school-boy clip. . . . Ted von Griethuysen's Laertes, Franklin Clover's principle player, Jared Reed's gravedigger, and Joyce Ebert's Ophelia are all good story book illustrations with primary colors in their veins.

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There is a time, not too far into the second half, as the evening is arranged at the Phoenix, when the hare and hounds method begins to reveal its limitations. With so much exercise the play tends to lose weight. Because things can only go faster and faster . . . Patricia Falkenhain's Gertrude cannot slow her boy down enough to make herself noticed; in literally foaming at the mouth, Mr. Madden shrinks from stature.

The play too takes on a curious aspect. It begins to look as though Thomas Kyd had constructed it, with improvements by Shakespeare. . . . One shouldn't be permitted to snicker faintly at Shakespeare's carpentry; the essence of the adventure lies elsewhere.

But then we are into the dazzling tumble of cards that Mr. Vaughan has made of the last scene. . . . The distribution of bodies is, almost beyond doubt, the most satisfying I have ever seen.

This is, then, a Hamlet for the young in heart. Let everyone grow up later.⁸¹

I have quoted Kerr's review at length because it discusses so many detailed moments in the production and because it precisely understood what Vaughan and Madden were attempting to do with the play.

Richard Watts of the New York Post called the production "vigorous, forthright, and interesting." He agreed with Kerr that "the second half of the presentation fell off in effectiveness." Vaughan's taste for a simple, clear Shakespearean delivery was embodied in Madden's performance. "Mr. Madden is almost conversational in manner, handling the great soliloquies quietly and with little emphasis on their lyric grandeur. . . . [Madden is] clear spoken, direct, and intelligently aware of the meaning of what he has to say." The interpretation was seen as tending toward the simplistic. "He is a frankly sympathetic Hamlet, not vastly given to subtlety or a concern with the complexities and obscurities of the part, or with anything in the way of originality of conception but always human and attractive." Vaughan's directing received the same kind of notice

⁸¹Walter Kerr, "First Night Report: 'Hamlet,'" New York Herald Tribune, March 17, 1961.

that his work in Shakespeare usually received. "Stuart Vaughan's staging always sees to it that the pace and vitality are maintained."⁸²

Hobe Morrison noted in Variety that the performance had a "much higher ratio of young people in the audience than is present at most legit performances in New York . . . and the whole show seemed to reflect the spontaneity and fullness of their responses." This spontaneity for Morrison was marred by the "rapid tempo . . . which occasionally leads to haste rather than pace with the action and the lines obscured." Variety ended its review with the observation that the production "seems a standout missionary item for new audiences."⁸³ (This was to prove true in that the Phoenix Hamlet became that theatre's most popular production to date, extending its run several times to play 102 performances).

Howard Taubman, writing in the New York Times, called the production "one of its [the Phoenix's] most distinguished productions." Taubman's praise for Madden was the highest of all the reviewers.

Mr. Madden is that rare thing, a player not yet out of his twenties entrusted with one of the most challenging of all tragic roles. . . . He proved that the Phoenix's trust was not misplaced.

Mr. Madden can move; he can speak; and he brings a mind to Hamlet. A slim figure in black with a ruffled blond wig, a lean pale face and haunted, penetrating eyes, this Hamlet is instinct with passion. But surging emotions are kept under control. Mr. Madden is thus able to give the role a sense of growth and intensification. . . . There is a brave, eager youthfulness in this Hamlet. He flings himself against a wall with abandon and gives the players their instructions

⁸²Richard Watts, Jr., "The Phoenix Theatre's 'Hamlet,'" New York Post, March 17, 1961.

⁸³Hobe Morrison, Variety, March 22, 1961.

with a feverish vivacity that does not conceal the thought behind the planning. . . . There are tragic depths to be plumbed. The scene with the queen is not yet as rending as it will be.⁸⁴

Taubman admired the technical skills which the Phoenix company was manifesting, exhibiting a growing ability in American actors to handle the special technical and physical skills necessary to play Shakespeare without sacrificing truth of character. "Although Shakespearean diction is something that American actors have not mastered, Mr. Vaughan has obtained from his company a semblance of consistency."⁸⁵

Jerry Tallmer in the Village Voice registered a negative review. On the one hand Tallmer seemed to resent Madden's youthful energy: "Stuart Vaughan's Hamlet is the one Hamlet that cannot be: the Hamlet of a sobbing 17-year-old to whom everything happens and for whom no responsible kinesis can possibly emanate to make something happen in Denmark." On the other hand, he seemed to want a more innovative staging and interpretation. "Mr. Vaughan takes pride in imposing his ideas on his productions. I fail to grasp the idea that was imposed on this one. What we lack at the Phoenix, what we have always lacked--even through its better realizations--is originality, freedom, a fresh wind." Tallmer went on to recommend Lenny Bruce as Hamlet, suggesting that Bruce "spend four full weeks before rehearsal

⁸⁴Howard Taubman, "Theatre: Donald Madden as Hamlet," New York Times, March 17, 1961.

⁸⁵Ibid.

going to the U.N. to sit and concentrate on a gentleman named Adlai E. Stevenson."⁸⁶

The techniques employed in the Hamlet rehearsals, as well as the critical reception to the production, allow comparison of Vaughan's principles with his practice. The following conclusions are possible:

1. There is a contradiction between Vaughan's desire to keep an invisible directorial hand and his control over his actors.
2. The emphasis upon action, pace, and energy as well as Vaughan's decision to play Hamlet as a "mystery play: indicate a desire to appeal to a popular audience with an entertaining production.
3. Reviewers' comments on Madden's speech indicate that Vaughan was successful in creating natural, conversational verse speaking.
4. Vaughan adhered to his principles of staging Shakespeare as "continual action" although the Phoenix was a proscenium stage which Vaughan admits is "less good" than an open stage.
5. Vaughan was not able to create an ensemble in Hamlet. Madden's performance largely accounted for the play's success.
6. Vaughan costumed and set the play in a Renaissance period. It was a visually simple production which did not call attention to itself.

Stuart Vaughan was a pioneer seeking an American way of doing Shakespeare. He was one of the first directors to try to find a way

⁸⁶Jerry Tallmer, "Theatre: 'Hamlet,'" Village Voice, April 23, 1961.

of acting Shakespeare that would present truthful characterization which would not sacrifice the verse. For Vaughan the task must be to make iambic pentameter sound like "human, connected speech . . . while obeying all the rules of the verse." He wants "a lucid, clear presentation of the poetry. Most actors playing in Shakespeare to this day don't know how to say these words properly and to talk like a real person at the same time. That's what Donald is so good at, and what a few of us, while working on our productions, were good at."⁸⁷

Stuart Vaughan, in 1976, is depressed that there are no true ensembles in America. He feels that there is still no proper environment in the United States for true classical repertory.

The Phoenix wasn't able to do it because New York isn't a very good place to do it. There are too many pulls in other directions for actors who have the stepping-stone philosophy, or have stars in their eyes. Nor do the regionals seem able to do it. It didn't take me very long to understand that the needs of a Seattle were antithetical to producing an ensemble. Those places really have to be commercial theatres, and no ensembles have grown up in such places.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Vaughan interview,

⁸⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

JOSEPH PAPP

Joseph Papp, at mid-decade in the 1970's, is the most important producer in the New York theatre. As head of the New York Shakespeare Festival he controls the Vivian Beaumont and Mitzi Newhouse Theatres at Lincoln Center, as well as the complex of theatres known as The Public Theatre. He produces more new plays than any other New York producer and his office receives some forty to fifty new scripts per week to read. He is the greatest single source of employment for New York actors. He produces Shakespeare in Central Park every summer, giving New York actors a chance to perform Shakespeare. All of this began with the Elizabethan Workshop started by Papp at Emanuel Presbyterian Church in 1955. Since then he has produced over sixty productions of Shakespeare, his taste and aesthetic sensibility having strongly influenced most of them. His efforts as a producer and his final say in stagings are well known, but it is often forgotten that Papp has directed twenty-four productions of Shakespeare. This effort makes him one of the most experienced directors of Shakespeare in the United States.

This chapter will deal with Joe Papp as director of Shakespeare. His colorful biography, his fights with Robert Moses to install Shakespeare in the park, his record as a producer of new plays, his financial battles and political triumphs are stories which have

been told in other places and do not bear direct relevance to this study.

Certain biographical influences which have contributed to his principles and techniques must be noted. Joseph Papp came from a Jewish immigrant family and was raised in the working-class neighborhood of Williamsburgh in Brooklyn, New York. How did he become interested in Shakespeare? Few biographers have noted the fact that Papp was an excellent student in English and a regular performer on his high school stage. While he was a member of teenage gangs, he also was a great reader and it was at the public library that he discovered Shakespeare.

One day when I was thirteen I was standing on a street corner watching one of the neighbors punch another guy in the face and it suddenly came over me that there must be something better than fighting. I began taking books out of the library and I discovered Shakespeare. The thing about Shakespeare-- what makes him endure--is that he transcends time and class. That's why I think he has something to say to the people of New York.¹

Papp frequently has reiterated his desire to make theater as available as books in public libraries. At one point in his struggle with Robert Moses, Walter Kerr suggested that Papp charge a small admission fee to Shakespeare in the Park. Papp answered that he himself would have missed a major influence if the libraries had charged for their use.

Joseph Papp is the only director included in this dissertation who is not a college graduate. While it is true that he may have been too poor to afford college, it is also true that when he graduated from high school, the Second World War halted any educational plans

¹Quoted in J. M. Flagler, "Onward and Upward with the Arts," New Yorker, August 31, 1957.

he may have had, along with those of millions of other American men. Discharged from the Navy in 1946 as a Chief Petty Officer, Papp used his G.I. Bill of Rights to study acting at the Actors' Laboratory Theatre in Hollywood, California. This theatre school was run by Luther Adler and J. Edward Bromberg, both of whom had been members of the Group Theatre. Through this school, Papp had a direct relationship with the Stanislavsky-influenced, socially committed form of realistic theatre that the Group Theatre had exemplified in the New York theatre of the thirties. Within two years of his admittance into this school, Papp had become head of the theatre connected with the school. The school and theatre were disbanded during the McCarthy period owing to allegations of communist influence against teachers involved with the theatre. Later in New York this relationship with the Lab Theatre in Hollywood was the reason for Papp's dismissal from a position as stage manager at C.B.S. Papp had supported himself working for the television corporation. The involvement with the Lab Theatre and C.B.S. are noteworthy here only inasmuch as they recall Papp's background of social commitments.

There seem to have been no teachers who influenced Papp as a Shakespeare artist. The idea of starting a workshop dealing with Elizabethan writers was his own. The original productions of this workshop were modest evenings; the first being a collection of scenes-- "An Evening with Shakespeare and Marlowe." Papp himself directed a workshop production of Cymbeline. No one seems to have noticed the struggling actors at the time. It really was not until Papp convinced Stuart Vaughan to direct Julius Caesar and Taming of the Shew at the East Side Amphitheatre that anyone began to take any notice of the

group. Once Stuart Vaughan joined the group, Papp did not direct again until 1958 when Vaughan dropped out of directing Twelfth Night and Papp took over. By this time the group had achieved considerable fame through two summers of Vaughan-directed Shakespeare. The company had put on these plays in Central Park, gaining widespread attention and popularity.

Doubtless Stuart Vaughan made an impression on Papp. Vaughan's vivid sense of action, theatrical realism, and broad comedy are consistently repeated in Papp's work.

Several critics found Twelfth Night to be less successful than previous Festival productions. One critic specifically compared Papp unfavorably. "His production lacks the organization, the brisk dry pace and the authority of Mr. Vaughan's work."²

From 1958 to 1976 Joseph Papp directed twenty-two productions of Shakespeare. Here is the list:

- 1958 -- Twelfth Night
- 1959 -- Antony and Cleopatra (Concert Version at Hecksher Theatre)
- 1960 -- Henry V
- 1961 -- Much Ado About Nothing
- 1961 -- Romeo and Juliet (high school tour)
- 1962 -- Julius Caesar (high school tour)
- 1962 -- Merchant of Venice
- 1962 -- King Lear
- 1963 -- Antony and Cleopatra
- 1963 -- Twelfth Night (school tour)
- 1964 -- Hamlet
- 1965 -- Troilus and Cressida
- 1965 -- Henry V (Mobile Theatre--five boroughs tour)
- 1965 -- Taming of the Shrew (Mobile Theatre--five boroughs tour)
- 1966 -- Henry V (school tour)
- 1966 -- All's Well That Ends Well
- 1967 -- King John
- 1967 -- Hamlet (Public theatre)
- 1968 -- Romeo and Juliet

²Brooks Atkinson, "Twelfth Night," New York Times, August 7, 1958.

1969 -- Twelfth Night
 1973 -- As You Like It
 1976 -- Henry V

It would not be feasible to investigate all of these productions. Looking at the list, we find certain trends. Papp has directed many tragedies. He has avoided the purely farcical comedies: Two Gentlemen and Comedy of Errors. He avoided the late romances. He has done three of the so-called "darker" comedies (Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, and Much Ado About Nothing), as well as the seldom-produced (Troilus and Cressida, All's Well That Ends Well, and King John). He has done Henry V four times, Twelfth Night three times, and the following twice: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Antony and Cleopatra. During the sixties he directed at least one production at the Delacorte every summer. He did not delegate the school tours to other directors but worked on them himself. However, since 1969 he has directed only two shows in the Park. He had not originally intended to direct As You Like It in 1973, but stepped into that production after firing Jeff Bleckner.

All of the productions were done in their historical period with the following exceptions: Much Ado About Nothing was done in mid-nineteenth century Spain; All's Well That Ends Well was transferred to the mid-nineteenth century; the 1969 Twelfth Night was set at the turn of the present century in H.M.S. Pinafore-type naval costumes. As You Like It was set in the Napoleonic Empire, early nineteenth century. Papp seems to find the comedies more transferable than the tragedies. Also, he seems to find the romantic nineteenth century appropriate for most of the comedies. The 1967 Hamlet at the

Public Theatre used contemporary clothes and a collage text. This latter production stands alone in Papp's production history as the one which could be termed "a director's concept" production in which the original Hamlet was used as the source for a contemporary "confrontation" of the original text. On the whole, Papp's dedication to social relevance has confined itself to interracial casting and the production of socially-relevant modern plays.

Papp's conservatism in directing Shakespeare's plays without directorial comment is clear from the following reviews:

[Antony and Cleopatra] is blunt, straight, serviceable, and interesting.³

This is a Hamlet played straight away. The point of view is direct.⁴

Papp brings everything down to a level that spells out the action without commenting on it with wit and subtlety. . . . Emphasis is placed on the . . . plots.⁵

[King John is] a clear uncluttered production. This is not one of those avante garde productions that try to show us the play that Shakespeare would have written if it had not been for the crude demands of his audience--a tough, colorful war story.⁶

[Romeo and Juliet] is as conservative as a three-button suit.⁷

Another aspect of Papp's Shakespeare seems to be his desire to make poetry sound like "natural speech."

³Lewis Funke, "Antony and Cleopatra in the Park," New York Times, June 21, 1963.

⁴Lewis Funke, "Papp's 'Hamlet,'" New York Times, June 17, 1964.

⁵Joseph LeSueur, "All's Well That Ends Well," New York Times, June 23, 1966.

⁶Dan Sullivan, "An Old Time Power Struggle," New York Times, July 14, 1967.

⁷Dan Sullivan, "Romeo and Juliet," New York Times, August 16, 1968.

[George C. Scott] as Shylock is mannered, abrupt, and in speech destroys the rhythms of Shakespeare.⁸

Mr. Papp's approach de-emphasizes [poetry] to the point of prose.⁹

He has cast the leading roles for modern realism known as the naturalistic style of acting. . . . Romeo and Juliet should talk themselves and the audience into a stupor of madness--a gluttoned stupor of a state. [The play shows] a way of life . . . ruled by rhetoric. Rhetoric requires certain accommodations from the actors. Miss MacArthur and Mr. Sheen do not manage to live up to the level of the language they speak.¹⁰

Mr. Papp has not stressed the poetic passages. Instead, he's had his players portray their roles in a naturalistic vein and speak their lines accordingly. [There is] a conversational quality to this procedure.¹¹

Papp often emphasizes broad physical comedy in his productions.

He likes knock-about "fun."

They don't bother a great deal about the play's lyric qualities or its romantic mood but they actually make it fun.¹²

Mr. Papp has a tendency toward surplus foolery and even overboard playing. The drunken revels involving the rulers of the world need not be so overextended as to verge on burlesque.¹³

With much gesturing, prancing and leering and winking, the actors manage to make clear that Shakespeare was very much an uninhibited product of his sexually outspoken times. Mr. Papp

⁸ Whitney Bolton, "Merchant of Venice," Morning Telegraph, June 21, 1962.

⁹ Michael Smith, "Cleopatra in the Park," Village Voice, June 27, 1963.

¹⁰ Robert Pasoli, "Theatre: "Romeo and Juliet,"" Village Voice, August 22, 1968.

¹¹ Lewis Funke, "Twelfth Night," New York Times, August 14, 1969.

¹² Richard Watts, "Two on the Aisle," New York Post, August 7, 1958.

¹³ Lewis Funke, "Antony and Cleopatra in the Park," New York Times, June 21, 1963.

does tend to let things get too hokey. Feste, dressed as a priest, is allowed to do a stage center dance that would not be out of place in a modern discotheque and to end one of his songs with a scat coda.¹⁴

The most common adjectives used to describe Papp's production seem to be "vigorous" and "vital." The physical movement of the productions is often commended by critics. Papp seems to have a flair for the historical pageantry and theatricality which employs processions, battles, flags, and torches waving in the wind that comes across Lake Belvedere.

Producer Joseph Papp has chosen to present the play more as a history than as a tragedy. The emphasis is on action, on the conflict between Goneril and Regan in Lear's divided kingdom.¹⁵

In the tradition of Papp's group, the stage bristles with a hearty virility. . . . But, Mr. Papp frequently confused the picture by having too many extras rushing or standing about or, worse, marching to and fro in clumsy sequence.¹⁶

Walter Kerr liked Papp's theatrical use of "flaming braziers and flapping cloaks." He recommended that the audience "go on a windy night."¹⁷

Mr. Papp's production for the most part is played broadly and boldly. It is an approach that works well with such scenes as the climactic battle at the end when broad swords clash and shields batter at each other as Greeks and Trojans literally spill over the stage as they settle their personal scores and their national enmities.¹⁸

¹⁴John J. O'Connor, "Twelfth Night," Wall Street Journal, August 14, 1969.

¹⁵Jerry Tallmer, "King Lear," Village Voice, August 16, 1962.

¹⁶Michael Smith, "Cleopatra in the Park," Village Voice, June 27, 1973.

¹⁷Walter Kerr, "Shakespeare in the Park," New York Herald Tribune, June 21, 1963.

¹⁸Herbert Kupferberg, "Troilus and Cressida," New York Herald Tribune, August 13, 1965.

Elements which have made outdoor Shakespeare popular entertainment for diversified audiences are evident in Papp's directing. He seems to feel that his outdoor theatre demands spectacle, and broad comic playing. The following influences and elements in his productions may be noted.

1. He was influenced by his training at the Hollywood Actors Laboratory Theatre, a realistic "method" oriented school.
2. He likes productions which do not have obtrusive directorial points of views.
3. He likes naturalistic, conversational, non-poetic speech in Shakespeare.
4. He likes broad physical comedy, at times verging on burlesque.
5. Papp employs vivid stage spectacle emphasizing elements of the plays which use theatrical activity such as battles, processions, and special visual effects.

Joseph Papp is the only director described in this dissertation with whom I could not get an interview. During the summer of 1976 I tried unsuccessfully several times. He gave me third row center tickets to the first preview of Henry V and made available to me his private written notes on Henry V. However, I never got to speak to him. During Henry V he was too busy to see me, and immediately after he went on a vacation. During the Christmas holidays of 1976 he was once more too busy. Fortunately, more written, published material exists on him than any other director about whom I am writing. I was fortunate to get interviews with people who worked on Henry V. Nor did Mr. Papp ever let me know which of his productions he wanted me

to write about. I have chosen to describe Henry V in detail since (1) I saw the production; (2) Papp has directed it four times and it is obviously a favorite play; (3) interviews were published explaining his intentions with the productions; and (4) the participants whom I interviewed had fresh memories of the production.

Joseph Papp's stated principles may be derived from published statements he has made over the years. As head of the New York Shakespeare Festival, Papp has frequently written articles and given interviews. I suspect that this availability of material was one reason for his not seeing me.

Shakespeare's vision of the world is something on which Joe Papp believes himself to be an authority. "In knowing Shakespeare as I do. I know him very well; I know the man, if I may say that."¹⁹ For Papp, the most important thing about Shakespeare seems to be that he is a "democratic" playwright. "The thing about Shakespeare is that he transcends time and class."²⁰ Joe Papp based his entire theatrical career in the beginning on the belief that a mass audience would want to see Shakespeare. He has always described the heterogeneous audience at the New York Shakespeare Festival with great pride.

We had every kind of person, from an old man with a beard and a Shakespeare book under his arm, who came to every performance of every day, to boys and girls and Puerto Rican mothers who couldn't understand the language but sat there babies in their arms and applauded the spectacle. Maybe

¹⁹"Joe Papp: Populist and Imperialist," Time, July 3, 1972.

²⁰Quoted in J. M. Flagler, "Onward and Upward with the Arts," New Yorker, August 31, 1957.

Shakespeare can be all things to all men. With our audiences, all men certainly seem to like him.²¹

Joe Papp believes that the energy such a diversified audience can give to the theatre is the most vital component of a Shakespearean performance.

You get a sense of street level energy from them . . . what a fantastic energy it is! And we have to match that life energy with theatre energy. Shakespeare can do that. You can more easily reach a working class audience with Shakespeare than you can with contemporary plays.²²

Perhaps the most daring, important concept in Papp's career was the idea that he could make the production of Shakespeare serve a social purpose. Papp has stated several times that for him the theatre must speak to a large audience. He sees as part of his goal the giving of culture to large numbers of the people. "The great gap separating the majority of Americans from their cultural heritage and the culture of the world must be spanned."²³

Shakespeare, for Papp, is thus a popular writer. "I've always felt that Shakespeare, the so-called longhair, is a much more democratic playwright than many of our contemporary playwrights. . . . The classics are mass plays. The audience is very small for plays by Pinter, Genet, or Beckett."²⁴ In 1971 Papp wrote an article attacking the Broadway theatre as elitist. "Broadway is in a sense an elitist

²¹"Brooklyn's Gift to the Bard," Theatre Arts, XLII, No. 6, June 1958.

²²"Joe Papp: Populist and Imperialist," Time.

²³Joseph Papp, "What Happened to the Audience," Sunday News, August 22, 1971.

²⁴Joseph Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On . . .," Prompt 14, 1969.

audience since it appeals to a particular class. The elitist label applies also to the Broadway price structure which is totally out of line with the pocketbook of the working man."²⁵ Since that was written, Papp has extended his production arena to the Broadway theatre where his shows, like A Chorus Line, charge as much as any other show. Papp talks less about "democratic" theatre in recent years. However, he has as yet not stopped producing free Shakespeare in the park during the New York summers.

The second consistent principle to appear in Joseph Papp's writing on the theatre is the primacy of the playwright as the most important artist in the theatre.

The playwright is the intellectual base of the theatre. He's the key force. He's changing the theatre. Actors and director's don't change the theatre. They may tamper with it. They may fool around with it, but until the playwright changes, the theatre doesn't change.²⁶

This policy is most clearly seen in Papp's dedication to new playwrights. Nobody else in the past fifteen years has produced as many new plays. Papp is convinced that "any theatre to be alive has to be a writer's theatre."²⁷

While this idea derives from the stress Papp places on new plays, it also influences his Shakespeare. Papp believes that the director's first job is to try to understand the most famous of playwrights.

What is most valuable is to understand the playwright. . . . With Shakespeare you're dealing with a genius, an extraordinary playwright. My greatest understanding is for the

²⁵Papp, "What Happened to the Audience."

²⁶Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On. . . ."

²⁷"Joe Papp: Populist and Imperialist," Time.

clarity for the play. I mean I have a great respect for the text, so I make it clear, even if it is at the sacrifice of plasticity or certain theatricalities. I strive for clarity and meaning, and with it a kind of beauty that the play has, whether it happens to be a horrible beauty or whatever. . . . The director's job is to protect the text so that it's not violated. Actors will do a lot of things out of impulse.²⁸

Papp prides himself on presenting to an audience the play that the playwright wrote. He assumes this may be achieved partially by not changing the text nor giving the play too strong a directorial point of view. "Good directing is never visible" is his maxim.²⁹ With the exception of Hamlet in 1967, and presenting some of the comedies in nineteenth century sets and costumes, Papp in general has not changed Shakespeare's historical perspective. "You know, you can take one of Shakespeare's plays and fool around with it, but why do that? Why don't you just write a new play?"³⁰

Papp agrees with Stuart Vaughan that the audience's interest should be on the content of the play and not on the way it was directed. "Directors can be intrusive, but if a director is intrusive, he's not a good director."³¹

The second most important artist in the theatre for Papp is the actor. Papp has remarked that actors like George C. Scott and Joe Bova have shown him things in the scripts that he never knew existed. "You have to give those guys their head."³² Papp admires

²⁸Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On"

²⁹"Joe Papp: Populist and Imperialist," Time.

³⁰Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On"

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

actors and says that he treats the actor as an equal. "A director must remember that he's not superior to the actor. Never! If an actor feels that for a moment, you lose out."³³

Over the years, Papp has insisted on a certain kind of American realism in the acting of Shakespeare. He often chooses "truthful" actors who he feels are "honest" over "technicians" who may be more experienced in verse speaking. Papp feels that his audience, reared on films and television, demand "natural" acting.

Because we want to attract a wide audience for Shakespeare, we don't charge admission. Our audience is therefore made up largely of people who have never seen professional theatre. But they have been to the movies and they see television. Both mediums have conditioned them to a style of acting that . . . we may call generally natural and unaffected. It has a sense of reality about it, even though it may sometimes be superficial. Be that as it may, we have an audience composed of people who insist that we serve them a style of Shakespeare they can relate to their contemporary experience--which means that it must be free of bombast and conventional stage artifices. They demand a Shakespeare that is believable and will settle only for characters with whom they can identify.³⁴

Papp has spoken of his admiration for Stuart Vaughan who "instead of having the actors just declaim poetry, he made them act like real people."³⁵ Papp believes that the British tradition of speaking Shakespeare is "refined" or "bombastic" and in some of his statements even suggests that it reinforces the class structure. "We don't seek for British refinement. We want good American standard speech. I think it serves Shakespeare better than the pronunciation

³³Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On"

³⁴Joseph Papp, "On Directing Shakespeare," Directors on Directing, ed. Toby Cole and Helen Krick Chinoy (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), p. 432.

³⁵"The Price of This Ticket is Responsibility," New York Herald-Tribune, March 16, 1958.

of the British elite."³⁶ One is reminded of the comparison American critics made between the refinement of England's Macready and America's Edwin Forrest in the 1840s in some of Papp's statements. Americans prided themselves on the masculine, and emotional, "American" acting of Forrest.

Papp likes "natural" actors who seem grounded in the American method. Stuart Little describes Papp's talk to A. J. Antoon's cast on the first day of rehearsal for Much Ado About Nothing. "He spoke of the ways of doing Shakespeare, of allowing the drama to come from the characters reacting to each other, letting their feelings radiate further to fill the greater space of the audience. In his view, Shakespeare had become simpler, depending less on direction than on the simple activity of the actors."³⁷

Papp seems to be referring here to Stanislavsky's technique of "the score of physical actions" in which an actor concentrates on a series of simple actions which will lead him to the truth of his character.

Papp is also continuing much of the New York 1950s preference for psychological realism, as exemplified in the Actors Studio of Lee Strasberg. "We seek blood-and-guts actors, those who bring spice and vitality to the production--actors who have the stamp of truth on everything they do and say. Their roles always have a psychological base, which means they experience deep emotions on stage. . . . It

³⁶Quoted in Kupferberg, "New York Shakespeare Festival," in *Theatre 3*, ed. Marcha Wadsworth Coigney (New York: Charles Scribners, 1970), pp. 129-130.

³⁷Stuart Little, Enter Joseph Papp (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1974), p. 46.

is founded on the creation of a feeling so deep that one can only resort to poetry to express oneself adequately."³⁸

"Energy" and "vitality" are two words that often enter Joseph Papp's vocabulary when he describes American acting. "The American actors have a great deal to contribute to the classics in terms of reality and energy."³⁹ This quality of energy emanates personally from Papp. "I feel primed, heightened. I'm 46 years old. I should be getting tired, but I'm exhilarated! We've got a rhythm of work here that goes and goes and it's gonna mean some good work."⁴⁰

Papp tends not to like stage designs which are highly decorative. David Mitchell, Papp's designer for the 1976 Henry V, made this clear. "Joe likes sparseness in his sets for Shakespeare. He doesn't like the designer or the director to make arty statements with the set. He likes architecture rather than decoration."⁴¹ Mitchell's statement is borne out by Papp's reaction to the televised production of Much Ado About Nothing described in Stuart Little's Enter Joseph Papp.

Whenever you put Shakespeare in a more modern period, it is diminished. And, when you put Shakespeare in color, it runs the danger of looking cute, Shakespeare can't stand being cute, Shakespeare has to be lean and mean. The setting Shakespeare had for his plays was in some ways exactly

³⁸Papp, "On Directing Shakespeare," p. 433.

³⁹Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On"

⁴⁰Quoted in Dan Sullivan, "Papp is a Love Person," New York Sunday Times, October 15, 1969.

⁴¹David Mitchell interview, December 23, 1976, New York, New York.

right. Fine to put the color in the costumes, but the lines come out better against that spare background.⁴²

Papp's principles of directing may be thus enumerated:

1. Shakespeare's vision of the world is "democratic" in that all types of men are of interest to him. His strength is in his appeal to a mass audience.
2. The playwright is the most important artist in the theatre. Therefore, any director of Shakespeare must try to be true to Shakespeare's intentions.
3. The best directing is the least observable.
4. Actors are primary artists and must be treated by directors as equals.
5. American Shakespearean acting should be natural, not bombastic or rhetorical, and should convince the audience that they are watching real people doing real things.
6. American Shakespeare must communicate a high level of performer energy.
7. The best settings for Shakespeare are the most sparse. Papp is against decoration for its own effect.

Henry V is a good play with which to take a sustained look at Joseph Papp as a director. The play has a realism and masculinity which Papp's approach to Shakespeare would seem to fit well. Papp has done the play four times. His first production in 1960 marked the first unanimously favorable reception to his directing from the press.

⁴²Quoted in Stuart Little, Enter Joseph Papp, p. 47.

In a program note for this production, Papp did not see the play as a "flag waving epic."

The story of Henry V is a universal story of a ragged, sick and hungry army, plunged into battle against fresh and overwhelmingly superior number-forces, both in numbers and in arms. . . . The emotional impact of the play is to be found in the audience's identification with the underdog. These men--the symbol of all men fighting for a "just cause" inspired to the point beyond human endurance by stirring leadership--are the matter from which this play is shaped. . . . It transcends flag-waving and is transformed into a statement of triumph for all ragged men fighting everywhere against impossible odds.⁴³

In 1960, Papp stressed the army as the protagonist of the production. He obviously could identify with "ragged men" fighting for a "just cause." Papp, coming from an underprivileged background and challenging the New York theatre to meet new responsibilities, must have felt in those days like an underdog himself. Never have the critics been so favorable to Papp-directed Shakespeare as they were to this first Henry V. Here is a sample of the response.

The sense of wanting to say something that has never been said before dominates the evening. . . . On this patch of earth there are rough and ready people. Henry seems not to have even bothered to put on his makeup, which suggests that he is really ready to go to war--and the people obviously mean it as they fume over treason, snipe at their leaders, hustle cannon from the audience to send smoke belching toward Bonwits. . . . The chronicle, with the breeze whipping at those torches, seems in its natural habitat.⁴⁴

The most criticized performance in the play was of the actor playing Henry. James Ray, who played Henry in 1960, "seems more an earnest boy scout than the spirited king."⁴⁵ Arthur Gelb felt that

⁴³ Joseph Papp, "About the Play," Program Note to Henry V, June 1960.

⁴⁴ Walter Kerr, "Henry V," New York Herald Tribune, June 30, 1960.

⁴⁵ Frances Herridge, "Across the Footlights," New York Post, June 30, 1960.

Ray did not have "enough variety in his performance. . . . Mr. Papp has not succeeded in setting fire to him."⁴⁶ Ray was thought most successful in the wooing scene of the last act.

In 1965 Joe Papp mounted a mobile theatre touring production of Henry V with a black Henry (Robert Hooks) and a black Katherine (Ellen Holly). Papp cut the script to approximately half its original length. According to one account the production was successful with audiences:

The audience's reaction to it would have reduced the need for newspaper criticism. The Harlem crowds, like most of the neighborhood audiences reached by the Mobile Theatre are uninhibited. If they like something, they listen. If they don't, some of them hoot. The prologues seemed to provoke most of the hooting and if Shakespeare had been there he might have thought his rhetoric was wrong.⁴⁷

The mobile touring theatres are no longer a part of the Shakespeare Festival, a fact which may further demonstrate Papp's decreasing interest in a lower class audience.

Papp's interest in reviving Henry V in 1976 came out of a desire to have Paul Rudd play Henry V. The 1975-1976 season was an especially successful one for the young actor who had in 1969 played a one-line walk-on in Gerry Freedman's Henry IV, Part I at the Shakespeare Festival. Rudd had achieved success in a television series, playing an opportunistic Irish chauffeur in "Beacon Hill." He had also gotten attention as the Gentleman Caller in The Glass Menagerie and in David Rabe's Streamers, a play which Papp imported from the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven to the Mitzi Newhouse Theatre

⁴⁶ Arthur Gelb, "Theatre: 'Henry V,'" New York Times, June 30, 1960.

⁴⁷ John Molleson, "A Rocky Start But 'Henry V' Scores Harlem," New York Herald Tribune, June 29, 1963.

in Lincoln Center. "Joe heard that I wanted to play Henry and thought I was ready for it."⁴⁸ David Mitchell affirms that the stimulus for the production came from Papp wanting to see Rudd play the role. Papp himself suggested this stimulus. "I chose to do Henry V because of Paul. The reason to do a Hamlet is that you have a Hamlet. You don't decide on the play and then go looking for your Hamlet or your Henry."⁴⁹ For this production Papp wanted a less romantic version of Henry than usual. In an essay written on Henry V as an introduction to the text of the play, Papp once had described Henry as "a cold, deadly serious young man who would stop at nothing and still be a figure of heroic mold."⁵⁰

Papp made his pre-production notes available to me and they also reveal his desire to present Henry V in an unromantic light:

HENRY

- A. 1. A brooding fanatic
 - 2. Warm moments (soft) to wildness "Edward, Black Prince"
- B. Interpolate
 - 1. Ritual over Richard II
 - 2. Voice of Richard - curse
 - 3. Falstaff's rejection and reply
 - 4. Boyhood things in whispers over speaker
- C. A religious fanatic
- D. Black costume
- E. Priests - cross with him
 - "famine, sword, and fire crouch"
- F. Leave all references to God in

⁴⁸ Paul Rudd interview, New York, New York, December 22, 1976.

⁴⁹ Robert Berkvist, "Notes: Boom Time for the Bard," New York Times, May 16, 1976.

⁵⁰ Joseph Papp, "Introduction to Henry V," Henry V (New York: Dell Paperbacks, Inc., 1961), p. iv.

- G. Leading men out of bondage
- H. Like a jove - eyes flashing but able to share the anguish of his men
- I. Castro - small band defeats great army with spirit
- J. Machiavellian Prince. Right conduct. "It is well to seem merciful, faithful, humorous, sincere, religious and also to be so, but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change it to the opposite qualities."

"A prince must take great care that nothing goes out of his mouth which is not full of the above named 5 qualities and to see and hear him, he should seem to be all mercy, faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. And nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last quality, for men in general judge more by the eyes than by the hands, for everyone can see but few have power to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are."⁵¹

These notes are fascinating in their portrayal of a fanatic, a Machiavellian prince who knows that he is manipulating other human beings. Papp had intended to put Falstaff in the production, reminding the audience of Hal's rejection of the old knight. This idea like all the above interpolations were later abandoned. Other notes reveal this wish to present an unsentimental Henry.

Henry - strong action - go way out - no limitations
a fanatic with dignity. Bishop Sheen - Castro -

Big Laughter - enjoyment of life
furious
mocking
wild
morose

"A maker of manners"

Love - brothers - those dear to him

Easily hurt - Touched - Scroop

⁵¹Joseph Papp, "Director's Notes for Henry V," (1976 Production).

Physical - great sense of personal strength.

Muscles - well toned

Eyes - penetrating (sees every move and attitude around him - a sense of what's going on around him)

heightened awareness

A flair for the dramatic (Castro) but with deep conviction.

Awareness - He is being watched

Always testing man's truth to him - loyalty to him.

Despises flatterers

Sensitive to beauty

Loves humility in others.

Henry says, "I am no flatterer. I am a Christian King." He consciously affirms what he considers princely virtues. Not that he has them. He is always at war with the ideal and his own compulsions. If a man is a certain way, he is not conscious of it. He doesn't have to talk about it. Henry has to.⁵²

Papp's Henry emerges from these notes as a complex character of a certain tragic stature. In seeking to become a king, Henry self-consciously creates himself. He is not a perfect man but one who tries to seem perfect. He is, however, filled with self-doubts, and troublesome responsibilities; a character who gives up his humanity and kinship with other men in order to become a king.

Paul Rudd confirmed that Papp wanted a very "tough character," and that "Joe wanted Henry to be very tough. I'm not a particularly tough actor. He wanted me to understand what it means to be a leader. Joe brought those things out of me."⁵³

⁵² Joseph Papp, private notes for Henry V.

⁵³ Rudd interview.

Papp in the first days of rehearsals spoke to the cast about leadership. "I remember he talked a lot to us about what it meant to be a leader. It was quite clear that Joe really identified with Henry."⁵⁴ In an interview with the Village Voice Papp also revealed his sense of identification with the role of Henry. "The play is really a study of leadership . . . of the leader of a major organization--a president maybe--anybody that is in charge of men. It's the third time I've done this play, and I'm doing it again because I've learned a great deal about leadership since the last time."⁵⁵ Along with the desire to present a picture of a Machiavellan prince, Papp wanted to take a realistic look at war. David Mitchell, set designer for the show, stated that the original concept for the production was to show in detail the horrors of war.

Joe and I both wanted the set to be a ballast against a pretty production. The "mechanics of war" was the original image for the production. Joe had done a lot of historical research on the battle of Agincourt. He had even visited the battlefield in France. We went over to the Metropolitan Museum and got advice from the curator of Medieval arms. Joe wanted the arms and weapons to be very realistic against a neutral setting.⁵⁶

Costumes for the production, designed by Timothy Miller, were also to be historically accurate and unromantic.

Joe wanted the English to be in greys and browns. No velvets or brocades for the English. The French were in velvet blues and blacks. But he didn't want them to be flamboyant either. He had this thing about the French society worshipping death and not having enough life energy in them to defeat the English. I tried to reflect that in the dark colors for the French.

⁵⁴Rudd interview.

⁵⁵Quoted in Geoffrey Stokes, "Joe Papp Crowns Himself," Village Voice, July 12, 1976.

⁵⁶Mitchell interview.

He accepted everything I did for him the first time except he thought the sleeves for the French were too exotic and romantic and made me cut them down.⁵⁷

Mitchell stated that as the production evolved, it became more and more romantic. "Joe wanted a panoramic stage, a large field, in which action was happening everywhere simultaneously, like in some of Breughel's paintings. As we got more and more people on the set, and I think as Joe became increasingly disappointed with Paul Rudd, he began filling up the performance with pageantry and lots of action."⁵⁸ Miller feels the same thing happened in spite of Papp's attempt to keep the play unromantic. "Paul is a romantic actor. Thus the production turned out to be more romantic than we had originally conceived."⁵⁹

Papp had the set from the first day of rehearsal, "something that had never happened at the Delacorte before."⁶⁰ The set, a wooden slatted polygon, suggesting both the Globe and a battle arena or cockpit, was dominated by a large mobile tower which moved around into various positions. This tower suggested both a "machine of war" and the above balconies of the Globe Theatre where musicians were placed.

Henry V held its first rehearsal at a rehearsal room in Lincoln Center. The cast read through the play and "there was no discussion."⁶¹ Suzanne Collins told me that after the first read-through all rehearsals were held at the outdoor Delacorte Theatre.

⁵⁷ Timothy Miller interview, New York, New York, December 20, 1976.

⁵⁸ Mitchell interview.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wilfred Leech interview, New York, New York, December 27, 1976.

"A lot of the actors were intimidated I think by being outside right from the beginning. There was no time to develop a character. We were conscious of the need to be big from the beginning. And there were so many people involved."⁶² Papp had assembled over sixty actors for the cast. It was a large undertaking. "Right from the start it was a big project. Joe acted like a general assembling his forces. This was not to be a cerebral approach."⁶³

The play was blocked quickly. Great patches of blocking were left to the actors. When asked about Papp's blocking, Philip Bosco, who played Pistol, answered,

I didn't get the impression that he pre-blocked. You brought it in, did it, and he changed or refined it. Business was by and large left to the actors. I must say that honestly Joe had more to do on this production with the physical aspects of the staging than within scenes. He worked a lot on the fights and the general patterns of movements. Also important to him were those interconnecting moments in scenes, as when a scene ends and another one begins; the business which connected the scenes, the movement in and out with the banners and all that, he spent a good deal of time with all that.⁶⁴

Suzanne Collins noticed,

The thing he loved most in rehearsals was doing all the horn fanfares. Here comes the king! Babababum! He'd make the trumpet sounds right from the beginning of rehearsals. He heard the music, the cannons going. He had all that right from the beginning. He was like a kid. Flags and torches,⁶⁵ he loved all that. We gave him a trumpet on opening night.

Paul Rudd says he had all his lines before ever going in to rehearsal. "You can't act Shakespeare with the book in your hand."⁶⁶

⁶²Suzanne Collins interview, New York, New York, July 30, 1976.

⁶³Philip Bosco interview, New York, New York, July 22, 1976.

⁶⁴Ibid. ⁶⁵Collins interview.

⁶⁶Rudd interview.

According to Rudd, Papp spent no time on the verse nor very much dealing with the text. "Joe doesn't believe in working hard on the text. I wish we had paid more attention to the words and to the poetry. We were into run-throughs very early and didn't stop to think a lot about what we were saying."⁶⁷

Joe Papp, according to most accounts, did spend a lot of time talking generally to Paul Rudd about the character of Henry.

Our first talks were about the play and what the responsibility of leadership meant. How one gradually learns to cope with responsibility. Joe very clearly identifies with Henry. I once said to Joe that I was glad I was thirty-five playing this part. It's really a very complex role. I don't think I would have understood the part when I was Henry's own age, 25. Joe said, "Wait till you're over forty. Then you can tell everyone to go fuck themselves."⁶⁸

Papp's identification with Henry as well as some sense of his unhappiness with Rudd were communicated in the Village Voice interview.

Paul Rudd, who's playing Henry, doesn't know any of that yet [the responsibilities of leadership]. He's still really beginning. I gave him his first job in the ensemble, only a few years ago. So I have to teach him about leadership. My authority has to be gradually transferred to him. For instance, I have to let him talk directly to the ensemble--direct them almost--until he begins to feel like a king. A king, right. This isn't some fucking Eisenhower. He's got to feel about his men the way I feel about the people in this show. Their souls are their own but their duty is to me.⁶⁹

Phil Bosco remembers that "Joe and Paul had lots of private talks, but never in front of the whole company."⁷⁰ Suzanne Collins remembers one day when rehearsal was called at the Lincoln Center because of rain.

⁶⁷Rudd interview.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Quoted in Stokes, "Joe Papp Crowns Himself," pp. 88-89.

⁷⁰Bosco interview.

That day we could see Joe work with Paul. They were working on the traitor scene when Henry was talking to his best friend, Scroop, who had betrayed him. Joe was trying to give to Paul his feelings about being betrayed; how deeply hurt Henry was at this betrayal but how Henry would not show his hurt. He described the coldness that could come over Henry when he was hurt, how he could turn off of people. I really could see Joe playing it when he was talking to Paul.⁷¹

Rudd found Papp's conception of Henry difficult to play. "Joe did not want Henry to show any personal feelings until his "Upon the King" soliloquy. He is always hiding his true feelings. He finally gets to be a human being in the wooing scene. Those early scenes were very difficult for me."⁷² Suzanne Collins feels that Paul "was very surface with Joe. I got the feeling he wasn't working in depth. Joe gave Paul the performance that he had, without really drawing from Paul's feelings."⁷³

David Mitchell was at every rehearsal and says that Papp got farther away from his original concept as he began to feel that Rudd was inadequate in the part. "One day Joe said to me, 'Jesus Christ, I've built the whole bloody production around a pea!'"⁷⁴ Rudd did not mention any tension between Papp and himself to me except jokingly to remark, "He was less acerbic in the beginning."⁷⁵

In the meantime, other actors in the cast complained that they were getting no direction from Papp. "I think there was a general complaint that there wasn't enough work done within the scenes, on the acting of the scenes themselves."⁷⁶ Joe Bova, who played Fluellen,

⁷¹Collins interview.

⁷²Rudd interview.

⁷³Collins interview.

⁷⁴Mitchell interview.

⁷⁵Rudd interview.

⁷⁶Bosco interview.

remarked, "Joe didn't give me very much direction, it was very frustrating. I never knew what I was doing out there."⁷⁷ Suzanne Collins gives the same observation. "Joe seemed impatient with individual slow work-throughs of the scenes. Unless an actor like Michael Moriarty could force him to take time to work through something, he wouldn't do it. He was more interested in the general look of things."⁷⁸

Papp would have "new ideas" he would try out at rehearsals. David Mitchell remarked, "Everyday there were new questions with Joe Papp. He'd get these brainstorm and everything would change. All the scenes in Henry went through wildly different ideas. Sometimes Joe would get ideas and then not follow through totally with them."⁷⁹ Bosco described one such idea, "intriguing but unrealized,"⁸⁰ was in the handling of the first comic scenes. During this scene with Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph, the tower was filled with "groundling" audience members laughing and jeering at the comic characters. This technique was never used in any of the other scenes. "We played that first scene like Elizabethan actors. I thought it was an excellent idea, but we didn't pursue it sufficiently. Joe began to draw back from it in some scenes. That kind of thing sets a different kind of tone. He lost track of that idea with his concern for the whole show, but still kept in bits of it."⁸¹

One day in rehearsal Papp came in with a new conception for the first chorus of the play. He had discovered possible sexual

⁷⁷ Joe Bova interview, New York, N.Y., July 28, 1976.

⁷⁸ Collins interview. ⁷⁹ Mitchell interview.

⁸⁰ Bosco interview. ⁸¹ Ibid.

which did not have stylistic consistency with other parts of the staging nor did they relate to the original unromantic view of the play. "There was one moment I hated when, during the St. Crispin's Day speech, Joe had all the Englishmen lie face down on the stage, their whole body horizontal in a kind of Asiatic obeisance to Henry. It certainly looked bizarre. That was one moment that Joe never changed."⁸⁶ Suzanne Collins said "that was the most important moment in the play for Joe, when everyone--nobles and commoners--got face down on the ground before Henry. He seemed to feel it showed the total unity of all men in a common cause."⁸⁷ By assuming Papp's identification with Henry, the scene could be given a different interpretation.

Papp tended to give his actors very technical acting notes. His written notes have a distinctly "mechanical" air about them. The following notes are from a run-through of June 23, 1976, late in the rehearsal process:

Chorus I: Play more to the 2nd balcony

Tennis Balls: Ensemble - yell once when you are up
on the tower
Henry - 2 feet more down when the
nobles council you
Canoneers: laugh on gunstones

Bardolph: more carbuncles on your face
Quickly don't relate to upstage audience
Bardolph: don't delay drawing your sword
Ensemble: push the side stairs in quietly

Death of Falstaff: Quickly: Mime a higher bed.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Mitchell interview.

⁸⁷ Collins interview.

⁸⁸ Joseph Papp, Director's Notes for Henry V.

These notes, similar to those any director might give at dress rehearsals, show Papp to be a perfectionist interested in specific technical details of physical staging.

Henry V used four assistant directors. They were Sam Waterston, Wilfred Leech, Lee Breuer, and John Beery. Sam Waterston tended to confer privately on walks around the park with Joe and to act as an authority on French pronunciation. Wilfred Leech, as an observer, "over-saw the production once it had opened."⁸⁹ John Beery seemed to be around talking privately to people about their roles and "looked things up in the library."⁹⁰ Lee Breuer was hired to conceive the battle choreography while Erick Frederickson worked out the specifics of the battle and taught stage combat to the ensemble. It is not inconceivable that such a multitude of directors added to the mixture of the theatrical styles emerging in the production.

As originally conceived, the battle sequences in Henry V were to be performed in a theatrically symbolic fashion. Lee Breuer wanted to show the historical battle of Agincourt in miniature.

He wanted to show a kind of diagram of the way it was, using miniature weapons and three or four men, symbolically standing for whole military components: cavalry, long bowmen, etc. We actually had built a lot of miniature stuff to be used this way. Joe never got around to using any of this stuff. I guess he was too worried about Paul Rudd's performance. The one element of this "in miniature approach" was the breach at Harfleur. In that scene a miniature wall was blown down by a realistic canon blast. It looked really silly when nothing else was done that way in the production.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Leech interview.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Mitchell interview.

The stylistic contradictions of the battle sequences are evident in press releases prior to opening which described the battle scenes. On May 16, 1976 Papp described his conception in the following manner: "We'll be trying to render Henry's battles in a surrealistic way. The siege of Harfleur, the battle of Agincourt, will be scenes of heaped bodies, severed limbs, and horses' heads. We're even using dummies to create the effect of more bodies. . . . I want to try to give the audience a very vivid sense of the sheer slaughter that took place."⁹² In a later article, published just prior to opening, the surrealism had seemed to disappear from the battles along with "severed limbs." Eric Frederickson told an interviewer:

No stage blood will be spilled because Mr. Papp says he finds it distracting. . . . We wanted absolute realism, but abstractions were unavoidable. . . . My contribution [Eric Frederickson's] has been to stage the fighting in an unpretty fashion--using the hilt of a sword to deal a crushing blow, for example, of having a big man simply pick up a smaller opponent and crush him. Ugly fighting. No director ever gave me license to do that before.⁹³

At the first preview of Henry V the audience saw a battle scene that was basically realistic, which, despite some "ugly fighting" was romantic enough to win the applause of the audience, after a shower of arrows flew into Lake Belvedere. Henry also had a climactic, man-to-man confrontation with an added character called the Black Knight [Eric Frederickson]. Their duel with broad swords was choreographed as a slow motion dance to the sound of heart beats amplified over the speaker system.

⁹²Robert Berkvist, "Notes: Boom Time for the Bard," New York Times, May 16, 1976.

⁹³Robert Berkvist, "The Delacorte is Agincourt Tonight," New York Times, June 25, 1976.

Several actors with whom I spoke were most surprised to find Joseph Papp so kind to his actors. "He likes actors. I remember him being very nice to me. I was crying because my costume made me look fat. Joe came over. He took my hand and said, "I'm so glad I'm doing a play mostly with men. I did a play with women once and they all cry. But it's all right. It's called 'emotion.'"⁹⁴ Phil Bosco likes the way "Joe gives actors their own creativity. He knows that the best way to get good work from actors is to leave them alone. The only note he ever gave me was to keep *Pistol* real. I have a tendency to get too theatrical."⁹⁵ Tim Miller remembers a potentially explosive situation when Michael Moriarty did not want to wear a cape that had been designed for him. "I admire the way Joe was very firm and gentle at the same time. He told Michael to 'try the cape for his sake.' Michael did and everything worked out all right."⁹⁶ David Mitchell recalls that Papp was not so gentle with his technicians. "He'd yell a lot if things weren't the way he wanted them."⁹⁷

During previews Papp cut twenty minutes out of Henry V. He was very concerned that the play be over by a quarter to eleven. A lot of people want to be out of the park and on their way home by eleven."⁹⁸ Papp tended to cut scenes that he felt were not working well or scenes that were not necessary to the central action. He had

⁹⁴Collins interview.

⁹⁵Bosco interview.

⁹⁶Miller interview.

⁹⁷Mitchell interview.

⁹⁸Rudd interview.

wanted to cut almost the entirety of the last-act wooing scene. "Joe wanted it to go. I begged him to keep it in. It was really the only chance I had to be human. Joe wasn't interested in that scene. He let Meryl Streep and me direct it ourselves. I think it was my best scene. It always worked very well in performance."⁹⁹ Papp cut lines out of the traitor scene, the camp fire scene, and the comics' scenes. Papp declared in cutting the lines, "I have to be ruthless even about things that I love."¹⁰⁰

These are the techniques used by Joe Papp in his 1976 production of Henry V.

1. Papp chose Henry V because of the availability of an actor.
2. Papp extensively researched the historical background of the play.
3. The production started out as unromantic in conception and ended romantically; therefore, we may say that Papp did not pursue a single through-line or conceptual approach in this production. He tends to develop his shows along pragmatic lines according to the circumstances and the people involved.
4. Papp does not spend much time on the text but gets a show on its feet early and has many run-throughs.
5. His main concern seemed to be with the flow of movement and the achievement of certain theatrical effects.

⁹⁹Rudd interview.

¹⁰⁰Berkvist, "The Delacorte is Agincourt Tonight."

6. Papp had many individual sessions with Paul Rudd. He identified with the role of Henry V and tried to make Rudd understand Henry through personal talks with Rudd.
7. He did not work through scenes with most of the other actors. He tends to leave actors alone unless they are in trouble.
8. Papp tried out several approaches to many scenes. He gets "brainstorms" on certain scenes.
9. Papp does not worry about stylistic consistency.
10. Papp extensively used assistant directors on Henry V.
11. Papp gave many specific technical acting notes in late rehearsals.
12. Papp's manner with his actors is courteous and kind.
13. When something is not central to the action, it gets cut in order to streamline the play and get the audience out at an early hour.

After seeing Henry V on June 27, 1976, I wrote the following comments:

Papp lets the story take precedence over any directorial touches. This is basically a realistic approach. He wants to involve us in the characters and what is happening. This realistic approach is abruptly jarred in some moments of the battle scene which suddenly becomes rather choreographed and looks arty.

Certain images from the production stick in one's mind. The French camp scene with blue tents and abstract silver horses bobbing up and down. The French are not outrageously caricatured; just men like the English. The Dauphin's paeon to his horse is touching--not ridiculous.

Certain pictures are memorable:

The image of Bardolph hanged; a stuffed dummy strung up on a post; the dead boy on a cart with a trumpet around his neck.

Philip Bosco's Pistol is highly theatrical, yet also touching and real. How clever of Shakespeare to give his braggart warrior a heart of gold. Also, Pistol, with true Shakespearean contradiction, is capable of courage and loyalty to his friend, Bardolph.

Paul Rudd seems ill at ease in his robes, like a little boy masquerading in his father's clothes. There is an energetic ambitiousness and coldness to him. He reminds me of an American Gatsby.

The production made me think how human beings lust for glory. "If it be a sin to covet honor then I am the most offending soul alive!" Hal can justify anything for himself and come out on top. The Hals of this world are the golden boys for whom everything works out.

One can also get ahead if one puts a cause ahead of oneself. Hal sacrifices his humanity to become king. He gains the world and loses himself. He wants to be one with the people but he also wants to fall back on the superior position granted him by his birth whenever the people do not please him. He doesn't take responsibility for the blood of others that he sheds. Of course, he's willing to shed his own too.

Henry is Joe Papp, the leader of the New York Shakespeare Festival--capable of sacrificing himself and others to his aims. Henry V is about success and American individuality. Know what you want and go get it. Henry V is also Gatsby who gets everything but somehow loses it. This makes the production rather sad.

It is interesting to me that Papp's production stimulated me to think about the play's meaning. No clear concept was presented to the audience, but somehow the production left my mind free to think about the play and made me want to think about it. Somehow I was sufficiently involved with Henry V. Surely this is an indication of a measure of success.

The critical reception to Papp's Henry V in 1976 was in some ways similar to the reception to the 1960 production. The theatrical pageantry was praised but many found fault with Paul Rudd's Henry. Papp did not get the Henry he wanted, nor was the production unromantic.

A vigorous sprawling Henry V, one lacking in unity and style. . . . A stage full of helter-skelter soldiers. It's a mess but lively.¹⁰¹

He handles the spectacle aspect of the play with great expertise.¹⁰²

A splendidly handsome military spectacle with banners that flutter, torches that flare, and guns that go boom. . . . The Battle of Agincourt "choreographed by Lee Breuer and combat by Eric Frederickson" is the biggest production number since Shanghai Lil, with processions before and after, mass combat, single combat, one of those moments when everyone freezes, a slow motion sequence, broadsword fighting, pike work, a brilliant flight of arrows and God knows what more. If you miss Op Sail and the Macy's fireworks, there is always Henry V in the park.¹⁰³

Grandeur is in fact the production's hallmark. It presents the cleanest kind of pageantry, keeping an enormous cast under control, filling the stage with wonderful pictures.¹⁰⁴

If Joseph Papp wanted to present an "unromantic" Henry V, he failed miserably. Yet, curiously enough, some of the comments on Rudd's performance reflect a certain uneasiness with the hero king. One wonders whether or not some of the criticism of Rudd's performance may not have stemmed from a desire of the critics to see a performance as romantic as the staging.

¹⁰¹ Douglas Watt, "'Henry V' Opens," Daily News, July 1, 1976.

¹⁰² Clive Barnes, "'Henry V' Staged with Fine Cast at Delacorte," New York Times, July 1, 1976.

¹⁰³ Julius Novick, "The Cannons Go BOOM in Central Park," Village Voice, July 7, 1976.

¹⁰⁴ Martin Gottfried, "A Little Touch of Harry," New York Post, July 1, 1976.

His voice was often tense with a kind of anguish--essentially a brash, youthful, heroic Henry. He has difficulty with poetry, a certain deficiency of musicality--a forceful thrusting Henry, full of the pains of youth.¹⁰⁵

[Rudd showed an] unemotional and impersonal playing of Henry.¹⁰⁶

Mr. Rudd lacks the technical equipment for the big bow wow speeches which come out rushed and pushed.¹⁰⁷

Paul Rudd felt unsatisfied with his performance. Part of his dissatisfaction came from feeling unprepared to do Shakespearean acting. He feels Papp's disinterest in techniques for classical acting is wrong. "Joe's weakness is the weakness of most Americans. We don't have the training. We don't do enough speech and voice work. Joe is crazy not to think that's important. Also, we just don't do the classics enough. We've also got to have an academy to learn in."¹⁰⁸ Rudd realizes that Papp was not happy with his performance. "He really wanted to make it his Henry. I had to make it mine. I think he resented it becoming mine a bit. That's very sad, but even Joe couldn't deny the success of the show with an audience."¹⁰⁹ Rudd admires Papp's chutzpah and agrees with him that American Shakespeare has a joy and energy missing in English productions. "Brook's Midsummer was the most joyless thing I've ever seen."¹¹⁰ It is evident that to some extent Rudd blames the incompleteness of his performance on Papp.

¹⁰⁵Barnes, "'Henry V' Staged"

¹⁰⁶Gottfried, "A Little Touch of Harry."

¹⁰⁷Novick, "The Cannons Go BOOM"

¹⁰⁸Rudd interview.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. ¹¹⁰Ibid.

Joe is the major patron of the theatre in this country, but he is a producer first and then a director. We don't have a hell of a lot of competent classical directors in this country. Joe can harness the resources of great numbers of talented people. He is a great leader and gets people to follow him but he lacks knowledge necessary to direct Shakespeare successfully.¹¹¹

Looking at Joe Papp's influences, creative history, and analyzing his techniques in relation to his principles, we may conclude the following:

1. Papp's belief that Shakespeare appeals to a mass audience is reflected in his productions in the following ways. He stresses the elements in Shakespeare that would appeal to a mass audience; namely, action, spectacle and low comedy. Philosophic thought or beautiful delivery of language are not trademarks of Papp's productions.
2. Papp's productions do not have directorial points of views nor any consistent theatrical style. His use of assistant directors, his encouragement of actors to "do their own thing," his changes in direction, reflect that the productions seem to grow by themselves with lots of cooks adding to the pot. He keeps what seems to him to work. What works for him is generally what he thinks will work for his "democratic" audience.
3. Papp's adoration of the playwright Shakespeare does not include keeping the text as whole as possible. Papp cuts a great deal. Nor does it mean spending very much time in

¹¹¹Rudd interview.

trying to understand or make clear to a cast the subtleties or meanings of Shakespeare's text. As for the poetic music which Shakespeare wrote, Papp prefers to treat it as unmetrical, "natural" prose.

4. Papp's dictum of unobservable directing seems to hold true. He does not impose his hand except at odd moments of staging, such as the moment in which the English army bows down to Henry V.
5. Nearly all the criticism of Papp's directing recognizes energy and vitality in his stagings. Papp seems to achieve this energy in part through charisma and concern for the actor.
6. Coming from a realistic American theatre background, Papp has tried to apply that tradition to Shakespeare. While some may criticize his lack of poetic sensitivity, his stylistic inconsistencies, and his occasional theatrical vulgarity, the success of many of his productions, in spite of the deficiencies, shows that there is something there that is essential to successful Shakespeare. What is that quality?
7. The essential quality of Joe Papp's productions of Shakespeare comes from his total involvement and commitment to his theatre. This pioneering, almost evangelical spirit of the New York Shakespeare Festival has made it unique. It is the least jaded of cultural institutions. Stylistic impurities are forgotten in the face of this energy and dynamic commitment. It must always be remembered that Shakespeare is not the most stylistically consistent of writers. The French have always regarded him as somewhat of a cultural barbarian. Papp, like

Shakespeare, never prefers stylistic unity over a grand effect or a moment of shocking intensity.

CHAPTER IV

GERALD FREEDMAN

Gerald Freedman feels that he has "always been in the eye of the New York hurricane" during his professional directing career.¹ His association with the New York Shakespeare Festival, as well as ventures into Broadway musicals and the off-Broadway theatre, have kept him in the national theatrical eye since 1960 when he directed The Taming of the Shrew for Joseph Papp in Central Park. He worked in Hollywood as a dialogue coach in the early fifties, and as Jerome Robbins' assistant on Bells Are Ringing, West Side Story, and Gypsy. He has worked with many stars of the commercial theatre including Lee J. Cobb in King Lear (1968), Zoe Caldwell in Colette (1970), Stacy Keach, Colleen Dewhurst, and James Earl Jones in Hamlet (1972), Julie Harris in The Au Pair Man (1974), Ruth Gordon and Lynn Redgrave in Mrs. Warren's Profession (1976), Deborah Kerr in Souvenirs (1976), and Genevieve Bujold in a television version of Anouilh's Antigone. Broadway musicals he has directed include The Gay Life (based on Schnitzler's Anatole) and A Time for Singing (his collaboration with composer John Morris based on How Green Was My Valley). He also directed the first production of Hair for Joseph Papp, which launched the first season of the Public Theatre, in 1967. His most recent Broadway venture was the musical The Robber Bridegroom, which opened

¹Gerald Freedman interview, New York, New York, June 23, 1976.

on Broadway during the 1976-77 season. Freedman has also had considerable experience in operatic theatre, having directed the American premiere of Benjamin Britten's Death in Venice at the San Francisco Opera in 1974, Mozart's Idomeneo (1974) at Kennedy Center, as well as Die Fledermäus (1974), The Coronation of Poppea (1973), and Beatrice Cenci (1972), a world premiere, at the New York City Opera. This variety of productions is cited to illustrate the wide interests of Gerald Freedman: musical comedy and commercial star vehicles, as well as Shakespeare and opera.

In 1975 he became, along with John Housman, the artistic director of the Acting Company, a professional touring repertory theatre. Formed in 1971 with graduates of the Drama Division of the Juilliard School, under Freedman, the Acting Company has become an autonomous producing agency using promising young talent of varying backgrounds. Freedman sees it as "potentially one of the best repertory theatres in America now that we have broadened our sources of recruitment."²

Since the subject of this dissertation is directorial approaches to Shakespeare, this chapter will deal only with Freedman's Shakespearean productions. His wide theatrical background and his other theatrical interests have, however, influenced his Shakespearean productions.

Freedman first became involved in theatre during his undergraduate days at Northwestern University. Having aspirations and talents as a painter, he offered his services to the drama department

²Gerald Freedman interview.

as a scene painter. After this initial exposure he became involved in all aspects of theatre there. Freedman has spoken of two teachers as influential:

The beginning of my work with actors was with Alvina Krause. But my production work came from a man named Lee Mitchell who was an expert in Elizabethan weaponry and was extraordinary in breaking down a script, a pre-modern script, and organizing your time. I have relied on that heavily. His way of organizing his rehearsal time has enabled me to get as much . . . out of a commercial rehearsal period as anyone around.³

The method of organizing rehearsal periods around groups of Shakespearean characters who have scenes together apart from other characters enabled Freedman to rehearse the two parts of Henry IV in six weeks, with the director and his staff working twelve to fourteen hours a day, while the actors were called for only a normal, seven-hour, Equity day.

Shakespeare has consistently played an important role in Gerald Freedman's life. His first directing job was for Alvina Krause at her summer theatre, Eaglesmere, in Pennsylvania, where Northwestern graduates practiced their skills. "She gave me Midsummer Night's Dream to direct and it was a wonderful, exhilarating experience. That was the first play I'd ever directed."⁴

He came to New York in 1950 while still in his early twenties. He "sang, painted scenery, did odd jobs, and made his living."⁵ As a result of an Equity Library Theatre production of As You Like It he directed in 1952, "somebody from Columbia"⁶ who saw the production

³Freedman interview.

⁴Ibid.

⁵George Oppenheimer, "Onstage," Newsday, May 11, 1968.

⁶Freedman interview.

liked it and put him under contract to Columbia Pictures. He remembers the As You Like It production fondly. "It had a lot of vigor, charm, and simplicity."⁷

During his Hollywood stint he worked as a dialogue coach on such pictures as It Should Happen to You, Solid Gold Cadillac, and The Caine Mutiny. In 1956 he came back to New York and became Jerome Robbins' assistant on Bells Are Ringing. On that production he worked mainly as Judy Holliday's dialogue director. She had known him from his Hollywood days and had requested his services. He states that Robbins' organizational skills were influential on him. "I hope, I think something of Jerry's ability to put together a show reinforced what I already knew. He also taught me what to look for in a musical number, and a lot of sections in Shakespeare are like musical numbers."⁸

Some time in 1957 Freedman saw Stuart Vaughan's productions of Richard III and As You Like It at the Heckscher Theatre. After seeing these productions, he decided to write to Joseph Papp. He remarks, "I honestly thought I could do better. So, I wrote to him saying I was interested and he interviewed me, took me around the theatre, and seemed very anxious to use me. Then I heard nothing."⁹ Papp had seen none of Freedman's work at this time, nor did he before hiring him in 1960 to direct The Taming of the Shrew.

The Shrew job came when "I got a call from Joe Papp, as far as I knew out of the clear blue. He had probably lost a director or

⁷Freedman interview.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

something, and he said, 'Would you like to do Taming of the Shrew?' (which is a most unfavorite play of mine), and I said, 'Sure!' This was in February of 1960."¹⁰

The Taming of the Shrew was presented on a stage designed by Eldon Elder, a unit of stairs and levels, and with Renaissance costumes. There was nothing off-beat about the interpretation, but the vitality of the playing, with J. D. Cannon as Petruchio and Jane White as Katherina, made the play a hit and obviously persuaded Joe Papp that he had found a young man who could direct successful shows. The New York Times review is typical of the notices the production received.

A rowdy, bawdy and convulsively funny Taming of the Shrew was presented . . . a carnival of comedy as the Elizabethans must have seen it. . . . The Festival group in this production has achieved a vitality, authority, clarity, pace, and style that can't be touched. Every ounce of comic value has been extracted by director Gerald Freedman. . . . There can no longer be any doubt that Joseph Papp has succeeded in bringing Shakespeare to the masses--and this with no sacrifice to the highest standards of professional excellence.¹¹

The production contained elements which were often to be cited by critics of Freedman's shows: broad comedy, vitality, clarity, and a choreographic sense of style.

Two years later he directed The Tempest which played at the newly opened Delacorte Theatre. The production starred Paul Foster as Prospero, Kathleen Widdoes as Miranda, James Earl Jones as Caliban, and Charles Durning as Stephano. Many of these actors were to appear

¹⁰Freedman interview.

¹¹Arthur Gelb, "Theatre: Hilarious 'Shrew' Bows in Central Park," New York Times, August 20, 1960.

frequently in Central Park and were becoming part of a "collection" of actors whom Gerry Freedman trained. The production stressed the fantastic, theatrical, and comic elements of the script. Milton Esterow's review of this production was one of the first to state the impression that Freedman's work did not deal with Shakespeare's plays on a deep emotional or philosophical basis. "Like Mr. Freedman, let us not consider the many allegorical interpretations of the play. . . . Let us, like Mr. Freedman, look at the lightness and grace of The Tempest and its verse, fancy, and wisdom."¹² Esterow also noted Freedman's gifts as a director:

His direction is lucid and bright. If the twists of the play exhaust you, Mr. Freedman makes the scenes flow easily. . . . If the clowning of Charles Durning as Stephano and John Hefferman as Trinculo is somewhat excessive, they are good buffoons. . . . There are displays of fireworks and smoke billows eerily from the stage. . . . Thanks to all of them the stage is filled with the thunder and roaring of the storm, the howling of the beasts, the cries of the drunkards, the sounds of the Enchanted Isles.¹³

The following summer, in 1963, Freedman directed As You Like It again, this time placing it in a French, eighteenth-century milieu. "I wanted something that looked like Watteau. . . . Also, I was afraid I might go stale with this production since I had done it before, so I changed the period."¹⁴ It featured Paula Prentiss as Rosalind and Richard Jordan as Orlando. One stylistic device used three young pages, who, Puck-like, moved props and scenery around. They also joined in the play's numerous dances. At the beginning of the second

¹²Milton Esterow, "Theatre: Park 'Tempest'," New York Times July 17, 1962.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Freedman interview.

act, the young boys threw down "a multitude of shafts with blossoms on them and behold, we have a flower garden for Rosalind and Orlando to gambol in."¹⁵ In the first act, Rosalind and Celia swung from Fragonard-inspired swings, adding to the rococo lightness of the production. It was not as well received as his two earlier efforts for Joseph Papp. Howard Taubman noted a certain excessiveness:

This As You Like It abounds in invention. Gerald Freedman's staging does not know when to stop being inventive. Probably it's a case of eagerness to offer nothing but the most entertaining Shakespeare to the hugely responsive audience in the park. . . . Mr. Freedman appears to be worried that As You Like It will pall. He has actors running up and down steps like frightened hares. A performer has to be in tip top physical shape to keep up with this pace.¹⁶

One excess noted by Taubman was the characterization of the shepherdess, Phebe, as someone who "sounds like Betty Boop."¹⁷ Paula Prentiss was thought to have "neither the vocal flexibility nor the acting experience to carry off the difficult task" of playing Rosalind.¹⁸

Love's Labour's Lost was his next project for the New York Shakespeare Festival and, according to Freedman, is "probably most representative of my work on Shakespeare." Asked to choose a production to be studied in detail for this dissertation, he suggested that it would be a good choice, and it will therefore be examined in detail later in this chapter.

Richard III, in 1966, was Freedman's first venture into non-comic Shakespeare and the result was generally agreed not to have been successful. Joseph Bova, who appeared in the earlier Freedman

¹⁵Howard Taubman, "Theatre: 'As you Like It' in the Park," New York Times, July 17, 1963.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

productions of The Taming of the Shrew and Love's Labour's Lost, admits that he was surprised to be cast as Richard and considered it off-beat casting. "Gerry likes to cast strangely sometimes."¹⁹ They had known each other from their undergraduate days at Northwestern, and Bova had always previously received brilliant reviews under Freedman. Richard III proved to be too much for both of them. Bova remembers the experience somewhat bitterly. "The critics really hated me in that one. I was really out of my element, though I didn't think I was so bad."²⁰ Vincent Canby's review of the production must have been painful to a director first trying out his abilities in a new area: "The curious thing about Mr. Freedman's production in the park is that Richard, the only full-drawn portrait in the play, does not dominate it. . . . Joe Bova seems to be playing Richard almost entirely for laughs. Missing is some sense of malignancy of the man--the darkness by which the light is defined--which would rivet an audience's attention."²¹ Canby also struck a note which has often recurred in criticism of Freedman's directing, namely that he did not have a strong directorial concept guiding his work. "Freedman seems . . . to be primarily concerned with having everyone get on and off the stage quickly and without bumping into one another."²² Canby did note one striking cinematic technique which has since been

¹⁹ Joseph Bova interview, New York, New York, July 28, 1976.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Vincent Canby, "Theatre: 'Richard III' Schemes in Central Park," New York Times, August 11, 1966.

²² Ibid.

widely used in battle scenes of Shakespeare. "The battle at Bosworth is strikingly presented in ballet slow motion."²³

Apparently Freedman's problems with Richard III did not dampen Joe Papp's enthusiasm for him, for, in 1967, he was named artistic director of the New York Shakespeare Festival when Papp opened the Public Theatre in the old Astor Place Library downtown. In the Summer of 1967 he received his most ambitious assignment: to direct two early Shakespeare plays, The Comedy of Errors and Titus Andronicus. Both were well received, and, in the case of Titus, convinced the critics that he was competent not only at Shakespearean comedy but at stylized, poetic staging for tragedy. A program note for The Comedy of Errors explained Freedman's aims in these productions: "It seems to me that the problem with these less familiar Shakespearean plays is not just doing the plays but in recreating an atmosphere in which these plays might originally have been seen, in order to enhance a contemporary audience's appreciation and enjoyment of them. My hope is to stimulate an audience to a response similar to that which the plays might have elicited from an Elizabethan audience."²⁴ The response desired in the case of The Comedy of Errors was a free-wheeling, rough, non-respectful enjoyment on the part of the audience. Freedman tried to evoke an atmosphere of street entertainers and travelling players

²³Ibid. This technique was also employed by Bertolt Brecht in his famous production of Coriolanus at the Berliner Ensemble in 1955. Also, it is an old Japanese technique, still popular in Kabuki. Freedman did not indicate to me that he was aware of Brecht's use of this technique.

²⁴Gerald Freedman, "About the Play," program note to The Comedy of Errors, Summer, 1967.

performing on improvised stages under various weather conditions. "I think The Comedy of Errors is best appreciated in this atmosphere of pickup players, spontaneous adjustments to weather and human frailty, and competition with jugglers, tumblers, and dancing bears."²⁵

Theatrical devices employed to produce this rowdy atmosphere included "two live figures doing everything wrong as they strike the hours on the tower clock," a Dr. Pinch equipped with a false nose and a bag of fireworks, and the dragging of an audience plant onstage to fill in for a missing actor. The cast consisted of Papp-Freedman regulars, Joseph Bova and Charles Durning, as well as David Birney and Julienne Marie, an actress experienced in both classical acting and musical comedy.

The critical reception of the production was universally excellent. George Oppenheimer gave Freedman particular praise. "The hero of the occasion . . . is Mr. Freedman. He has staged an earthy, bawdy, lively, and enormously comical version. . . . Here is fast, furious, and farcical entertainment."²⁶ Michael Smith of the Village Voice appreciated Freedman's lack of awe for Shakespeare.

See Shakespeare for fun, plain and fancy fun--what an idea! Freedman plays it that way without reservation, filling the stage with color and incident, decorative, robust, vigorous, setting a bravura pace and sustaining it throughout. Slick, even cheap tricks are redeemed by a guileless, consistently unabashed showmanship. . . . It's odd to see Shakespeare played for laughs . . . Comedy of Errors turns out fast, approachable, and actually funny.²⁷

²⁵Freedman, "About the Play."

²⁶George Oppenheimer, "Delacorte Debut a Comic Delight," Newsday, June 15, 1967.

²⁷Michael Smith, "Theatre Journal," Village Voice, June 22, 1967.

Titus Andronicus, produced the same summer, received a more non-conventional treatment than anything Freedman had hitherto attempted. In a program note for the production, he outlined his rationale for a "ritualistic" style employing chanting, masks, and chorus.

Apparently the Elizabethans were more receptive to blood and gore as theatre staples, just as they were less critical of revenge and sheer evil as motivations for human behavior. . . . How does one create a similar response to horror and violence in a modern audience? . . . Perhaps real violence has lost its power because it is too familiar. . . . If one wants to create a fresh emotional response to violence . . . one must shock the imagination and subconscious with visual images that recall the richness and depth of primitive rituals; with the power of poetic conventions drawn from the ancient theatres of Greece and the Orient; with instruments and sounds that nudge our ears without being clearly explicit or melodic; with fragments of myth and ceremony and childhood fantasies that will still have the power to set our imaginations racing. . . . The solution to a more immediate response seemed to lie in a poetic abstraction of the events existing in an emotional compression of time and space.²⁸

This program note reminds one of similar statements in Antonin Artaud and Peter Brook's theatre-of-cruelty experiments in the late sixties using poetic metaphor for violent realism. Freedman states that he arrived at his ideas independently. "I've never read Artaud. There were my own ideas."²⁹ However, it is hard to see how he could have been unaware of Brook's Marat/Sade which played on Broadway in the theatrical season of 1965-66.

Freedman commented on his rehearsal technique for this production.

²⁸Gerald Freedman, "About the Play," program note to Titus Andronicus, Summer, 1967.

²⁹Freedman interview.

I rehearsed with the actors in a totally realistic way, warning the actors. As a matter of fact, I had the actors sign a rider on their contracts stating that they would be willing to wear masks and difficult costumes. I gradually introduced the masks after about two weeks' work, after the characters were developed, after the relationships were explored, so that they wouldn't feel that the masks were a cutoff. Then the masks presented other problems. They do require a different kind of acting. . . . It also seemed to me that the populace was like a chorus. They served as a background to the violent principal action. They were soldiers, there were buzzings in the head of Titus, there were non-objective things without changing costume. . . .³⁰

The concept was difficult for Freedman to communicate to Theoni Aldredge, the costume designer.

Remembering Titus nowadays Theoni Aldredge screams, sometimes with pain, sometimes with laughter, because we went through at least three versions of the costumes, because it was a hard thing to arrive at. I didn't want something "interplanetary" but I didn't want something objective. I wanted a kind of Byzantine richness but I also wanted the simplicity of a Japanese line. And I found a painting that was very simple. It was a Japanese scroll painting.³¹

The production was well received by many of the critics. Dan Sullivan in the New York Times was particularly impressed.

To stage it at all takes a certain amount of audacity. Gerald Freedman's production in Central Park's Delacorte Theatre--the play's first professional performance here--is not only audacious, it is also convincing. . . . [It is] an awesome ritual of blood and night. . . . It was a powerful, disturbing evening of theatre. Disturbing--not distusting. It is this element of ritual--emphasized by half-masks, choral chants, stylized gesture, that takes Shakespeare's penny dreadful out of the gutter and puts it on some strange planet (Ming Cho Lee's marvelous set suggests that it is the moon) where the gods still require human sacrifice. . . . The style invites the individual performers to act as broadly as possible and they respond.³²

³⁰Freedman interview.

³¹Ibid.

³²Dan Sullivan, "The Theatre: Taking Shakespeare Out of the Gutter," New York Times, August 10, 1957.

In Beyond Broadway, Julius Novick described the production with less enthusiasm.

Everything was elaborately stylized and ritualized. . . . It looked as if Mr. Freedman had seen the Noh, or Gagaku or some equally recondite form of Oriental theatre, and then decided what the hell, nothing else is going to work so let's try it. . . . Mr. Freedman's staging obscured the action to the point where I . . . was hard put to figure out what was going on. . . . And the acting was bad. . . . Mr. Freedman's players often seemed merely uninterested in what they were saying. They acted for the most part from their throat outward, and most of them did not even have pleasing voices. I was moderately intrigued with Lavinia's Dance of the Stumps . . . although the gauzy scarlet streamers that hung from her mouth and wrists to indicate missing members were borrowed from Peter Brook's production.³³

Freedman himself feels that the production achieved what he set out to do. He is particularly proud of one moment in the production--when Tamora's sons were beheaded and their masks were brought in on a tray. "Every night the audience gasped in that moment and that's what I wanted."³⁴

Freedman's ambition and energy did not diminish in 1968 when he first staged both parts of Henry IV for Joseph Papp in the park and then directed King Lear at the Vivian Beaumont for Jules Irving.

Henry IV, Part I and II are two of Freedman's favorite productions. Asked to describe them, he enthused, "I really felt they were full of life. I mean life: people relating to one another."³⁵ He sees the key to the plays in Hal's growth to manhood and the father-son relationships which exist in the plays. "Sam Waterston-- people thought I was crazy to cast a gawky kid who grew into a king.

³³ Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), pp. 341-42.

³⁴ Freedman interview.

³⁵ Ibid.

Stacy Keach--I can't believe Stacy was only twenty-six when he did it--was a lusty, 'needing' Falstaff whom Hal made into a surrogate father. We didn't say, 'This is a 'funny' man.'"³⁶ Freedman saw Hal, during his days with Falstaff, as a drop-out from society suffering from a generation gap with his real father. Eventually Hal drops back into society and must give up his former life, but the cutting off of Falstaff is painful to him.

The critical reception to both productions recognized that the presentation of both plays in one summer was an important theatrical event. The praise for Stacy Keach was unanimous, with Dan Sullivan's New York Times piece typical of the response. "Mr. Keach gives us a Falstaff which is so freshly observed that it is almost a new character. He finds Falstaff's mind funnier than his waistline." He wrote of the director, "Mr. Freedman's direction has point and pace but, as usual, it serves the play without calling attention to itself."³⁷

Several critics were surprised to find the Henry IV plays emotionally moving. A. D. Coleman in the Village Voice, while disagreeing with Freedman's "generation gap" theory, admitted, "Watching his rich and thoroughly enjoyable production; I found myself moved profoundly for the first time by a play which had previously excited me only intellectually."³⁸

Walter Kerr's Sunday piece in the New York Times indicated that he also was moved, calling the performances "thoroughly

³⁶Freedman interview.

³⁷Dan Sullivan, "Falstaff Triumphs in the Park," New York Times, June 30, 1968.

³⁸A. D. Coleman, "Theatre: 'Henry the Fourth,'" Village Voice, July 11, 1968.

satisfying." Henry IV, Part II, stimulated him to compare Shakespeare's technique to a then current production of Ubu Roi which used Artaud-like theatre-of-cruelty effects. "It [Henry IV, Part II] permits emotion. And it is the much crueller play of the two. . . . It is when we open our hearts that we are finally and necessarily horrified."³⁹

King Lear, according to Freedman, was "not a totally happy experience to tell you the truth."⁴⁰ Hired after Lee J. Cobb, he tried to make the older actor as comfortable as possible, but Cobb was plagued by fears that undermined his performance.

I worked as closely with Lee as I've ever worked with any actor. Partly because he was coming back from a long absence from the stage; partly because, although I think he was anxious to play the part, he was somewhat fearful of the role; because also he had suffered a severe heart attack some time before-- he was frightened of the physical demands of the role. You can't be frightened of Lear. . . . I expected Lee to use his method bias, but my impression was that Lee wanted to show everybody that he could be John Gielgud, and that he could speak the verse. What everyone was waiting for was for Lee to tear the roof off the theatre in the way that they were used to seeing him do. It never happened. He wanted to prove something else, mistakenly I think."⁴¹

Walter Kerr, reviewing the production, seemed to sense this reserve on Cobb's part:

There isn't a moment of madness in Lee J. Cobb's King Lear and that I suspect is what keeps Lincoln Center's otherwise acceptable production from touching us or troubling us very much as a world goes wholly wrong. The man at the center of it keeps his head. . . . Mr. Cobb has chosen to try to dominate the play by refusing to participate in its ultimate boldness. . . . Something in him is not vulnerable. . . .

³⁹Walter Kerr, "Heart is What Hurts," New York Times, July 14, 1968.

⁴⁰Freedman interview.

⁴¹Ibid.

A part like Lear cannot be protected. It must be submitted to, given its head in quite another sense, embraced on the edge of disaster, welcomed as an invasion of privacy. When the world cracks, the man can't let us know that he is saving out a little for himself.⁴²

Freedman did not again direct Shakespeare until three years later in 1971 at Central Park, when he directed one of the most difficult and seldom-produced of the plays, Timon of Athens. In the interim he had worked full time at the Public Theatre as artistic director, and had directed many experimental productions of contemporary plays, including some with European backgrounds. Among these were Jakov Lind's Ergo and Adrienne Kennedy's Cities in Bezique. During this period, few productions at the Public Theatre proved to have any commercial potential with the exception of Charles Gordone's No Place To Be Somebody, developed and directed from workshop by Ted Cornell, a young director whom Joseph Papp had met at Yale University while teaching a seminar in directing.

Freedman's dismissal as artistic director of the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1971 may have resulted from his failure with Timon of Athens in the summer of that year. Critics were unanimous in damning the production. Clive Barnes wrote of it: "Timon is the dullest of dogs. . . . Gerald Freedman's direction seemed oddly flaccid. It is Mr. Freedman's scheme to direct the play as if it were, say, Julius Caesar, offering no insight into a dramatic poem that is intentionally just one simple image, one simple stage metaphor

⁴²Walter Kerr, "No Madness in his Method," New York Times, November 8, 1968.

describing the corruption of riches."⁴³ Barnes also attacked the American speech of the cast. "The verse speaking is the worst I have heard in Central Park for some seasons."⁴⁴ Walter Kerr, in his Sunday New York Times column, lamented Freedman's lapse of talent and, while criticizing the play itself as "a disheartening business, a venture that must steadily go down hill,"⁴⁵ he nevertheless saw an aberrant failure for a director he normally admired.

Alas, Gerald Freedman, normally an excellent hand at such challenges, seems to have entered the fray wearier than Shakespeare. I have rarely seen a production in the park so unsure of its pictorial effects, so grasping after non-existent straws, so slack in its comings and goings, so without power to shape scenes on that high scaffolding. . . . What is most wrong is the fact that no one is in charge of the scene. . . . The great image has no form. Clearly Mr. Freedman is off form.⁴⁶

Timon of Athens was, to the reviewers, Gerald Freedman's least successful interpretation of Shakespeare. It is fascinating to speculate on the causes of this failure to please the reviewers. Admittedly, Timon of Athens has never been one of Shakespeare's popular plays. Also, one suspects that the misanthropic vision of Timon was temperamentally alien to Freedman who had been most successful with "upbeat" comedies.

Freedman did not stay away from Shakespeare in Central Park after Timon or after having been dismissed as artistic director of the

⁴³ Clive Barnes, "Shakespeare Returns to the Park," New York Times, July 2, 1971.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Walter Kerr, "Did Shakespeare Tire of Timon?," New York Times, July 11, 1971.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Festival. He returned in 1972 to direct Hamlet with an all-star cast including Stacy Keach as Hamlet, James Earl Jones as Claudius, Colleen Dewhurst as Gertrude, and Kitty Winn as Ophelia.

The production received a good deal of attention and Joseph Papp wanted it to be the first televised production of the Shakespeare Festival. Stacy Keach refused to sign for the television production and A. J. Antoon's stylish Much Ado About Nothing was chosen instead. Keach may have been angered over some of the reviews which gave better notices to the production and particularly to James Earl Jones' Claudius than to Keach's Hamlet. T. E. Kalem in Time called Keach a "kind of Danish Willy Loman."⁴⁷ He was "not a raging, grieving mourner at the yawning grave of all existence."⁴⁸ Kalem counted the evening a success, however, due to Freedman's conservative respect for the script. "Gerald Freedman has done something that redeems even his most wayward players. He trusts the play, hews cleanly to the text, and the god of playwrights again performs the dramatic miracle that is forever Hamlet."⁴⁹ Martin Gottfried in Women's Wear Daily was unhappy with Freedman's interpretative unoriginality. "Gerald Freedman's direction, like Keach's Hamlet, follows the play like a floor plan going from room to room instead of standing back and seeing the whole."⁵⁰ Jerry Tallmer in the New York Post thought that James Earl Jones stole the play from Keach. Jones showed Claudius to be a

⁴⁷T. E. Kalem, "Willy Loman at Elsinore," Time, June 30, 1972.

⁴⁸Ibid. ⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Martin Gottfried, "Theatre," Women's Wear Daily, June 30, 1972.

"king of joy, pride, of passion, of command and ultimately of guilt, gaunt stature, satanic fury, naked semi-suicidal resignation."⁵¹

Of Claudius' and Gertrude's relationship it became quite clear that the two were passionately in love with each other. "These two cannot keep their hands, their lips, their eyes off one another."⁵²

Gerald Freedman's creative history shows the following influences and artistic qualities:

1. He has experience in commercial show business, including musical comedy, star vehicles, film, and television. Also, his operatic theatre experience aids him in the handling of total theatre productions with musical elements.
2. He has been successful with comic Shakespearean productions using broad physical humour, an energetic presentational style, and choreographic blocking.
3. He has been less well received in the tragedies with the possible exceptions of Titus Andronicus and Hamlet.
4. Freedman is not usually a director who imposes a strong conceptual idea on a production, Titus Andronicus again being exceptional in this respect.
5. Freedman has a strong visual sense. He began his career as a painter. He often uses certain painters and specific paintings as source material for this Shakespeare.
6. Freedman says he likes the outdoor Delacorte theatre because it approximates the experience of an Elizabethan theatre.

⁵¹Jerry Tallmer, "Off Broadway," New York Post, June 30, 1972.

⁵²Ibid.

He believes this atmosphere is conducive to a good reception of a Shakespeare play.

When Gerald Freedman talks about Shakespeare's vision and what the playwright means to him, he becomes emotionally aroused and communicates what he feels about him as much by the way he expresses himself as by what he is saying. Some of Freedman's "personalizing" of Shakespeare was evident in my interview of him.

The ones I haven't done are the ones I want to do. There isn't any one of the plays I want to do over another. I always find the plays infinitely more rich than I could possibly imagine. When I don't work on them I miss them terribly. I feel that when I work on them I am constantly buoyed up by the poetry, by the insight, by the fantastic humanity, by the great theatrical skill. . . . I would hate to think that my life--this is terrible and almost brings me to tears--would be deprived of that experience, because it's probably the most wonderful thing that has happened to me.⁵³

When asked to articulate Shakespeare's overriding vision, Freedman replied, "This has everything to do with one's own psychology. I see them mostly to do with love and loving--all of them. What I'm most impressed with is his humanity. Even the most minor characters in what seem, I repeat, seem, to be the most mechanical of plays, are based on intimate relationships."⁵⁴

While each play, according to Freedman, has this humanity, they are each, in themselves, separate "experiences." One feels that Freedman is reacting to critics of Timon of Athens and perhaps Titus Andronicus when he says, "The only thing that pisses me off sometimes are the critics who say, 'Oh, this is an inferior play.

⁵³Freedman interview.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Shakespeare really didn't know what he was doing here.' Admittedly, each is not a perfect--whatever that means--diamond. They all want to put them into categories, and a lot of them don't fit into categories but are separate, extraordinary experiences."⁵⁵

Freedman's reverence for Shakespeare extends to his feeling about the text and cutting. Asked rather jokingly if he felt Shakespeare's text was "holy," he replied seriously, "I think it is holy. I work with the most obscure passages as long as I can, bringing everybody's intelligence to bear. I try to figure out what's at the root of it. If, after giving it everything I can . . . I can't figure it out, I cut it. I always figure there's an answer which just has eluded me. The cuts I've done in the park are usually for time."⁵⁶

The outdoor Delacorte Theatre requires productions that seem to Freedman to be very Elizabethan, and he feels it creates excellent conditions for staging Shakespeare. "I love the Delacorte. I love the mixture of the audience and I love the space that demands bigness. I liked it much better before we had the body mikes. It lent for more interesting solutions."⁵⁷

While he likes the open stage of the Vivian Beaumont where he directed King Lear, he finds it "less than good in that it is neither here nor there."⁵⁸ By this statement one supposes he means that the Beaumont is a compromise between an open thrust and a proscenium theatre, without the full advantages of either, and does not have

⁵⁵Freedman interview.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

the outdoor, festive air which contributes to the enjoyment of Shakespeare at Central Park.

Musical comedy seems to have had an influence on Freedman's Shakespeare. In an interview given to the New York Times during the rehearsal period on the Henry IV plays, he was quoted describing Shakespeare as "lyric theatre of the best order, demanding music, dance, and movement."⁵⁹ He has always been proud that he cast actors in Shakespeare who had a good deal of experience in the musical theatre. "I began to bring in people from the musical theatre who are great for this Elizabethan theatre: Jane White, Joe Bova, Phil Bosco, and so forth."⁶⁰ Rae Allen, who played Rosaline in Freedman's Love's Labour's Lost, and has also worked extensively in musicals, commented in an interview that she agreed with Freedman's predilection for musical performers in Shakespeare. "It's healthy to use extrovert actors in the park. The musical gives you a feeling of scope that you really need to work outdoors--because you do big presentational work."⁶¹

In his interview Freedman confirmed this tendency to look at Shakespeare as musical theatre. "To me a musical and Shakespeare are very much alike. The structures are alike, the rehearsal schedules are alike, big scenes and little scenes, and a presentational style. The soliloquies are like arias. There are duets, trios, quartets, et cetera."⁶²

⁵⁹"Gerald Freedman Interview," New York Times, June 11, 1968.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Rae Allen interview, New York, New York, July 30, 1976.

⁶²Freedman interview.

While he tries in rehearsal to get the actors to be "real people," he always feels that "Shakespeare demands the presentational part."⁶³ This presentational style is required because of the "energy I feel out of the writing, the vitality, often the obvious direct address to the audience. There is a gusto in the writing which is also part of my research into Elizabethan life."⁶⁴

He also gets inspiration from the other arts. Painting, music, and opera have been used by him as points of reference for certain aspects of his productions of Shakespeare. "I was originally a painter and I have a strong predilection to use paintings. I often think that a production idea is embodied in a certain painting."⁶⁵ One is reminded of how the visual concept of Titus Andronicus crystalized as the result of a Japanese scroll painting. Music often communicates a feeling that Freedman wants for a production. "I used Le Tombeau de Couperin for As You Like It."⁶⁶ Love's Labour's Lost was likened to Così Fan Tutte in an introduction he wrote for a published edition of Love's Labour's Lost. "The flavor of the play is that of a chamber group. It has the qualities of Mozart's Così Fan Tutte."⁶⁷

Comedy has been a forte of Freedman's, and his productions of Shakespeare's comedies have almost always been well received. He has strong ideas on how they should be done, feeling that "nowadays Shakespearean comedy is in the worst shape" as far as the problem

⁶³Freedman interview.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Gerald Freedman, "Introduction to Love's Labour's Lost," The Festival Shakespeare, ed. Bernard Beckerman (New York: Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 26.

of anachronism is concerned. "In order to get the comedy out of Shakespearean scenes, Freedman believes that the actors and director must "recognize the classic base of his humor, the ageless theatrical forms and kinds of comedy that are still evident in contemporary theatre, including night clubs, burlesque, television and Broadway theatre."⁶⁸ He recognizes in Shakespeare a showman who knows how to make an audience laugh. He thinks that some directors become too involved in the comic language and the obscurities that often abound, particularly in the comic passages. "Even if one understands the allusions after careful study, one wonders if a modern audience will. But I have always found that the humor does not lie in the words. I would like to emphasize that point very strongly. The essence of an emotion in Shakespeare, in poetry, is almost always in the words. But it is certainly not the solution to comedy."⁶⁹ Freedman often uses broad, sometimes bawdy physical humor to hide the obscurity of the text as will be seen in our closer examination of Love's Labour's Lost. "Often the comedy comes from the relationships of the characters,"⁷⁰ which usually follow the classic formulae of comic relationships including the gull and the shill, the fool and the straight man.

One perceives from many of the reviews of Freedman's productions, as well as from his own statements, that physicality sometimes takes precedence over language. This assumption is substantiated by a statement of Freedman's. "One aspect of my directing in Central

⁶⁸Freedman, "Introduction to Love's . . . ," p. 46.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 45.

⁷⁰Freedman interview.

Park has been to stage the plays as if the members of the audience could not hear, but only could understand the action by what they saw."⁷¹ At its best, this philosophy can lead to vigorous physical productions but, at its worst, it leads to broad vulgarization and a tendency to condescension which assumes that the audience is not intelligent enough to understand Shakespeare's language.

Gerald Freedman's procedures as a director tend to follow certain basic principles including a firm organization of rehearsal time, non-didactic formulation of a concept, a Stanislavsky-like search for the truth of a scene, a great deal of freedom for the actor, and an organic evolution of style out of the reality of the characters' situations.

Freedman is particularly proud that he organizes his rehearsal period efficiently and does not waste time. He has several assistants who constantly organize his appointments and scene rehearsals. A busy man, he not uncommonly has several projects going at one time. "I could never do half of what I do if I didn't organize my time carefully."⁷²

While he feels he always knows what he is going for in a production, he tries not to articulate it in an intellectual concept.

I know what I'm going for--usually it's life. I mean, it's a life feeling. I try to get the people to make the events important to themselves, to understand them out of their own life experiences--and to communicate them through the language. I never talk about relevancy. I just think those events were charged with a reality and you have to find out what that reality is. I try my damndest not to pick out one theme for the play--a thesis. I try to find out what is life.⁷³

⁷¹Freedman, "Introduction to Love's . . .," p. 29.

⁷²Freedman interview.

⁷³Ibid.

Freedman says that he needs "at least nine months to prepare for a major Shakespeare."⁷⁴ He reads the play over and over trying to find out what it is about, rather than what he can do with it. "I am really abhorrent of the people who, the first thing they come up with is an idea: 'I will set it in--' whatever, rather than examining the text and what that can do for it. I really think that's foolishness. I never start with what I will do with it. I start reading the play."⁷⁵

Scene work with the actors tends to follow Stanislavsky's directive that the director discover specifically what the characters actions are in a scene in order to discover the truth of that scene. Actions are the result of psychological intentions and subtextual motivating thought. "I always look for what is happening in a scene. . . . My method as a director is to try to find out the logic behind human behavior."⁷⁶

This logic is achieved in Freedman's rehearsals, he believes, by giving the actor a good deal of freedom. "I never pre-block."⁷⁷ He likes the actors to invent their own business and movement, using their own impulses to tell them where they want to go. His attitude toward the actors is democratic. "I look at them as my peers."⁷⁸ He likes to create a warm family atmosphere for his shows. Joe Bova has commented that Freedman stresses this loving atmosphere so much

⁷⁴Freedman interview.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Freedman, "Introduction to Love's. . . ," pp. 27-32.

⁷⁷Freedman interview.

⁷⁸Ibid.

that "he really wants us all to be there all the time, and gets hurt if someone doesn't want to be at rehearsal for some reason."⁷⁹

Freedman feels that, as he has become more secure as a director, he has extended this freedom even more. "I like to think that actors really like to work for me for that reason. Actors feel free working under me. I really give them a lot of latitude. And then I try to use the best of all of us. If an actor comes up with something better than I thought of, I'm happy to use it."⁸⁰

The job of director, to Freedman, is that of an "editor" who selects from the inventions of the actors that which best serves the production. He likes to see a scene done several ways so that he has a larger choice. "I like to reserve the right to the final editing because the play has to have an overall texture. The texture is within an overall framework that I set. . . . I think there can only really be one unifying vision."⁸¹ After about two weeks of giving the actors freedom, Freedman begins to set things, giving the action a specific shape, sometimes using the actors' blocking and business, sometimes changing it.

As a result of this process, Freedman feels that his shows have an organic life of their own apart from himself. "What has happened without fail in shows that I've done is that after I've left, the shows keep growing because I set them up in a growth process, not a rigid mold. They usually get richer. After a while in a good situation the actors know more than you do. They take the show away from you in the best creative sense."⁸²

⁷⁹Bova interview.

⁸⁰Freedman interview.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

The ideal Shakespearean actor to Freedman is someone who can combine the inner techniques of the Stanislavsky method with technical, verse-speaking skills and physical vitality. "Actors have been developing in both much more. I think when we started in the late fifties and early sixties there wasn't any kind of a meeting between the two. Now there's a better understanding and mixture of the two. Method then seemed to drive out any kind of technical proficiency. Now one sees that one has to have both."⁸³

In theory he does not like a mixture of accents, regional or national, in Shakespeare. "Personally I don't think it's desirable at all. After all, when you're talking about verse you're talking about music and, while all the instruments don't have to sound alike, they have to be an ensemble, and when they strike you as being divergent there's something wrong. A standard American speech is desirable."⁸⁴ He admits that the verse speaking at the New York Shakespeare Festival was not always the best.

When I was with the Shakespeare Festival, my predilection, which was reinforced by Joe's [Papp's] predilection, was for an actor who had vigor and emotionality over speech. We were always looking for somebody who had both. We were often criticized for bad speaking but it was because we couldn't find what we wanted in both. [But] that meant we never would have used Jimmy Jones, and by using Jimmy Jones, by the time he was in Hamlet, he could speak verse magnificently. You have to start somewhere. At the Shakespeare Festival we always chose the honest actor over the technically proficient one, always hoping for both.⁸⁵

⁸³Freedman interview.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

Since working with the Juilliard Company, Freedman has come to see great benefit in the stress they lay on speech training. However, he is not sure that conservatory training is the best overall preparation for a young actor.

I went to Northwestern and I think I had a terrific acting coach. We were required to do everything: lights, costumes, makeup--all of which I think is invaluable for an actor. We had very little time for speech work. Juilliard puts a great emphasis upon speech and I think it's very important.

What I miss in conservatory training is just education. I think the brighter an actor is, the more he knows about everything, the more valuable he is as an actor. Usually when you go to a conservatory you're so damned busy you don't have time for that--and then you never catch up. But all the English courses, all the anthropology, psychology, philosophy feed into your acting tremendously. Be a human being first, and that [is] a measure of you as an actor.⁸⁶

He feels that style in the theatre is best achieved by not attempting consciously to create it. He has never consciously tried to create a Shakesrearean or Elizabethan style. "The best way to approach style is not to approach it at all. By that I mean the best way to achieve it [is] honestly, from the bottom up, from the heart out; not to superimpose it, not to apply it like a varnish."⁸⁷ Obviously he believes that style is the evocation of the specific reality of a specific play, and that once one finds that play's "reality," one has found its style.

⁸⁶Freedman interview.

⁸⁷Freedman, "Introduction to Love's . . .," p. 24.

Reviewing Freedman's principles, one may list the following:

1. Shakespeare's plays are about "love and loving." For Freedman Shakespeare's "humanity" is his most essential characteristic.
2. Each of the plays is its own separate experience and does not fit into easy critical categories.
3. Text is "holy" to Freedman. One must cut as little as possible. Nor should one edit nor rewrite.
4. Shakespeare demands "bigness" and is best served by an open stage and an outdoor theatre.
5. Musical comedy techniques using extrovert acting, a presentational style, and musical abilities serve Shakespeare well. An understanding of the way musicals are put together in rehearsal and structured as drama helps a director in Shakespeare.
6. In Shakespearean comedy, humor lies not in the words but in character relationships and physical action.
7. Freedman does not intellectually articulate what a production will mean. He sees rehearsals as a search for a "life feeling."
8. He uses Stanislavsky in finding character actions, relationships, and subtext.
9. He believes in giving the actors maximum freedom and does not pre-block.
10. Rehearsals should have a warm family atmosphere.
11. The director acts as an "editor" of the actor's creativity.
12. Verse speaking should have a uniform diction.
13. Style should not be imposed on a production by a director.

According to Gerald Freedman, Love's Labour's Lost was a representative production of his and one that he felt was quite successful. Indeed he must have liked the production in view of the fact that he remounted it in 1975 for the Acting Company, using essentially the same design, the same musical score by John Morris, the same costume design, and most of the original stage business from the 1965 Central Park production. I saw the revival in Saratoga Springs, New York, on August 2, 1976 at the John Housman Theatre. It followed in most respects the prompt book from the earlier production with only minor changes.

This production and Freedman's thinking on it are also well documented in an introduction which he wrote to a published version of the play under the name The Festival Shakespeare. Joseph Papp and Bernard Beckerman had decided to publish the works of Shakespeare with essays by the directors who had directed the specific plays at the Festival. The series only produced one other volume, A Troilus and Cressida with an introduction by Joseph Papp, before it was discontinued. But the Love's Labour's Lost introduction is particularly helpful in that Freedman discusses specific interpretative problems, and how he solved them in his production. He writes of his goals and what he considered his "guiding thesis."

In Love's Labour's Lost Shakespeare has taken a common and rather superficial play form of the period and transcended its confines by infusing the material with his overpowering humanity and his knowledge of the mutability of human affairs. . . . It's a play filled with human feeling. The distinction between the "game of love" and the "truth of love" became my guiding thesis when I began rehearsals. I was dealing with full people . . . people vulnerable to chance, to pain and ultimately to death.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Freedman, "Introduction to Love's . . .," pp. 22-23.

Freedman was aware that Love's Labour's Lost has often been thought of as an imitation of John Lyly's Euphues, a play of artificial language and emotions. He was particularly anxious to eradicate this view of the play and saw the ornate language as part of the "game of love" which hides the "truth of love." He saw the characters as poseurs hiding their true feelings, which the audience must see. He wanted to make evident the "public image and the private emotions."⁸⁹

He saw all the characters as of equal importance, an "ensemble," and "beautifully attuned string orchestra."⁹⁰ This ensemble, the collection of characters or types all concerned with love, formed for Freedman a collage which made up the play. "I see various characters fragmented and splintered as if there was a mirror called Love's Labour's Lost which fell to the ground and shattered. In the slivers I see different aspects of the characters reflected."⁹¹

Joseph Bova spoke to me of Gerry Freedman's rehearsal procedure on this production.

I remember that we read Love's Labours Lost for about three days. I remember thinking at first, "Gee, that's an awful play." I mean, there were things in it that I just couldn't understand. I was playing Costard and eventually started to have fun with the part, and then things began to make sense. Mostly I remember the rehearsals being great fun. Gerry likes to cast people who have a sense of inventive comedy. In that show we had a very compatible cast of actors, most of whom had worked together before.⁹²

Bova confirms that Freedman gives the actors enormous freedom.

We would do things, sometimes silly, crazy things, that would not get into the show but which created an open atmosphere at the rehearsals. The first two weeks of rehearsal were wide open. We had much, much freedom.

⁸⁹Freedman, "Introduction to Love's . . .," p. 26.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 26.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 179.

⁹²Bova interview.

I remember at one point we were doing that scene in which Costard is talking about a goose or some crazy thing. I didn't know what was going on. [Bova is referring to III, i, in which Costard puns with Don Armado on a poem which Armado is trying to end with an "envoi."] It had something to do with a fox and a goose. Gerry didn't know what to do either. . . . The scene was between Armado, Moth, and Costard. Gerry told us to go off and come back with some sort of comic routine based on the puns in the scene. We added Jaquenetta to the scene and [it] became a competition between Armado, who romantically woos her with his poem, while Costard gooses her on the refrain.⁹³

After two weeks of this "open" rehearsing, Bova maintained that Freedman became much more specific and detailed in his direction.

Gerry finally did give a specific choreography to the scenes, building on what the actors had done. He acts as an editor. His notes get very specific and he tightens the reins considerably. However, the spontaneity was never lost on that show. One night Alexandra Berlin, who played Jaquenetta, and I were on stage when an actor didn't make his entrance. We weren't at all frightened but created an improvisation and had a wonderful time. We could do it because we had had so much freedom in rehearsal.⁹⁴

Rae Allen, who eventually came into the show and played Rosaline, initially went to a rehearsal to watch her friend Lee Grant who had originally been cast as Rosaline. Ms. Allen spoke of the special atmosphere which Freedman had created in rehearsal. "I had just come back from California. The winter before I had run a workshop with Lee and she asked me to come to rehearsals to see how she was doing. . . . So, I went to a rehearsal on an afternoon in the park and I knew everyone there. It was very beautiful and I thought, 'This is remarkable for an afternoon rehearsal in the sun.' I mean, something was really happening between those people."⁹⁵ Later, when Lee

⁹³Bova interview.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Rae Allen interview.

Grant dropped out of the show in order to take a television offer in California, Rae Allen was asked to join the cast.

I had about ten days. It was already formed and gorgeous. The rehearsal period for me was one of catching up, and Gerry rehearsed me in it. It was easy. Gerry knew how he felt about the play and the performers. It was one of my pleasantest memories always. . . . It's also a chemical thing. It's how people participate with each other. For instance, while Jane White [who played the Princess] is a different kind of actress from myself, in this show her personal aesthetic was a matching thing for me. The feeling up on that stage was somehow complete.

One important thing about Love's Labour's Lost was a total absence of the feeling of competitiveness. It happened because everybody was sure of what they were doing. Everybody also had wonderful roles. So we were able to get away from the usual fight to survive, to be noticed, to do a particular kind of work, to be a satisfactory kind of person for Mr. Papp to have hired and for Mr. Freedman to have directed. Usually there's no way you can beat that in the city, or in this country.⁹⁶

Rae Allen agrees that Freedman leaves the actor very free to invent business, but she always had the feeling that he knew exactly what he wanted. "He has something that he ultimately wants you to do. I mean, he has to have a strong concept or his shows wouldn't physically be so handsome and 'right.'"⁹⁷

The invention of comic "business" is obviously an important part of the rehearsal process for Freedman, sometimes coming from the actors and sometimes from himself. One such piece of business came at the very beginning of the play.

Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine entered playing badminton. In the center of the stage was a statue of Venus, around which the men played. When the prince entered and reminded his friends of their vows of chastity, the statue of the nude was removed by servants and

⁹⁶Allen interview.

⁹⁷Ibid.

replaced by a large telescope. All of this business had a dance-like quality and was accompanied by harpsichord music.

Freedman likes to feel that his stage business evolves out of the meaning of the scene. He created an interesting entrance for Don Armado out of his questions about the character.

Armado is obviously not really a man of refinement. He is one who aspires to refinement, aspires to real knowledge, as he aspires to appearance. Appearance means a great deal to him but he does not have the wherewithal. . . . My questions and presuppositions began to lead me to the "activity" of the scene. Don Armado entered, covered by a cloak, and followed by Moth, both of them looking offstage surreptitiously. They appeared suspicious and strange, which gave them a "fantastic" entrance. . . . Their initial impact was slightly comic, which I reinforced with a comic music cue. When Armado seemed satisfied that they were alone, he threw open his cloak and revealed the unadorned man, dressed in his hair shirt--a garment somewhat resembling woolen underwear. I wanted the audience to see Don Armado for what he really is, and then see how he covers himself up. Thus the life of the scene is fulfilled by Moth, dressing and actually sewing Armado together.⁹⁸

Looking at my notes written immediately after seeing the Acting Company production, I see my strongest impressions were of pieces of business and a feeling for the general "warmth" of the production:

The production uses a lovely painted set with the same basic groundplan as the Central Park production. One addition is a painted drop which is a romantic vision of a French chateau, perhaps Chambord. Many of the pieces of business are from the earlier production: different shaped letters to the three lovers which makes for funny business as they try to read them written on a circle, a fan, a many-feet-long piece of parchment. Some very attractive stage pictures such as the posing of the four lovers as Berowne delivers his long oration on love. Harpsichord music is played under the speech. Berowne sits at the fountain while Longaville and Dumaine are spread out on the ground at his feet. Looks like Fragonard.

". . . where Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Make heaven drowsy with the harmony."

⁹⁸Freedman, "Introduction to Love's. . . ," pp. 34-35.

There is a spectacular Russian dance, amazingly athletic, which the male lovers perform disguised as Russian emissaries. It got the biggest laughs and applause of the evening. The ham Russian accents were played to the hilt for broad comic value.

The ending is nicely done with the ladies leaving for the funeral while the Winter's song is sung.

"When icicles hang by the wall
And Dick the shepherd blows his nails. . . ."

Lights dim, kisses are exchanged, tears are brushed away. Don Armado is left alone onstage. He speaks Shakespeare's stage direction, "Exeunt Omnes." One feels a certain warmth and humanity from the production.

The critical reception to the 1965 Love's Labour's Lost was generally favorable. It is interesting to note that in 1965 this play was considered "one of the unfamiliar works of Shakespeare,"⁹⁹ while eleven years later Michael Feingold was complaining in the Village Voice, "As far as I can tell, everyone in the world has produced Love's Labour's Lost. I've seen three productions of it in the past two years, which is certainly too much of a good thing."¹⁰⁰

Many of the reviews admired the visual aspects of the production and its general charm. None of the reviewers, however, discussed the "humanity" of the artificial comedy. This "humanity" was the chief goal of Freedman and seems not to have been noticed by the reviewers. I myself did find these qualities in the production I saw at Saratoga Springs in 1976. Several of the reviewers seemed to view the play as a difficult museum piece.

⁹⁹Lewis Funke, "Theatre: Papp Ventures," New York Times, June 16, 1965.

¹⁰⁰Michael Feingold, "It's Too Much of a Good Thing," Village Voice, July 26, 1976.

Lewis Funke of the New York Times felt the production was "a generally airy and engaging effort;" but that the play itself was "one of the earlier works and hardly ranks with the masterpieces that were to come." The idea of the play as a rather artificial piece was resurrected. "It needs a wealth of style to come alive."¹⁰¹

Robert Passoli in the Village Voice also saw the play as difficult and conjectured as to why it was so seldom produced.

No doubt producers are incapacitated by the need to decide between a simple production which would offset the play's complexities but would leave the audience to grapple with them unaided, and an elaborate one which would complement the complexities but overwhelm the audience. Gerald Freedman opts for the latter course at the New York Shakespeare Festival and succeeds, I suspect, thanks to a strong hand on his part. His production illuminates the complexities rather than obscures them.

Considered as a whole the production is spacious, well-paced, witty, unafraid of special effects, its parts integrated into a full design. Altogether it is very much in the ebullient Guthrie tradition. Freedman uses the open playing area dexterously, swirling his actors around the central fountain down onto the apron, up curving staircases to twin gazebos and a connecting balcony on the upper level. . . . Freedman is able to animate the rondo which is this play.¹⁰²

Walter Kerr found the production to be "gracefully dispersed, pleasantly unhurried" and "prettily mounted." Reservations were expressed about the actors' speech, a lack of darker tones, and what Kerr considered an excess of burlesque. These are reservations we have seen before in criticism of Freedman's work.

They do not insist that you listen to them. They deliver the language without tasting it. . . . I think they must listen to those lines more closely themselves--especially for those

¹⁰¹ Lewis Funke, "Theatre: Papp Ventures."

¹⁰² Robert Passoli, "Love's Labour's Lost," Village Voice, June 24, 1965.

overtones that make the play a shaded, rather than a sunny comedy. The rueful ending needs some preparation.¹⁰³

Kerr disliked a piece of business when the pedant Holofernes saw the nude statue and "is struck dumb and cannot get on with his speech. . . . There is enough in the play to keep the nightclub out of it."¹⁰⁴

The actors I spoke with who had worked with Freedman, Joe Bova and Rae Allen, both admired him and particularly this production. Bova expressed the opinion that "Gerry is a marvellous director of the comedies. If he can be criticized for anything, it is perhaps that sometimes his plays get too busy."¹⁰⁵

Rae Allen, herself the director of Stage West, a regional repertory theatre in Springfield, Massachusetts, had some fascinating remarks to make about Freedman as a director. Having recently seen and admired Mike Nichols' direction of David Rabe's Streamers, she compared Nichols and Freedman:

Mike Nichols seems to me to be an almost complete director. He has a great deal of personal feeling. He's gone past whatever personal blocks and defenses he may have had as a person. He seems, in Streamers, to have reached a very high point of creativity. That's where Gerry used to have definite artistic trepidation in a sense. Feeling on a sentimental level he could deal with. If it were something more complicated, he would let you do it, but it would not really be discussed or dealt with openly. He would probably want you to do it, but it would never be dealt with on a technical, conscious level in rehearsal. I know that's why his comedies have been more successful, because they're not so terrifying as the tragedies, where one has to face one's own pain.

Gerry is intellectual, highly verbally developed, but he doesn't discuss the spine of the play to any deep level. I mean, if the spine of the play is less than operatic--by

¹⁰³Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, June 16, 1965.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Bova interview.

which I mean if it has more emotional detail--it seemed to me that there were areas he would not go into thoroughly enough. Love's Labour's Lost was very clear. . . . It had a gorgeous lightness, but now that I think about it, there are some things we didn't do. I mean, the name of the play is Love's Labour's LOST. It ends with a funeral. They are not going to get together pronto. There's a bitter-sweetness that was missed in the production.¹⁰⁶

Ms. Allen's remarks may in part be based on her own preoccupation with the "truth of emotion" which she stresses in her own work, but the perceptions strike true of a director who seems to have always had difficulty with Shakespeare's tragedies. One remembers Kerr's observations on Lee J. Cobb's Lear, "The man at the center of it keeps his head."¹⁰⁷ One wonders if the same isn't true of Freedman as well.

On the other hand, as Rae Allen was careful to point out:

He did a lot of really big plays with a lot of production detail in the park. I think that, for Mr. Papp and the New York Shakespeare Festival, it's the most consistent work that's ever been done there. . . . He participated and gave as much as anyone to that organization. His casting was almost always faultless. His production standards were higher than anybody's in the park with the exception of Mr. Papp himself. He really is an artist in that respect.¹⁰⁸

In summation, many of Freedman's principles were revealed in the rehearsal of Love's Labour's Lost.

1. Freedman's analysis of Love's Labour's Lost as about the "truth of love" bears out his general view of the Bard. Love's

¹⁰⁶Allen interview.

¹⁰⁷Walter Kerr, "No Madness in his Method," New York Times, November 8, 1968.

¹⁰⁸Allen interview.

Labour's Lost has a pastoral sweetness that seems particularly appropriate for Freedman.

2. Freedman kept most of the text, cutting only for time considerations.
3. The extrovert, presentational nature of the production was served well by musical comedy performers such as Jane White, Joe Bova, and Rae Allen.
4. Freedman's use of actor-found physical bits as in the "fox and goose sequence" reveal his principle of the importance of physical humour over verbal wit.
5. The actors interviewed confirmed that Freedman gave a great deal of freedom to them and finally acted as an "editor" of their work.
6. There was no evidence of intellectual discussion or Stanislavsky procedure being followed in my findings.
7. Actors interviewed all commented on the warm, uncompetitive atmosphere in the rehearsals.
8. Verse speaking was not discussed per se.
9. Style evolved out of the rehearsals.

CHAPTER V

ALLEN FLETCHER

Allen Fletcher has directed thirty productions of Shakespeare, more than any other director treated in this study. However he has tended to repeat certain plays rather than direct new ones. He has directed at three of the major Shakespeare Festivals and his production history goes back to 1949 when he made his directorial debut at the Ashland Shakespeare Festival with King John.

This is Fletcher's production record of Shakespeare:

1949	<u>King John</u>	Ashland, Oregon
1950	<u>Othello</u>	Ashland
1951	<u>Taming of the Shrew</u>	Ashland
1952	<u>Julius Caesar</u>	Ashland
1953	<u>Coriolanus</u>	Ashland
1954	<u>Merry Wives of Windsor</u>	Ashland
1955	<u>Hamlet</u>	San Diego, California
1956	<u>Love's Labour's Lost</u>	Ashland
	<u>Richard III</u>	Ashland
1957	<u>King Lear</u>	San Diego
1958	<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u>	San Diego
1959	<u>Romeo and Juliet</u>	San Diego
	<u>Love's Labour's Lost</u>	San Diego
1960	<u>As You Like It</u>	San Diego
	<u>Hamlet</u>	San Diego
1961	<u>The Merchant of Venice</u>	San Diego
	<u>Richard III</u>	San Diego
	<u>Richard II</u>	Stratford, Connecticut
1962	<u>Othello</u>	San Diego
1963	<u>King Lear</u>	Stratford
	<u>Antony and Cleopatra</u>	San Diego
1964	<u>Measure For Measure</u>	San Diego
	<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u>	Stratford
	<u>Richard III</u>	Stratford
1965	<u>Coriolanus</u>	Stratford
	<u>Romeo and Juliet</u>	Stratford

1966	<u>Two Gentlemen of Verona</u>	San Diego
1967	<u>Henry IV, Pt. 1</u>	Seattle, Washington
	<u>Merry Wives of Windsor</u>	Seattle
1968	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u>	Seattle
1971	<u>Antony and Cleopatra</u>	San Francisco, California
1976	<u>Othello</u>	San Francisco

This list shows that Fletcher has directed Richard III and Othello three times and the following twice: Hamlet, Antony and Cleopatra, Love's Labour's Lost, Coriolanus, Merry Wives, King Lear, Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet. His interest seems greatest in the tragedies and comedies of character and language. He tends to avoid the farces, and the more obscure plays such as Titus Andronicus, Pericles, or All's Well That Ends Well. It will be noted that more than half the plays were directed in the 1960s. Of his record he has stated, "I haven't done Macbeth or The Tempest, which I'd like to do. The last five years I've only done two Shakespeares but before that I averaged two or three productions a year."¹

Fletcher has directed less Shakespeare in recent years since he joined the American Conservatory Theatre in 1970, partly because the San Francisco company tends only to do one Shakespeare per season and Bill Ball's own interest in Shakespeare requires Fletcher to share the Bard. Also in the past five years he has become interested in Ibsen, translating and directing A Doll's House, Pillars of the Community, An Enemy of the People, and Peer Gynt at A.C.T.

¹Allen Fletcher interview, San Francisco, California, November 20, 1976.

Fletcher remembers seeing Max Reinhardt's A Midsummer Night's Dream at the San Francisco Opera House when he was eleven years old and actually dates his interest in Shakespeare from that production. "I was also a Shakespeare fan in high school. My father was an army officer and I grew up all over. Moving around made me a loner and I didn't care about peer approval, so I read Shakespeare."²

He earned his B. A. and M. A. at Stanford University, majoring in Theatre. His undergraduate degree was interrupted by the Second World War, during which he served in the Navy. While a graduate student he met Angus Bowmer, who was working toward a Ph.D. at Stanford. Bowmer had started the Oregon Shakespeare Festival at Ashland while teaching at Southern Oregon College.

Angus asked me to come up to Ashland to act. I said I would if I could also direct. In those days they didn't pay anything at all to the actors and only the promise of directing could entice me to go up there. I was an absolute novice as a director. Angus was overworked and needed somebody to help him. In the beginning, he directed four Shakespeares by himself. He gave me the script of King John. It was the first play I'd ever directed. I fell into it, following pretty much Angus' ideas on Elizabethan staging. Every summer after that I directed a play for them until I switched over to San Diego.³

Bowmer founded the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1935. Still in operation, it is "the oldest Elizabethan production organization operating continuously in the United States."⁴

²Fletcher interview.

³Ibid.

⁴Ashland, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Souvenir Program, Summer 1952, p. 9.

Under the influence of the English director B. Iden Payne, who had taught him in his undergraduate days at the University of Washington, Bowmer constructed an outdoor theatre with an Elizabethan facade, attempting to create not a copy but a modern version of the Elizabethan playhouses. The following statement in a 1952 souvenir program stated the Ashland approach to Shakespeare which Fletcher followed during his years there:

Through intense study of the results of scholarship, Festival directors learn as much as possible of the nature and means of the dramatic impact which Shakespeare's company made on an Elizabethan audience. Then through their knowledge of modern cultural changes they modify the original means to obtain something close to the original impact. Thus the Festival does not use a boy Juliet or perform by daylight.⁵

The program might also have stated that the Ashland stage is not a thrust stage, as Shakespeare's had been, with the audience on three sides of the actors. Bowmer's principal fidelities to Elizabethan staging are an outdoor unit stage with Elizabethan trim, and his insistence that all the plays be costumed in Elizabethan rather than historical costuming or transplanted periods. Ashland has even presented the Roman plays in Elizabethan costumes. Fletcher's production of Julius Caesar in 1952 carried the following note on the costuming:

Costumes for this classic tragedy began with the paintings of Veronese as the source, a contemporary of Shakespeare's. The Venetian suggested the classical scenes of Roman and Greek history by using obvious classical accessories over late 16th

⁵Ashland, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Souvenir Program, p. 9.

century costumes. In order to clarify the multitude of characters for the audience, we have used the color principle to contrast the two opposing forces. Purples, grays, and whites unify the loyal Caesar faction, while reds, silvers, and blues distinguish the Brutus-Cassius group.⁶

After getting his M. A. at Stanford, Fletcher taught for a year at Purdue University, where he directed a production of Romeo and Juliet. Dissatisfied with students who did not have professional theatre aspirations, he decided to work toward a Ph.D. at Yale.

I went to Yale to work on my Ph.D. in theatre history, although I was really interested in further training as a director. I split my time between the graduate school and the drama school, which they let you do at that point. That was my only year at Yale. I ran out of money and was offered a job, so I never took the degree. But it was a good year. I think Constance Welch as an acting teacher and director was more influential than anybody else. I respected Frank McMullan a lot and took his directing course and enjoyed talking to him. Alois Nagler was my official mentor there. He had no sympathy with the practical theatre and wanted me to be a theatre historian. He was still pretty influential for scholarship and ways of investigating things.⁷

The job which took Fletcher away from Yale was that of acting teacher at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From his summers at Ashland, he knew Douglas Russle, costumer at Carnegie Tech., and Bill Ball, graduate student, and through their recommendations, he became a teacher there.

Carnegie Tech. had a certain atmosphere which was interesting and very lively. Henry Boettcher had a lot to do with it. He was a very creative chairman and he used those young people. He recognized their talents and rewarded them. There were many interesting students including Bill Ball and Ellis Rabb. Mary Morris was teaching there. I was very young and enthusiastic at the time. I taught something called "internal

⁶ Ashland, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Souvenir Program, p. 12.

⁷ Fletcher interview.

technique"--a horrid phrase which I never use any more. It was essentially the Stanislavsky system. I had been barely exposed to it at Stanford, much more so from Connie Welch at Yale. When I went to Tech I had to teach it because Mary Morris was teaching the opposite thing. I had to study a lot about it and make up a lot about it, but basically it was the Stanislavsky system.⁸

Fletcher's use of the Stanislavsky system carried over into his work on Shakespeare. Ted van Griethuysen was a member of the San Diego Company in 1955, Fletcher's first year there. Griethuysen remembers Fletcher's use of Stanislavky technique during rehearsals of Hamlet.

Allen changed a lot of my thinking about acting. In those days you were either from the University of Texas, where B. Iden Payne taught or you were from Carnegie Tech. I was a student of Dr. Payne's at Texas where I had played Hamlet for him. When I went to San Diego that first summer I found myself playing Laertes to Bill Ball's Hamlet. Dr. Payne and Allen were terribly different. Dr. Payne would give you line readings and beat out the rhythm of speeches and scenes for you. Allen discussed motivation at great length. I was acting in Measure for Measure at the same time for Dr. Payne. I remember he got annoyed with me, and felt my method work with Allen in Hamlet was affecting my acting for him. I did a scene for him concentrating on relationships and actually cried in the scene. Dr. Payne's criticism was scathing. "You were like the worst of the Stanislavsky imitators!" Everyone idolized Fletcher at that time. He was the revolutionary and Stanislavsky was the new thing in Shakespeare.⁹

Fletcher remembers that he admired Payne and was never conscious of trying to "revolutionize" Shakespearean acting. "I wanted to be like Iden because I respected him a lot. I had learned about Shakespeare from Angus Bowmer and I knew that a lot of what Angus had come from

⁸ Fletcher interview.

⁹ Ted van Griethuysen interview, New York, New York, July 20, 1976.

B. Iden Payne. I think I just naturally was attracted to a discussion of character motivation and never had Payne's theatrical flair!"¹⁰

Fletcher's first Hamlet, starring Bill Ball at San Diego was an important production for the young director. "Hamlet was a production which showed me the possibilities of what trusting an actor could produce."¹¹

The first Hamlet we did at San Diego was a big step for both Bill and me and, in a way, for San Diego. They became very popular as a result of that production. It was Bill's performance and the excitement of it. I remember that the conditions were very poor. We never knew it would come together. We worked on the meanings of scenes and relationships, where various climaxes would occur. We didn't decide things right away. Bill even then tended to structure his acting in a technical way but that was much more true the second time we did the play. The first time Bill was still investigating and was too excited by the possibilities of the role and was too eager to commit himself personally and emotionally to the role to be very technical. Oh, he did things with a red cape, throwing it over the throne on "The play's the thing" [a piece of business Ball used in 1969 when he directed Hamlet at A.C.T.]. The Hamlet we did at San Diego was less theatrical and more realistic which sounds dull, but it had a lot of emotional excitement and contact among the actors of which I was proud.¹²

Interestingly, some of Fletcher's and Ball's ideas on Hamlet resemble those of Stuart Vaughan and Donald Madden. Fletcher and Ball also saw Hamlet as a very active man, not the traditionally introspective melancholic. "Bill was a young Hamlet, extremely energetic, not very introspective. The thing that was very exciting about it was that all of his actions were definite positive actions. He committed himself totally to every action and the actions came from

¹⁰Fletcher interview.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

himself."¹³ Immersion in a role and total concentration, according to Stanislavsky, come from an actor doing with commitment what is logical and specific for a character to do in any "given circumstance."

Fletcher's use of Stanislavsky is also evident in his discussion of Ball's choice for Hamlet's superobjective: "He played--to find himself, to investigate himself, to find his place in the world, which came very close to 'save the world.'"¹⁴

It is typical of Fletcher's productions that the theatrical and visual elements take second place to the acting and simple staging. "At the time I was still very much into Elizabethan staging. It was a very simple production. If you compare it to the Hamlet that Bill directed at A.C.T., you see how much more of a visual director Bill is than I am."¹⁵

Peggy Kellner, who costumed this Hamlet, remembers it as "one of the best productions we ever did. Bill Ball was so energetic that you couldn't take your eyes off him. He was very frenetic, always moving. I've never seen an actor so busy or do so much."¹⁶

It would be impossible to describe all of Fletcher's productions, nor would it be particularly illuminating. He himself has named three productions as important and formative. They include the Hamlet discussed above, Richard III with Douglas Watson at San Diego, and King Lear with Morris Carnovsky at Stratford, Connecticut. The

¹³Fletcher interview.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Peggy Kellner interview, Tucson, Arizona, December 6, 1976.

latter will be discussed in detail later as Fletcher's self-chosen "most successful production."

Poor documentation exists on many of the San Diego and Ashland productions. Reviews from both places tend to express general local adulation, which tells us little about what happened on the stage. Better documentation exists on the productions done at Stratford, and I shall deal with some of those productions as well as the Antony and Cleopatra and Othello at A.C.T.

Richard III is obviously a play which appeals to Allen Fletcher. He has done it three times. His first production of it at Ashland carried the following program note: "It comes vitally alive as the story of a man who captured a kingdom with his immense intellect, selfishness, and cynicism--a man who in physical repulsiveness and passionate wickedness seems almost a symbol of evil, and yet somehow remains frighteningly human."¹⁷ He seems to have been intent upon producing a sympathetic Richard, or at least a humanly understandable one. The melodramatics of the play seem to have been less important to him than the character study. "Shakespeare achieves the most extraordinary thing with that play. He makes evil understandable and sympathetic. The audience must understand why Richard is the way he is. Cut off from normal social and sexual contact, he must do evil to have any form of human contact. It is his only way of making contact with the world which is not humiliating to him."¹⁸

¹⁷ Ashland, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Souvenir Program, Summer 1956, p. 16.

¹⁸ Fletcher interview.

Fletcher's depiction of a sympathetic Richard was, according to him, most successful in the San Diego production. "Douglas Watson had specific ideas, like he wanted Richard to be very crippled physically. I found that his ideas worked well with my desire to present Richard as an understandable human being."¹⁹ Peggy Kellner remembers Watson's performance as moving and pathetic. "You had to feel sorry for him. He was freakish but you could sympathize with his desire to get back at the world which had made him such a freak. With such handicaps his achievements seemed extraordinary."²⁰ Like most of Fletcher's productions, there was nothing particularly "conceptual" about the visual production. Realism within a basic unit set seems to have been the style of the production.

Fletcher did Richard III again with Douglas Watson at Stratford, Connecticut in 1964, but felt it was less successful. "It didn't work well at Stratford. There were things about the . . . stage and the atmosphere . . . which didn't feed the production as much as had been true at San Diego."²¹ The most obvious difference between the two stages is that the Globe is a small theatre with an intimate relationship between actor and audience, whereas the Stratford stage is enormous and the audience tends to feel distant from the action. Josef Sommer remembers that Richard II with Richard Basehart, which was Fletcher's first production at Stratford, was very subtle and powerful in the rehearsal hall, but "Basehart got up

¹⁹Fletcher interview.

²⁰Kellner interview.

²¹Fletcher interview.

on that stage and just blanked out like a too subtle make-up job that washed out."²²

Martin Gottfried found Richard III commendable and painted a vivid picture of Watson's performance:

. . . He is half-mad, perhaps retarded, violently physical, almost simian, very like a movie monster in his pathos. The concern with his body is realistic--physical deformity must make its victim acutely self-aware and Watson will rub his crippled foot, release his hand to a compulsive twitch and even revel in his deformity. He will swing himself round like an alcoholic orangutang and go flying off to war on foot, bound startingly in a hideous black brace. He is a wild, running child of a monkey, his fur-like robe and cape a mantle of helplessness.²³

Certain effects in the production were mentioned by several critics. Fletcher began the production in absolute darkness and out of the dark came the first lines of the play, "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this sun of York." In the wooing scene with Anne, Richard "digs a curious finger into the encoffined corpse of the Prince of Wales, brings it out blood red and appreciatingly licks and savors it."²⁴ At the moment of his death, Watson paused before collapsing "opening and closing his withered hand at the point of death."²⁵ Walter Kerr found the portrayal in the "mad scientist blabbermouth tradition."²⁶ Something alienated a large part of the audience from what at San Diego had been a moving

²² Josef Sommer interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

²³ Martin Gottfried, "Theatre," Women's Wear Daily, June 12, 1964.

²⁴ Walter Kerr, "Richard III," New York Herald Tribune, June 12, 1964.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

experience. Surely the Stratford stage cut down on the intimacy Watson's performance needed for a sympathetic response. Rather than the inner torment of Richard, the audience saw the external eccentricity of the performance.

Howard Taubman described the production as "committed to a kind of frenetic intensity--although the pace is slow--an effort is made to keep the tension high."²⁷ This kind of slow, yet intense emotionalism seems to be a trademark of much of Fletcher's work. Ball's performance of Hamlet had this kind of intensity. Lear was often described in these terms and Taubman's description could fit the performance of Othello I witnessed at the American Conservatory Theatre in November 1976.

Fletcher's tenure at Stratford marked a change in the policy of that institution. Before Fletcher, the company had no permanent ensemble but tended to hire star actors who wanted a summer of great Shakespearean roles; for instance, Katharine Hepburn had starred as Viola and Cleopatra one season. Fletcher organized a troupe of actors who trained together during the winter months with funds supplied by a Ford grant. Patrick Hines, a member of that company, described the classes which continued under Fletcher for three years.

It was a training program stretching the actors. We did projects with Shakespeare, working on some of the unfamiliar plays like Pericles and Titus Andronicus. We did dance, speech, and voice. Some of the younger actors took fencing. The most important thing was that we became a company through

²⁷Howard Taubman, "Theatre: 'Richard III,'" New York Times, June 12, 1964.

this work together. With a Broadway show it usually takes a company three or four weeks to get over their shyness with each other. Phil Bosco, Rex Everhart, Jackie Brooks, Douglas Watson, Rosemary Murphy, Sada Thompson, and myself and all the younger company--fifteen or twenty of us--would work in the city and then move up to Stratford in March. We usually had a school season.²⁸

King Lear with Morris Carnovsky in 1963 was the first production at Stratford under Fletcher's administration. It was perhaps the most successful production, measured by critical reception and audience attendance, that the theatre has ever done. It was revived two years later, again under Fletcher's direction. His administration seemed off to a good start. The Douglas Watson Richard III was featured in 1964, and in 1965 Fletcher directed Phil Bosco and Aline MacMahon in Coriolanus, as well as Much Ado About Nothing. The Coriolanus in particular was praised and it was felt that Phil Bosco was one of America's best Shakespearean actors. Walter Kerr vividly described Bosco's performance:

He is an ardent core of fury, in someways alarming to watch. Shakespeare's Coriolanus is thought a cold character. Mr. Bosco fires him, makes his contempt for the common people a thing of passion rather than intellectual niceness. He is not uneasy in the presence of the obvious inferiors; he is enraged. That he should have to ask for the votes of the "garlic eaters"--touches one raw open nerve that is in him, his instinctive, physical, tactile exasperation with the very existence of the herd. . . . His skin is where the sting is; there is a knot in the pit of his psyche. . . . [Bosco has] the presence of a man so angry at the universe that he would shake it off his shoulders if he could.²⁹

²⁸Patrick Hines interview, New York, New York, December 27, 1976.

²⁹Walter Kerr, "Bosco's Coriolanus," New York Herald Tribune, June 21, 1965.

It is typical of Fletcher's work that most of the attention should go to the actors. Of leading performances in Fletcher's productions, it is consistently observed that: (1) they are emotionally volatile, and (2) often they make seemingly "cold" characters understandable and "hot."

Julius Novick in Beyond Broadway praised King Lear and Coriolanus and found the work under Fletcher to be an improvement over the previous work at Stratford. He describes Fletcher's general directorial style based on observation of the Stratford productions:

Gradually his directorial style became recognizable. His staging was a compromise between procenium and open stage technique. He used scenery (usually designed by Will Steven Armstrong), but sparingly; one or two large, emblematic, mood-evoking pieces at the rear of the stage, backed in turn by a sky drop or black drapes. The main acting area was essentially a bare platform, and there was no curtain. It was the sort of staging well adapted to the swift, fluid, uncluttered, no-nonsense work that Mr. Fletcher provided. He seemed to be the most self-effacing of Shakespearean directors. His ideas for individual characters, individual scenes, were often original--but it was usually difficult to tell what he thought about a play as a whole. He seemed reluctant to impose a firm overall concept on a production; instead, it almost seemed as if he gave each actor his head and encouraged him to do his utmost. His productions were uneven, varying widely in quality from moment to moment and sometimes merely commonplace.³⁰

Soon after the summer season of 1965 it was announced that Allen Fletcher would no longer continue as artistic director of Stratford. He returned the next summer to direct Julius Caesar but refused to have his name put on the program when his and the cast's request for a longer rehearsal period was refused. It was the end of Fletcher's

³⁰Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 307.

association with the American Shakespeare Festival. Looking back at his problems with the board of that institution, he commented to me:

It could have happened at Stratford, but it would have taken more time than we had. [He is referring to the establishment of a first-class American national Shakespeare company.] Jackie Brooks used to say, "There is disaster bred into the walls at Stratford." It was not a friendly place because it was built with the idea of success in mind. It had to be successful right away and then it wasn't. You were always fighting a certain atmosphere of disaster and a certain coldness from the board. The Board was frightening as a group.³¹

Fletcher left Stratford to become the artistic director of the Seattle Repertory Company. He replaced Stuart Vaughan and stayed there four years.

In 1969 Fletcher was replaced. Of that experience Fletcher has said:

Seattle was a negative experience in that I didn't seem to be able to give them what, in their vague, uninformed way, they wanted or seemed to expect. I went there with great enthusiasm. I was only frustrated with the reception of the community and the Board of Directors. So I decided I would never do that again. I wouldn't run a theatre again. It wasn't really right for me to run a theatre. I was a director and maybe a teacher, but not an administrator.³²

After Seattle he went immediately to the theatre of his former student, Bill Ball, in San Francisco, and has remained there, content to direct and be the head of the Conservatory Acting Program.

At A.C.T. he has directed two Shakespearean plays: Antony and Cleopatra and Othello. The Antony and Cleopatra, starring Michael Learned and Ken Ruta, and directed by Ellis Rabb in 1971, was to have been transferred from the San Diego Globe. However, Rabb needed eye surgery after it opened in San Diego and was not available for the revival in San Francisco. Fletcher agreed to take on the production

³¹Fletcher interview.

³²Ibid.

but changed Rabb's concept from a visually abstract and exotically theatrical production to a more traditional and realistic one. In a news release prior to the San Francisco opening, Fletcher commented on his approach to the play. He spoke of the San Diego production with its "stylization and a more abstract feeling, along with a more abstract approach to costumes and settings."

"The production here is more realistic in style. Ann Roth's costumes give a real sense of the First Century B.C. and of the Egyptian and Roman cultures in the play. And we're going for a sense of freedom and openness on stage." In Fletcher's view the play is primarily a love story although it contains strong political and military overtones. "Both characters give up everything and abandon the world for love. Also, chance plays a great role in the tragedy." Fletcher sees Antony and Cleopatra as two people totally dependent on each other for everything. Often they resent that dependence and quarrel like most mature lovers. They also know that their love has cost them wealth, power, and respect of other people. They know they're doomed but they can't help themselves.³³

At the time of my interview with Allen Fletcher in San Francisco, I was fortunate to see his production of Othello which had opened the 1976-77 season at the American Conservatory Theatre. Here is my response to the production written immediately after seeing the performance:

At intermission of this Othello I was very excited at an enormously moving performance. Danny Davis as Iago was different from any Iago I had previously seen. Here was a tortured, driven, unhappy character. His soliloquies were given in blinding white spotlights. He would grab his head as if suffering from migraine headaches. Bleating music would underscore these outbursts. The big temptation scene began with the two men fencing and ended with Othello high above Iago on a platform while Iago reached up to shake his hand in a bond of vengeance. "I am yours forever," was a passionate vow. When Othello was in his epileptic fit, Iago "mounted" him in a sexual way. The set was very simple.

³³"Antony and Cleopatra'--Staging the Play by Accident," San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle Datebook, October 31, 1971, p. 22.

White stucco, cubistic shapes turned in several directions to change the scene. An unfortunate collage of spears and shields flew in at various moments to suggest hallways. Twelve flags waved by extras suggested the storm at sea before Othello's arrival at Cyprus. The period was early nineteenth century Napoleonic Europe. Uniforms were green and white. Iago wore wire-rimmed glasses and chain-smoked. Desdemona was quite spirited. When Othello slapped her, she slapped him back. Roderigo was more pathetic than funny. John Hancock as Othello was charming as a lover in the first part but not frightening in the second half. I also felt he had exhausted his effects early in the evening and had no place to go. The second half did not keep my attention as the first half had done. But, the first half was intensely emotional. No cold, moustache-twirling Iago this, but a haunted, miserably unhappy man who performs his deeds out of deep inner compulsions. For the first time, Iago made psychological sense to me. He shares in the same "green-eyed monster," jealousy, as Othello. Ironically, he, too, kills the thing he loves.

My interview with Fletcher proved particularly profitable in our discussion of Othello since I had just seen it and his ideas were still fresh. He admitted he had taken a "Freudian" approach to the Iago-Othello relationship.

I thought the play was about paranoia. I can associate with that very readily. I have been doing a lot of reading in psychology in the last few years and it seemed obvious to me that Iago is paranoid and that he releases a certain paranoia in Othello by his own illness. The same root can be touched in all human beings. It all fit together for the actors. John, Danny and I discussed, not that there was a homosexual relationship between the two men, but that for Iago the attraction was there. We even discussed the possibility that they might have had sex with each other. That happens regularly in the army during a war. It's not important to Othello but there as been that relationship. There are reasons why he married Emilia. (This is all terribly Stanislavsky!) There is an attraction between them, but with that paranoia, he thinks she sleeps with everybody and it drives him crazy. She had slept around before they married but I don't think she does anymore. But he knew when he married her that she was an experienced woman. She can't help implying that in her relationships when she talks to men. When she talks to Cassio or any other gentleman you always feel that she conveys that she is available. You know, there are women who do that.³⁴

³⁴Fletcher interview.

Fletcher seemed to feel that the production was not completely satisfactory due to the difficulty of performing the title role and the length of the play.

There are three problems with Othello as a play which make it practically impossible: (1) The play is too long. I don't know how to cut it down any more. [This production lasted about three and a half hours.] I've done a fair amount of what B. Iden Payne used to call "fine tooth combing." It's not any big chunk of the play because the action makes too much sense to me. (2) Iago "runs" the first half of the play and Othello "runs" the second half. But in the second half your attention as an audience is on what is happening to Othello, while in the first half it tends to be on what Iago is doing. (3) It is John Hancock's continual problem to make a progression of Othello's falling apart make sense step by step, so that if there is an emotional explosion, it works from that into something else. Every scene has to build on every other scene. Each scene has to be a different point for Othello. That's not coming clear yet, and may never, because it's just such a problem for any actor. No matter how talented, an actor's instincts tend to make him go in a straight line--to give everything he has to give the moment he goes on the skids. John understands this but he's a young actor and he has so much energy and has so much emotional grounding in the part, that he can't always govern where he is beginning a scene from. It's a superhuman problem and I've never seen anyone who could do it but Olivier,³⁵ who could deal with the different problems in each scene.

The following influences and trends may be noted in this short tracing of Fletcher's long and eventful career:

1. He was influenced by the ideas of Angus Bowmer and B. Iden Payne and their desire to recreate the "impact" of Elizabethan staging.
2. A student of theatre history, he seems to find such knowledge helpful in his directing.

³⁵Fletcher interview.

3. He is an exponent of the Stanislavsky system. He teaches it and applies it in his productions.
4. He has been most successful with those tragedies in which a strong leading actor was cast. He tends to give such an actor great freedom.
5. Acting is more important to him than the visual concept of the play. He likes simple settings.
6. His productions have intense emotional content and energy when they are successful. Character psychology is studied in depth.
7. His effects seem to come from actors' business which illuminate character psychology.

Fearful of generalization in verbalizing Shakespeare's vision of the world, Fletcher reluctantly volunteered the following ideas:

I can't imagine that I would mistake a play of Shakespeare's. I think it is a world in which there is a very realistic but very exotic view of character. Shakespeare has a special view of people, of how they make the world and the universe. He's got room for everybody. He's very attracted by people who are unusual and exceptional, yet he understands what drives them. He writes about what is in them that we can associate with. So, it is romantic. The language is exotic and romantic in itself too. Sometimes it's harsh, sometimes it's soft and lyrical, but it's always extreme language. It's music which always conveys feeling. What I find in common in the plays is this tremendous interest and understanding of unusual people and what is unusual or attractive about them. The most vicious people he makes attractive.³⁶

For Fletcher, Shakespeare's depth of characterization takes precedence over any other quality of the playwright. His success with characters like Richard III, Iago, Hamlet and Lear reveals intensive analysis.

³⁶Fletcher interview.

Fletcher is very conscious of the importance of the actor. It has been noted that he has been particularly successful with productions in which he has given the leading performer great freedom. He feels that the kinds of performances Shakespeare requires benefit from actors working in relative freedom with understanding support from the director.

I am always in awe of truly fine actors. They do what you can never do. I mean, they're doing it. They are the one who ultimately have to give something of themselves to the audience. It's the director's job to help them do that. If the actor doesn't by himself get with Iago or Othello or Richard III, there isn't much the director can do about it. If it's not in his soul, if he is a little too prosaic to face all that the character must face, then no director can give those things to him. Therefore, you must be very careful in casting. You must know that the actor is capable of emotionally and intellectually understanding the character and that he is capable of showing an audience a personal part of himself.³⁷

Fletcher's statements are in line with Stanislavsky's general view of the art of acting as defined in An Actor Prepares: "The fundamental aim of our art is the creation of this inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in an artistic form."³⁸ Fletcher's concern with the "inner life" of a character, as well as his vocabulary, are clearly borrowed from the Stanislavsky system. Like Stanislavsky also, he is primarily a realist who wants the audience to identify with the characters as real people. Stanislavsky's principle of "the logic of emotions" can be seen in Fletcher's discussion of Othello. His concern with Othello's progression of emotions, which should take the actor step by step to larger and larger emotional outbursts, is a process

³⁷Fletcher interview.

³⁸Constantin Stanislavsky, An Actor Prepares, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Theatre Arts Books: copyright 1936 and 1948), p. 14.

outlined in An Actor Prepares. The use of commitment to "logical actions" in Hamlet is another Stanislavskian technique. Fletcher has stated, "I am a great believer in the technique of personalization."³⁹ Personalization is the Stanislavsky technique in which an actor imaginatively places himself in the character's "given circumstances." The actor "uses himself" to find the "truth" of the character. He uses memory of emotion from his own life to find the character's emotions.

We understand something about parts because of our own life experience. We can associate with characters who are doing weird or kooky things because there is something in all of us that shares in all experience, at least the desire to do it. I don't ask actors how they're personalizing. I don't ask them what it is. I often say to them, "You should personalize here, or there." I also give them things from my own experience. I hope my openness helps them.⁴⁰

Unlike some method directors, Fletcher does not conduct memory of emotion exercises as part of the rehearsal process. "I have never used emotional memory in rehearsal. Not that I don't approve of it. I do. But I do not feel it is the director's business to participate in an emotional memory. I have occasionally suggested to an actor that he do it privately."⁴¹ The foregoing statement reveals a certain reserve in Fletcher. He prefers an "encouraging" to a "coercive" relationship in his dealings with actors.

His affinity with Stanislavsky is also evident in his statements concerning rehearsal process. "I like a long rehearsal process. I would like at least seven or eight weeks. And I wouldn't rehearse frantically eight hours every day. I like the time for the actors because it's useful for an actor to really live with a part and with

³⁹Fletcher interview.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

each other over a longer period of time. I don't like to do it in three weeks. Four weeks is possible. In San Diego I used to do it in three weeks but it's not ideal."⁴²

Character building for Fletcher is a time-consuming process in which the actor gradually "transforms" himself into a character. It is an organic process which takes its own time. Fletcher sees Shakespeare's great tragic roles as "reservoirs of emotion which must be filled by the actor."⁴³ For him, "The primary purpose of theatre is the communication of emotion,"⁴⁴ and Shakespeare's characters have this potential in great abundance.

We don't often see the great roles really done to their true depth. In other words, we don't see the actors truly feeling those things onstage. Usually it's because what the actors are doing is too generalized. Right now I say that if a performance is wrong, not moving, or ineffective, it's because it's not specific. Not because it's not "big" enough. An actor must get very specific in his performance. It's not a general grief but a specific grief that you're after, not general anger but specific anger. If an actor can get to the specifics of any character's given circumstance, it can be a great stimulus to depth.⁴⁵

Again Fletcher's insistence on "specifics" is reminiscent of Stanislavsky, who insisted that emotion could not be tapped directly but that an actor could arouse the emotions through concentrating on the specifics of a character's sensory life and surroundings.

Communication among actors is also of primary importance to Fletcher. He wants Shakespearean verse to sound like "real speech."

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Communication among actors is the thing I am most interested in right now. In most of the recent productions I have seen I have been discouraged in that the characters didn't seem to be talking to each other. Sometimes what they were saying was clear. Shakespeare style seemed so important to them. I get disgusted with that, so I may have bent over backwards and gone in the opposite direction, making sure that what they were saying was said to each other.⁴⁶

Fletcher's ideas are so different from Bill Ball's that one wonders why Ball considers Fletcher his "great teacher."⁴⁷ Fletcher's productions are "slow" and their length is far from the fast two hours which Ball likes in his productions of Shakespeare. When asked about this dichotomy between teacher and student, employer and employee, Fletcher answered:

We've never clashed aesthetically. Bill leaves me totally alone. I've always been kidded that I do the longest plays in the world and I hate it, but I can't seem to get away from it. I would understand if Bill Ball said to me, "Allen, you've got to make it go faster." But he never has. I totally agree with Bill about the verse, and it ought to go fast, but then when I get down to the nitty gritty in rehearsal and see an actor doing something, I want him to take it a step further and make more of it emotionally. I can't say to him, "Don't take so much time." I always promise that I'll make myself do it eventually. I say to myself, "Let him take time now because he'll find out things for himself." I believe that is the way actors find things, by taking time and exploring. The thing about getting the play into the rhythm it should be in may have to come later. Sometimes I never get to that "later," but I always want to. So I would say that intellectually I agree with Bill, but instinctually I go after something else first, and just don't get back to the rhythm of the show sometimes.⁴⁸

According to Fletcher there are certain principles of Elizabethan staging which must be followed, the most important of which is "continuous staging." In other words, there must be no interruption

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷William Ball interview, San Francisco, California, November 19, 1976.

⁴⁸Fletcher interview.

of the action for set changes. "B. Iden Payne's principle of 'continuous action' is vital to me and I violate it as little as possible."⁴⁹ At one time Fletcher believed that the plays should always be costumed in Elizabethan dress. He no longer finds that important. "Now I think you have to look for what serves the world of the play best, and the world of the play is not always totally Elizabethan, although I do think you have to start from there."⁵⁰ The 1976 Othello, costumed in early nineteenth-century Europe "allowed us to emphasize the military life of the play which is important to the Othello-Iago relationship. . . . Those green and white uniforms give a feel of the barracks to the play which is not possible in Elizabethan clothes."⁵¹ Although Fletcher has done more transplants in recent years, he feels that his transplants "are not visually decorative."⁵² His taste runs to spare staging. "Shakespeare's stage was essentially bare. A very good actor on a stage which offers no distractions to the audience's imagination or barriers to the actors' movements--that is the most important element in Elizabethan staging."⁵³

The following directorial principles are based on Allen Fletcher's comments on Shakespearean directing:

1. Shakespeare has a realistic conception of character. He is primarily interested in exotic characters who are in some way "different" from most men and are extraordinary in some way.

⁴⁹Fletcher interview.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

He is able to understand the most unattractive aspects of human behavior and make them sympathetic. Because of this interest in the extraordinary, he may be said to be "romantic" as well as "realistic."

2. The purpose of the theatre is the "communication of emotion." As the source of this communication the actor should be of primary importance to the director.
3. It is the director's purpose to serve the actor and help him give a "truthful" performance. The director is a kind of emotional midwife urging "life" out of the actor's subconscious.
4. Shakespeare's characters require a depth and truth of emotion in their playing which is well served by Stanislavsky's inner techniques outlined in An Actor Prepares.
5. Specific principles of Stanislavsky urged by Fletcher include logic or emotions, communication, use of given circumstances, memory or emotion, discussion of objectives, and a long, "gestating" rehearsal period.
6. Fletcher believes in certain aspects of Elizabethan staging, the most important of which are the principle of continuous action and the primacy of the actor on an essentially bare stage. He dislikes scenic decoration.

The production Fletcher chose for me to investigate as his most successful was the popular King Lear with Morris Carnovsky at Stratford, Connecticut. The first production was in 1963 and it was revived in 1965. Carnovsky states that since then he has "played the part all over the country, essentially using the ideas and business

which Allen Fletcher and I arrived at together."⁵⁴ Lear was again revived at Stratford in 1975 with a visiting English director guiding the production. Of this last production, Carnovsky remarked to me:

That production fundamentally disheartened me. I did it with the understanding that Michael Kahn would direct it and it would be the Lear I had always represented. Suddenly at the second or third rehearsal Kahn announced that Anthony Paige would direct. Well, he was pretty ignorant of the play. The whole thing was miscast. Lear is an ensemble play. The other actors have got to be right. The whole thing was wrong. It saddens me to think that this may have been my last Lear.⁵⁵

The 1963 production was an important one for Fletcher as well as one of the outstanding achievements of Carnovsky's career. It was Fletcher's first production as the artistic director of Stratford. It was a "go-for-broke attempt." He knew from the beginning that Carnovsky would play Lear. Carnovsky recalled their first meeting in a hotel room in San Francisco:

I had almost fainted dead away when they asked me to play Lear. I remember feeling overwhelmingly inadequate. Fletcher came out to San Francisco where I was playing. We met in my hotel room. We didn't say anything to each other for a long time. There was a peculiar wariness in him. We sat on opposite sides of the room and tried to begin a discussion. We both burst out laughing. I said, "We're going to do it." We both agreed that "'Go for broke' is the motto." It meant there could be no holding back. I could not put restrictions on myself. I had not to be afraid. Every scene in that play for Lear has enough emotion for a full length play. But I decided I couldn't hold back in the early scenes. I couldn't save anything back. Allen and I were in absolute agreement that what we wanted was complete reality in the performance. We had to have courage and could not be afraid. Allen was exactly what the doctor ordered. He was always encouraging, positively reinforcing, and very intelligent. He gave me a great deal of freedom, allowing me to go into areas which I had not tapped as an actor before.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Morris Carnovsky interview, New York, New York, December 28, 1976.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Fletcher gives Carnovsky credit for the success of the production.

King Lear may have been my best production, mostly because of Morris. I knew from the beginning that it would be he, and so we worked from the beginning together. I, of course, couldn't help feeling a little intimidated by Morris. He had such a history in the theatre and I respected him so much. But, luckily, I also felt that I had the freedom to say what I really felt. I think Morris knew that I respected and admired him and that made him secure, but I also think he felt I would not falsely flatter him. He trusted me. We were lucky. It doesn't happen that often. It has to happen on something like Lear. Morris was receptive to me. We were frank with each other. He would say that he wanted to do certain things and then, after chewing it around, after some hemming and hawing, if I felt it was a bad idea I would tell him I thought it was bad. He also knew that the things that really mattered to him, the soul of the thing, I was never going to touch.⁵⁷

Phil Bosco, who played Kent, had the impression that Fletcher was a little afraid of Carnovsky. "He seemed to let him do what he wanted, and was a little shy with him, but the result was magnificent."⁵⁸

In discussing his pre-rehearsal work, Fletcher commented:

I do a fair amount of paper work. I analyze the play scene by scene. Depending on the play, I study certain things about the characters, not always confining myself to terminology such as superobjectives or spines. I tend to do a lot of tangential thinking and reading about the characters' psychology and their relationships with the other characters. I read a lot of criticism on Lear. At that point I was into reading a lot of criticism, which I don't do anymore. I suppose I was mostly influenced by Granville-Barker and A. C. Bradley.⁵⁹

He saw King Lear as "a journey through madness to a brutally true vision of the world."⁶⁰ He was particularly interested in exploring the psychological stages of madness which Lear moves through in the

⁵⁷ Fletcher interview.

⁵⁸ Philip Bosco interview, New York, New York, July 22, 1976.

⁵⁹ Fletcher interview.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

play. For him, "The ultimate scene in that play is the mad scene on the heath with Gloucester, in which Lear puts his imagined daughters on trial" (Act IV, sc. vi).

I felt everything in the play was working toward that scene; Morris and I felt that this scene was the absolute nadir of Lear's experience. After Gloucester is blinded we have the ultimate mad scene in which Lear sees the collapse of all justice and order. Man is a cruel beast with no kindness in him and "None doth offend." This despair leads him to the cry, "Then kill kill kill kill kill kill." It is an existential despair of unanswerable cruelty. That was the whole core of the play. I think that scene is so painful because it takes away every defense that Lear has, it lays bare the man's soul. The painful thing about madness is that it strips away every defense that the "realistic" world gives. Not the real world, because what you face is the real world. You see, the logical, "realistic" world sets up all these defenses for us, and our souls are laid bare when we do not have the logic of the world, of the mind to hide behind. In that scene Lear sees something deeper and truer, and it is unbearably painful. Morris and I were instinctively working toward that.⁶¹

The King Lear rehearsals took place in the middle of winter in February of 1963 and alternated rehearsal time with the other Shakespearean play in the repertory for that summer, The Comedy of Errors. Patrick Hines, who played Gloucester, recalls those rehearsals:

We rehearsed in a hall on Second Avenue downtown above Ratner's restaurant. It was strange. We rehearsed for six weeks but did not work on Lear every day because we were also in rehearsal for Comedy of Errors. Actually, it was nice to be able to get away from Lear and come back to it. Also, we played Lear during April and May for school matinees, so by the time we opened for the critics in June we were really ready. We got to inhabit the play over a length of time.⁶²

Fletcher says that he did not do a lot of initial discussion about the play with the actors, nor did he do a lot of sit-down readings:

⁶¹Fletcher interview.

⁶²Hines interview.

I didn't do much reading at the table. I never did and still don't. Nor do I do a lot of early discussion. Particularly on Lear we got up on our feet pretty soon. Even in those days I didn't block very definitely. I do pre-block certain things in my mind but I don't give them to the actors right away. I like to say where you come in and go out. Those early on-our-feet rehearsals were like readings but we didn't sit at a table. I don't seem to be able to make actors communicate across a table. It remains very intellectual. The first couple of days we read and talked about the meanings of words and what sentences meant. We paraphrased a lot. But we didn't go much into emotional relationships or what was happening. Then when we got on our feet, the actors began to say, "Gee, a funny thing began to happen there," even though nothing really happened. They were not forced. All our discussion on King Lear happened on the floor. We would stop if someone wanted to, and talk about things, and then do things over. Morris is a talker, and so am I, and we talked a lot on that production, but it all happened on the floor.⁶³

Josef Sommer, who played a small role in this first King Lear, and who has worked with Fletcher in many other roles, described the director's technique with actors:

Allen works in detail and will work over and over certain moments, sometimes beyond the patience of actors. Not that he will dictate the moment, but he will try to get the actors to more and more fulfill that moment. Allen is very good at deciding what is happening in a scene, setting up the circumstances in such a way that the actor must respond in the way that he wants them to. He has a knack for getting what he has preconceived without letting the actors know directly what he wants. Allen will rehearse a scene over and over and never say anything about it to the actors. That's fine for an actor who is secure with Allen and will work a scene for his own benefit. He wants you to find things for yourself, but he will not leave you alone until you find something, and find it in depth. The insecure actor, who is worried about what Allen is thinking, tends to have a hard time. He tends to frighten people very much.⁶⁴

Patrick Hines described Fletcher as "the best actor's director in the business."⁶⁵ He spoke of Fletcher's directing in rather mysterious language.

⁶³Fletcher interview.

⁶⁴Sommer interview.

⁶⁵Hines interview.

He uses what the actor has and then he leads you gently into things you didn't know you could do. It doesn't seem like he's directing you, but he's there all the time. He knows where he wants it to go, but he lets it flower by itself. He is a very simple director, and things seem simple to do for him that are really difficult. He's not demanding. Things just sort of happen. I think one senses in him something that is deeply suffering, and that, somehow, releases you. He taps emotional resources in a gentle way. He gets you there quietly.⁶⁶

Carnovsky remembers Fletcher as "a quiet, well-mannered man with a kind of professorial bearing. He was often jovial but I always sensed there were frightening things boiling around inside of him."⁶⁷

Fletcher commented that his discussions with Carnovsky were "not intellectual in nature, nor would they have been comprehensible to someone outside the rehearsal process."⁶⁸

Morris tends to talk in images. These were very important to him. The image of Michelangelo's from the Sistine Chapel-- the figure looking out from one eye while his hand covered the other eye--was one of them. This was a very strong image for Morris. He told me about it immediately and I understood exactly what he meant. It was an image of universal despair which embodied his feelings about the play. He also had this image which I wouldn't permit visually on the stage, but I understood what he meant. He had this vision of a figure behind him all the time, a fate figure who was directing him, particularly in the first scene, who was keeping a record of everything he did. I knew what he meant by that. The man is driven by something in himself. We didn't discuss it in those terms, but it was there.⁶⁹

Carnovsky remarked to me that he had invented two pieces of business of which he was particularly proud. "In the mock trial scene on the heath after seeing imaginary figures of Goneril and Regan, I said the line, 'Now you she devils,' and looked at their imaginary

⁶⁶Hines interview.

⁶⁷Carnovsky interview.

⁶⁸Fletcher interview.

⁶⁹Ibid.

figures, and in revulsion I resorted to a gesture which came from Michelangelo's 'Last Judgement,' a gesture of ultimate despair in which I knelt with my eyes wide apart and put one hand over one of my eyes."⁷⁰ Another moment which became particularly important was when Lear first saw Tom o' Bedlam, Edgar in disguise. "Allen and I were trying to find the first moment when Lear's mind really snaps. We tried lots of things. In one rehearsal for some unknown reason it seemed to me that the moment had to be when Lear first sees Poor Tom. 'Is man no more than this?' When I saw him, I snapped my fingers, and that became the moment when my rational mind left me."⁷¹ Fletcher also commented that "The relationship with Tom was terribly important to Morris."⁷² It marked a turning place in the action. "Lear's anger at his daughters dissipated at a more general view of human misery. Psychologically, it was the trigger that let loose Lear's madness."⁷³ It was as if Tom had a contagious disease that Lear caught. "At that moment Lear begins to feel sympathy and brotherhood with all 'poor wretches.' 'Is man no more than this?'"⁷⁴

Patrick Hines felt Fletcher was most helpful in helping him to see the progression in Gloucester's despair and "his growing stoicism."

After the blinding scene, it is an actor's tendency to want to get very emotional about it all. Gloucester's anger, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods/ They kill us for their sport," and despair subsides after his attempted suicide at the imagined Dover Cliffs. It was very difficult for me to understand the kind of tragic resignation that consumes Gloucester after this strange experience at Dover. Allen showed me that there is a step beyond despair, an area of acceptance of life's horror which seems to protect human beings from too much heartbreak.⁷⁵

⁷⁰Carnovsky interview.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Fletcher interview.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Hines interview.

Hines remembers that some of the cast was worried that work on *Lear* was going too slowly and that the production may have been self-indulgent.

One has to trust Allen and his methods. I know some people feel that Allen's work is too slow. That's because he insists that actors fill their moments. But that's the only way you can get the kind of intensity and internal involvement that Allen wants. He never makes the actor feel the pressure of the whole play's pace and rhythm. When it works it's deep and full. Allen tends not to throw moments away. He wants you to take the time you need to do what you have to do. Actors thrive under him because he lets you take that time. By the time *Lear* opened after two months of school matinees, the play had found its natural rhythm. Too many directors worry about pace and rhythm too early and make the actors worry about "pace, energy, and rhythm." Those things should be the director's concern. If an actor is thinking about them he is not doing his job. Of course, Allen's way of working is difficult in the American theatre, where we normally have three weeks of rehearsal. Many of his shows open before they've evolved their natural rhythms.⁷⁶

Fletcher also feels *King Lear* was an important step in his creative development because it was the first time he worked successfully with a designer. "For the first time I found a designer who I thought was a brilliant artist -- Will Steven Armstrong. For the first time I began to have a rapport with a designer and I saw how the visual metaphor of the stage could reinforce what I wanted to do."⁷⁷ Armstrong, who had also been Stuart Vaughan's designer at the Phoenix, designed a simple production of *Lear* with a few desolate mobile pieces. The most interesting design element in the production was the costumes, which were an attempt to "create a period which was essentially outside time and national character."⁷⁸ Patrick Hines called the costumes

⁷⁶Hines interview.

⁷⁷Fletcher interview.

⁷⁸Ibid.

"vaguely Byzantine, unidentifiable, yet not overly fantastic."⁷⁹

Julius Novick described the setting in his review: "Will Steven Armstrong's settings consist mostly of skeletal pavilions, like soldered or welded sculpture, on movable platforms that can quickly be rearranged to suggest changes in locale. They are highly abstract . . . serviceable and atmospheric."⁸⁰

The following techniques can be observed from the preceding discussion of Fletcher's rehearsal techniques:

1. In King Lear, Fletcher conferred early with Morris Carnovsky and discussed their interpretation.
2. He used many specific ideas from Carnovsky and worked for a basic trust between actor and director.
3. He is reserved and intense. He creates an atmosphere which promotes introspection and personalization.
4. He works in detail for the "truth of emotion" and the logical progression of emotions within scenes and linking scenes.
5. He does not discuss the play in depth "at the table" but as the actors go along "on their feet." He does have a lot of discussion at that time.
6. He reads "around" the play a good deal. Psychology and history stimulate his thinking on the play.

⁷⁹Hines interview.

⁸⁰Julius Novick, "Theatre: 'Lear' at Stratford," Village Voice, June 7, 1963.

7. He used a longer than average rehearsal period.
8. He pre-blocks in his mind but doesn't tell the actors.
9. He creates circumstances in scenes so that the actors will voluntarily give him what he wants.
10. Fletcher allows the actors to work slowly, "filling their moments."

King Lear did not receive a unanimously positive critical response. Howard Taubman had reservations but recognized that the production was an important theatrical event:

The production directed by Allen Fletcher . . . thinks grandly and aims high. It attempts to do no less than prove that King Lear can be captured on the stage in large dramatic terms. It does not succeed in full because it lacks the heroic actors to match Shakespeare's setting. But who has them? It does accomplish more than do most versions of Lear. It has sweep and feeling, though it cracks under the burden of intensity expected of it. It is most successful in its pity and compassion . . . Morris Carnovsky's Lear dares to risk all in a try for grandeur. . . . In his first moments he is a Lear of touching humility. Mr. Carnovsky's Lear tears at the heart as he struggles between laughter and tears.⁸¹

Walter Kerr's description of Carnovsky and the production are particularly vivid and helpful in letting us imagine what the performance was like:

The first thing I admire about Allen Fletcher's production--and I admire virtually everything about it--is that there is a cause in nature for the furious carnival set before us, and it begins in the king himself.

Morris Carnovsky is the scowling, near-sighted, hard old man who sweeps in orange robes to the throne on which he dotes, there to deal out favors in precise proportion to the foolishness that is lavished on him, in the name of love. His nerves are no longer

⁸¹Walter Kerr, "'Lear' at Stratford," New York Herald Tribune, June 10, 1963.

steady. His fingers fumble at the forehead. The first sounds of senility betray themselves in the rumbling mutter that continues to come when others waste his time by speaking. But whatever the precipice he already leans over, he is clearly the man he has made himself. What he does now was determined long ago by the cast of his mind and the arrogance of his will. This is a good base to build on. Mr. Carnovsky builds on it erratically, at first roaring out at an inhospitable Goneril so wildly and prematurely that the role seems to stagger, then to grope for its own cumulative rhythm. But the pride and powerful hauteur are there to grab onto, and the actor seizes them and nurses them to a remarkable moment: one in which he is down on his knees and pretending to beg for kindness, but begging with such scorn and such mockery that his posture becomes a calculated insult to everyone in sight. The effect is regal, vicious, and incredibly right.

In the second half the actor pierces through the clamor he has been helping to make. He seems to pinpoint for himself in his mind's eye the intolerable small grievance he holds against the universe, and now he turns it over and over, coddling it, sustaining it, almost making love to it in his madness. By the time he is through, weary to death of his own cause, Mr. Carnovsky is firmly moving, more than any Lear I have seen.⁸²

Kerr seems to have caught precisely what Fletcher wanted to do. This review must have pleased the director greatly with its exact perception of his intention: "It makes the entire play possible Everything gathers to a fist, every savage bit of bloodletting falls into place as necessary counterpoint. And out of the gale of lust and reason and greed that stirs in every corner of the stage comes a new impression of what the play is about. It is not a play about a man who goes mad but about madness itself. . . . The wildness of the world comes from the wickedness of the world and is itself insane."⁸³

⁸² Howard Taubman, "Theatre: Carnovsky's Lear Opens Stratford, Conn.," New York Times, June 10, 1963.

⁸³ Kerr, "'Lear' at Stratford,"

A consistent picture of Allen Fletcher as a director emerges from his comments, actors' comments, and reviews of his productions. He is essentially an "actors' director" who works for emotional intensity and realism. He wants the audience to become involved with the characters as real people and to feel sympathetic toward them. He seems uninterested in theatrical styles of production, nor does he often use unrealistic theatrical devices. He does not impose his "look" on a play. He wants the audience to be unaware of the director's hand. His rehearsal techniques basically reflect these principles:

1. He does give the actor great freedom, but he also leads the actor into areas of emotional truth that he might not explore if left totally alone.
2. He uses most of Stanislavsky's techniques in rehearsal, especially given circumstances, personalization, slow working, and logic of emotion. However, he does not use improvisation of scenes outside the text. Nor does he ask the actors to share their private thinking with the cast.
3. There was little evidence in my research that Fletcher discussed Elizabethan staging principles with the cast of Lear, nor was the design concept "Elizabethan." However, his use of an essentially bare stage with a few moving set pieces did allow for Elizabethan "continuous action."
4. He works for depth of emotion and "realism" in the performance, exploring the psychological bases of the characters. Lear, from all newspaper accounts and comments of the actors, was a very emotionally moving experience.

Bernard Beckerman, in a review of the 1965 season at Stratford for the Shakespeare Quarterly, praised Carnovsky's Lear (in the revival of that year) for its "credibility" but also called it a "solo triumph rather than a company achievement." Beckerman went on to list two basic limitations to Fletcher's directing which may also be the limitations of a realistic, emotional, character-oriented approach to Shakespeare:

I do not sense an overriding vision that incorporated all elements of the production. In the first scene gesture and costume suggest the enactment of a primitive rite. Subsequently a scene here or there reminds us of the motif, but the production neither adheres to the initial concept nor draws illumination from its occasional use. . . . As in Coriolanus, the world surrounding Lear lacks distinction and vividness.

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. . . The intensive training that the Stratford company has undergone does not seem to stem from a full-blooded conviction. . . . This absence of conviction is evident in the other aspect of staging: theatrical invention.⁸⁴

Beckerman is raising important questions for those directors who work primarily for realism and truth of emotion. Interpretation--the selection of details which point to a clear "intellectual" meaning of a work of art--does not necessarily arise from finding the emotional truth of the characters. "Invention" and theatrical originality are perhaps naively assumed to be inferior qualities in a Shakespearean production. Beckerman seems to feel that part of the joy of Shakespeare is its admission of theatricality--a joy which a realistic approach may deny.

⁸⁴Bernard Beckerman, "The 1965 Season at Stratford, Connecticut," Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. XVI, 1965, p. 332.

Beckerman's observation of the lack of "conviction" in the Fletcher company at Stratford points up the unmistakable truth that his Shakespearean approaches lacked points of view which were original and therefore inherently exciting. However, Fletcher is not alone in this respect. Few of the directors interviewed in this dissertation have philosophically original approaches to modern production of Shakespeare. We have few Artauds, Brechts, or Brooks. Nor do our productions in general burn with the zeal of original, revolutionary theatrical ideas. Fletcher's lack of this quality may have seemed particularly flagrant during the 1960's when British Shakespeare as well as the American experimental theater seemed to have an intellectual freshness lacking in Allen Fletcher's productions of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER VI

WILLIAM BALL

William Ball, founder and general director of the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, is a colorful American director of Shakespeare. The theatricality of his productions, as well as his personality, his articulation of theatrical principles, and his unique conservatory organization, make him one of the more interesting figures in the American theatre.

A product of American universities, Ball was the recipient of several institutional grants including a Fulbright fellowship, a Ford grant, a Rockefeller grant, and an N.B.C.-R.C.A. fellowship. When he was directing off-Broadway in the early sixties, he received numerous prestigious awards. Six Characters in Search of an Author won for him the D'Annunzio, the Outer Circle Critics award, and the Obie award; Under Milk Wood won the D'Annunzio and Outer Circle Critics awards; Ivanov received an Obie as well as the Vernon Rice Desk award.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1931, William Ball attended Holy Family and Iona preparatory schools. He attended Fordham University (1950-51) and graduated from Carnegie Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Arts (1953) and Master of Fine Arts (1955). His first theatrical interest was in scenic and costume design before he turned to acting. At Carnegie Tech, Ball played leading roles

including Prince Hal, Orestes, Ariel, Claudio, Laertes, Dogberry, Trinculo, and Uncle Vanya. Harry Boetcher, then chairman of the drama department, employed Ball as a teaching assistant, and Ball taught acting and speech while still a student in the Master's program. He also directed several studio and mainstage productions including plays by Shakespeare, Chekhov, Moliere, Williams, Giraudoux, and Shaw.

While still a student at Carnegie Tech, Ball met Allen Fletcher during a summer at the Shakespeare Festival at Ashland, Oregon. Fletcher maintains that Ball was largely responsible for getting him a teaching position at Carnegie as a result of their acquaintance from Ashland.¹ Allen Fletcher remembers Bill Ball and Ellis Rabb, a classmate at the same time, as stand-out students who attracted a lot of attention.

They were the eccentrics, the obvious "geniuses." I remember Bill used to talk a lot about theatrical principles. He was very philosophical at that time about the theatre and also very romantic. Ellis used to talk about how he would in the future direct certain shows in certain ways. They were both impressive students and Henry Boetcher gave them a lot of freedom.²

Of Fletcher, Ball has said, "He is my great teacher. I studied with him at school and ever since."³ The Ball/Fletcher relationship has been a constant in both men's careers through the years.

In 1953-54, before obtaining his M.F.A. from Carnegie, Ball received a Fulbright fellowship to Great Britain. Like Stuart

¹William Ball interview, San Francisco, California, November 19, 1976.

²Allen Fletcher interview, San Francisco, California, November 20, 1976.

³Ball interview.

Vaughan, he did not stay in one school but travelled throughout Europe observing repertory and institutional theatres in France and Germany as well as England.

I visited something like forty-seven different theatres. I became acquainted with the financial and scheduling structures of different theatres. How they engaged people, what plays they did. I think that helped me tremendously because I was gathering information that would ultimately lead to the formation of this theatre [A.C.T.]. I also saw lots and lots of Shakespeare. Glen Byam Shaw was at Stratford Memorial with Michael Redgrave and Peggy Ashcroft. I remember particularly good productions of Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, and Antony and Cleopatra.⁴

In the late fifties, after graduating from Carnegie Tech, Ball spent four summers at the San Diego Shakespeare Festival, and most winters in New York City. Ball's first summer at the Old Globe was in 1955 and Allen Fletcher cast him as Hamlet. Fletcher remembers this as a very exciting performance, as does Peggy Kellner, long-time costumer and set designer at the Globe. "That was an amazing Hamlet. There was something absolutely electric about that performance. Everything he did seemed filled with so much energy and commitment. One always knew when in Bill Ball's presence that he was extraordinarily brilliant. You always felt this even if you didn't like him particularly."⁵

For Ball, the fifties were filled with acting jobs for directors whom he often did not admire. When he had the opportunity to become a director, he felt that he could do better than many of the men he had worked for as an actor.

⁴Ball interview.

⁵Peggy Kellner interview, Tucson, Arizona, December 10, 1976.

The switch to directing from acting came along about 1958 or '59. I was asked to direct a play more or less by mistake. There were these young producers who thought I had the rights to Chekhov's Ivanov. They came to see me and asked me what kind of a director they should look for. I then gave the long lecture on the necessary qualities of a Chekhovian director. I have always been a good talker and that impresses people, I guess. I wanted them . . . to understand that this play was a play of direct action while Chekhov usually wrote plays of indirect action. You have to have someone who understands this. So they went and talked over a lot of directors and came back to me, I guess because I talked so much and knew the play so intimately. So they asked me to do it. My feeling at the time was that I had seen so many directors wreck productions that I thought I could at least do as badly as they had done. . . . So, I gathered around me all the very best actors I could because I had no experience. So we had a brilliant cast and a wonderful time rehearsing it, and it was a glorious experience. And then I got more offers as a director than as an actor, so I just went in that direction.⁶

Ball feels that it was inevitable that he should become a director rather than an actor. "I think I always as an actor had too much energy going about how the part should be played or what the play meant; I think I always annoyed directors a little because I had very strong feelings about how it ought to be."⁷

During the summer of 1959, Ball returned to the Globe in San Diego and directed Henry IV, Part I, and also played Hal. Peggy Kellner remembers the production as a "traditional one in which Victor Buono played Falstaff for the first time." She recalls that the first time people at the Globe really became aware of Bill Ball's directing brilliance was his 1960 Julius Caesar. Ball himself called this his "favorite of the Globe productions. It was a black and white, Dutch Renaissance Julius Caesar. All the costumes were black with little white muslin cuffs and collars. It was sort of done

⁶Ball interview.

⁷Ibid.

in the style of Rembrandt's "Surgery Lesson," or the Dutch Masters' cigar picture with a wooden background. I liked that very much."⁸ According to Kellner, Ball's stage pictures were like Rembrandt's compositions. "Nobody moves people around a stage like Bill Ball or can make such beautiful stage pictures."⁹

Ball directed two other productions at the Globe, Twelfth Night in 1961 and Henry IV, Part II, in 1962. "I don't remember the Twelfth Night too well. For some reason I didn't think it worked too well. It was a kind of picture-book look at the play which I didn't think had much warmth."¹⁰ For Henry IV, Part II, Ball wrote a coronation scene in Latin to be inserted into the play. "I cut and rearranged everything in that play; I added a couple of bits and pieces from other plays, which was naughty but I think it worked. The critics didn't notice the addition of my scene. I also wrote a couple of lines which I thought helped out here and there."¹¹ Kellner remembers that for the coronation of Henry V, Ball had everyone on stage in red velvet. "He made me cut up and make costumes out of the theatre's draperies in order to fill that stage with red velvet. Henry's cape filled the entire stage when he walked up a ten-foot platform. It was really breathtaking. He had all the lower characters, including Falstaff, standing in the theatre where the groundlings would have been. The theatre was also filled with incense. It was a real extravaganza."¹²

Ball credits the productions at San Diego with helping him to formulate his ideas on Shakespeare, mentioning also his one summer at

⁸Ball interview.

⁹Kellner interview. ¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ball interview.

¹²Kellner interview.

Ashland and a Twelfth Night production he did for the Antioch Toledo Shakespeare Festival. He particularly admires Craig Noel at the San Diego Globe.

Of course Craig Noel is brilliant. He and Angus Bowmer of the Ashland Shakespeare Festival are two men who have dedicated their lives to the idea of a theatre as they saw it on their own terms. They worked tremendously hard with their sponsors and communities and gradually over the years they have built fine theatres. Craig has been there for 27 years and Angus for 37 years. But they built what they believed in and that's why their theatres have great vitality.¹³

The east coast did not see any of William Ball's productions of Shakespeare until he directed The Tempest in 1960 for the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut. The production featured a highly ornate masque scene with music composed by Lee Hoiby. The cast included Morris Carnovsky as Prospero, Joyce Ebert as Miranda, Clayton Corbet as Ariel, Earle Hyman as Caliban, Rae Allen as Ceres, and Sada Thompson as Juno. Brooks Atkinson in the New York Times felt the production was an indication that things had improved at the theatre on the Housatonic. He described Ball's production. "Ball staged this one on an uncluttered stage in terms of legend, masque, and poetry. . . . The masque scenes are gloriously costumed, staged, and performed."¹⁴

Walter Kerr's review of The Tempest voiced objections to the production which are similar to those critics would often raise against Ball's work in the next sixteen years. Principally he felt

¹³Ball interview.

¹⁴Brooks Atkinson, "Theatre: New 'Tempest,'" New York Times, June 20, 1960.

that the masque elements of the production made one forget the play's action. The masque was described as an ". . . onstage 'spectacular' which finds decorated wagons rolling in from all directions, slyly beaming suns descending from the heavens, and all manner of goddesses erupting in feather, tangerine headresses, corn shucks, and song. Indeed; the little concert has gone on so long that Mr. Carnovsky seems twice the fine actor he is for remembering the plot at all."¹⁵ Kerr's review gives us a vivid account of the design of the production:

Costume designer Robert Fletcher has ripped Rembrandt right off the canvas to provide official furbelows for the king of Naples and his entire entourage. He has dipped deep into the Restoration to find flare skirts and improbable coronets for the various muses who drop in to chat. He has matched these odd things up with some interesting snatches of early American paintings, including a full detachment of cigar store Indians, and made them all seem as though they all belonged in the same never-never land.¹⁶

For Kerr, Ball was a talented "visual" director who seemed to lose the dramatic tension and the point of the play in his mania for decoration.

A word, too, for director William Ball's flair for pictorial composition. Nary a moment goes by when the canvas isn't handsomely at rest. Miranda's clasped hands are suspended imploringly in mid air at stage right while Caliban pauses with one foot lowered into a smoky hell stage left, and between them Prospero stands with his staff frozen forever as a barrier between them. . . . But the music and the pictures and the postures, and the very mellow and meticulous rate of speech are at best nothing. They flow gently by, like a river that is not exactly Avon. . . . Even a gentle play needs punctuation to give it shape, and even the kindest of fantasies needs a touch of dramatic tension.¹⁷

¹⁵Walter Kerr, "'The Tempest' Is Presented by Shakespeare Festival," New York Herald Tribune, June 20, 1960.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

In 1965 Ball was invited to direct Tartuffe at the newly-founded Lincoln Center Repertory Company under Robert Whitehead and Elia Kazan. Ball's Tartuffe was one of the few well-received productions of that ill-fated company, which was then located on Washington Square. Ball's stylish handling of the French classic sharply contrasted with Kazan's disastrous production of The Changeling, which had been approached as a piece of psychological realism. Tartuffe, while not universally admired, was unmistakably daring in its broad theatricality.

Tartuffe opened January 14, 1965, immediately after Robert Whitehead had been dismissed as head of the company. Ironically, Tartuffe was thought by many critics to be the company's best classical work to date. John McClain called the production "the happiest event yet in the two-season history of the company."¹⁸ Richard Watts, Jr., thought it "the highest achievement in degree of imagination, styles, and taste it [Lincoln Center] has yet displayed."¹⁹ Martin Gottfried admired the actors Ball had brought into the company, including Michael O'Sullivan, Sada Thompson, Joyce Ebert, and Paul Shenar. "William Ball is responsible for the treat. He has staged Tartuffe with a royal feeling for words, for movement, and more than anything else for the stage."²⁰ Michael Smith in the Village Voice felt that with Tartuffe the company ". . . does

¹⁸John McClain, "'Tartuffe,' A Rollicking Big Romp; Best Yet for Lincoln Center," Daily News, January 15, 1965.

¹⁹Richard Watts, Jr., "Notable Production of 'Tartuffe,'" New York Post, January 15, 1965.

²⁰Martin Gottfried, "Theatre," Women's Wear Daily, January 19, 1965.

its first good work. . . . Ball does not merely keep the actors moving but uses their movements to comment upon the words, to make a series of verbal-visual puns that flow together as convincingly as the writing itself. The stage picture is prettily composed at almost every moment--something that most contemporary directors apparently forget altogether."²¹ This production was an important one for Ball. It indisputably raised him into the top rank of American directors. He had succeeded where Kazan, the most important American director of the fifties, had failed. He had successfully directed a classic with an American cast.

Ball was not praised universally. Once more Walter Kerr criticized Ball's "pictorial" bent: "Mr. Ball is so preoccupied with the creation of pretty genre paintings on the stage . . . that he quite forgets what is truly doltish and deeply amusing about the family Tartuffe preys upon. Always we are offered charming groupings in the half-light--with mothers and babies and lutes arranged near the piano-forte, when it is the vast and stubborn idiocy of the victims we . . . ought to be noticing."²²

A musical sensitivity has also often been cited as a quality of Ball's directing. He directed numerous productions of operas for the New York City Opera Company. His sensitivity to music-drama earned him praise in productions of Don Giovanni (1963), Benjamin Britten's Midsummer Night's Dream (1963), Porgy and Bess (1961), The

²¹Michael Smith, "Theatre: 'Tartuffe,'" Village Voice, January 21, 1965.

²²Walter Kerr, "'Tartuffe' As Seen by Walter Kerr," New York Herald Tribune, January 15, 1965.

Inspector General (1960), Così Fan Tutte (1959), and Six Characters in Search of an Author (1959). Ball's stagings of plays have sometimes been called operatic. His experiences in opera may have contributed to this tendency as well as his desire to make the drama a "total theatre" experience, employing music and grand gestures.

The major goal of William Ball's life seems to have been the formation of his own theatre, a dream which materialized in 1965 when he formed and planned the first season of the American Conservatory Theatre, which found its first home at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Ball later left Pittsburgh for San Francisco when the Board of Directors at the Pittsburgh refused to give Ball his total artistic control. After playing seasons in Chicago and Palo Alto, California, the American Conservatory Theatre found its permanent home in San Francisco when the city promised the theatre \$200,000 yearly to support it.

The American Conservatory Theatre under Bill Ball opened its first San Francisco season January 21, 1967, mounting some sixteen productions in twenty-two weeks, playing at both the Geary theatre and the Marines Memorial theatre. It played in repertory and it also created an acting conservatory.

Actor Rene Auberjonois, a member of the early A.C.T. Company, in an interview, spoke of those days.

A.C.T., in the beginning, was the most exhilarating and totally exhausting experience I had ever been involved with as an actor. I think we just kept going out of an energy which Bill Ball magically instilled in us. It was just plain crazy. All that travelling in the beginning. All those shows. Sometimes I couldn't remember what show I was supposed to do

that night. For me the exhilaration was fantastic, but my physical collapse after a year of that was almost total. It was like coming off some incredible drug experience.²³

From 1967 to 1976 Ball directed twenty-one productions for A.C.T. Among the first were Tartuffe, Six Characters in Search of an Author, Under Milk Wood, Tiny Alice, and King Lear. They were followed by Twelfth Night, The American Dream, Hamlet, Oedipus Rex, Three Sisters, The Tempest, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Caesar and Cleopatra, The Contractor, Cyrano de Bergerac, The Crucible, The Taming of the Shrew, The Cherry Orchard, Richard III, Jumpers, and Equus.

Some discussion should be given to Ball's productions of Shakespeare for A.C.T. The first was King Lear, in which Rene Auberjonois played Lear in a much cut two-hour version. "Characters like Oswald, Kent, Albany, were all cut. The production concentrated on movement, costumes, choreography. The whole was like some primitive Greek ritual. I wore a long fur cape that covered the stage. Bill wanted to take a very dynamic approach to the play. We were hardly characters at all. It was conceived like an elaborate dance. I remember we used an elaborate electronic score and the movements were all very stylized."²⁴ This writer has not been able to find any reviews of that particular production. It was conceived while the company was in Pittsburgh and seems to have been taken out of the repertory soon after it left there.

²³ Rene Auberjonois interview, New York City, December 14, 1976.

²⁴ Stuart Wurtzel interview, New York City, December 11, 1976.

Ball's second Shakespeare production for A.C.T. was his Twelfth Night. The cast included Ken Ruta as Malvolio, Ellen Geer as Viola, Carol Mayo Jenkins as Olivia, Paul Shenar as Orsino, Harry Frazier as Toby Belch, and Philip Kerr as Aguecheek. Stuart Wurtzel, who designed it and was the resident designer for A.C.T.'s first three years, recalled, "It was a very pretty production. Everything was pink and baby blue. The costumes were done in the cavalier period. Everything looked like a painting by Boucher or Fragonard. White lace trimmed everything. Nothing was real or substantial. All was artifice."²⁵

Philip Kerr saw the same artifice in the acting:

Bill made us rehearse that play like we were doing an opera. We rehearsed from music stands and he was very insistent that we obey the scansion, come in with our lines on top of each other, and "sing" the lines. The characters were all two-dimensional. I remember he wanted us all to say the name "Illyria" in a strange way. When Viola asked the ship captain where they have landed, Bill had the captain say, "In E-LEEEEEEEEE-REA, lady," elongating the e sounds in a high-pitched, sung way. It was very strange and had an unearthly effect.²⁶

Nagle Jackson, the assistant to Ball who later put in the second cast, also spoke of this production. "I thought it was stunning but cold and inhuman."²⁷

Hamlet, produced in the spring of 1969, featured Paul Shenar as Hamlet, Izetta Smith as Ophelia, Ray Reinhardt as Claudius, and

²⁵Stuart Wurtzel interview, New York City, December 11, 1976.

²⁶Philip Kerr interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

²⁷Nagle Jackson interview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 6, 1976.

Angela Paton as Gertrude. I was in San Francisco auditioning for A.C.T.'s summer training congress and saw it in preview shortly before it opened. My impression was that it was romantic and rich-looking. I remember a very large court dressed in shimmering gold. Most of what I recall are visual effects. When Hamlet shouted "The play's the thing/wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king," he took off a very long black cape, lined in red and threw it at the throne. The cape fell perfectly in such a way that it covered the throne with its red lining. It looked for a moment as if the throne were bleeding. I also remember the very spectacular entrance of the players--quite a large company--and they performed acrobatics and wonderful physical feats. One stunning effect occurred during Ophelia's mad scene, when large streamers of willow branches and leaves floated onto the stage while Ophelia ran distractedly through them.

Clive Barnes saw the production in San Francisco and sent a negative review back to the New York Times:

Mr. Ball is clearly an inventive director, and he is not above imagining that he knows more about Hamlet than did Shakespeare. He cuts, he merges, he twists, and once in a while he adds. And the production moved in this manner was not so much fast as furious, and had an air of antic, frantic affectation about it, in the deplorable old Tyrone Guthrie tradition, when anything was good for a laugh or a thrill. . . . He doesn't appear to have any particular view of Hamlet. It is not played as a part of the Elizabethan world picture, it is not Hamlet our contemporary, it is not an out-and-out theatrical Hamlet, it is certainly not a scholar's Hamlet . . . and the final impression is that the production was intended more to fill a hole in the repertory than a void in the director's heart.²⁸

²⁸ Clive Barnes, "Frantic 'Hamlet': A Guthrie-Like Staging Used On Coast," New York Times, June 9, 1969.

Barnes went on to compliment the physical skills of the actors, saying they "are in much better shape than most American actors." He also found the duel between Hamlet and Laertes to be "the best staged I have ever seen."²⁹

The Tempest, staged in 1971, occurred during a time when the company was riddled with factions and internal strife. Ken Ruta, who played Prospero, told me that these troubles seemed to filter into the rehearsal process. "I don't know why, because we had all looked forward to working with Bill on The Tempest. . . . I cannot remember a time when he was less receptive to the actors. For the first time I remember actors openly refusing to do certain effects that he asked for."³⁰ Suzanne Collins, a journeyman at the time, affirms that the rehearsals were filled with tension. "Bill wanted very operatic effects in The Tempest. I remember he wanted me to sing some line in a strange way and I must say it was bizarre. I was always terrified of him. And I felt he really didn't care about what I might contribute to the production."³¹

The most successful Shakespearean production which Ball has staged for A.C.T. is undoubtedly The Taming of the Shrew in 1973. Since Ball has called this his best production to date, it will be dealt with in a later section of this chapter and discussed in detail.

In the 1974-75 season, Ball directed Richard III with Randall Duc Kim as Richard. "I did it as an oriental fairy tale using

²⁹Barnes, "Frantic 'Hamlet:' . . ."

³⁰Ken Ruta interview, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 19, 1976.

³¹Suzanne Collins interview, New York, New York, July 20, 1976.

oriental theatre and dance techniques in the battle scenes."³² In Ball's version, Richard was an evil oriental king dressed in black, while Richmond, the deliverer of good, was Caucasian and scantily clad in a white dance belt. "I did it that way," said Ball, "because it is a story of good and evil forces."³³ William Hogan in the San Francisco Chronicle called the production "Outrageous Melodrama." He found Ball's production "dashing," and further stated that "Despite a good deal of Shakespearean shouting and gesturing, this is only a daring, risk-taking rendition in which the company seems to be having a wonderful time in an unsubtle play."³⁴ It was recognized that Ball had radically cut the play and the action of the second half was cinematically telescoped so that the entire evening only played two hours. Richard III is one of Shakespeare's longer history plays and in an uncut version usually runs near to four hours.

The review of Ball's creative history has revealed certain influences on him and recurring qualities.

1. The years at Carnegie Institute of Technology were formative. Ball has named Allen Fletcher as his "master" teacher.
2. Ball seems to have been influenced by European repertory theatres in his desire to establish an American Conservatory Theatre. His education and travel, and his experience in Shakespearean Festivals, gave him a wide background in "classical" theatre.

³²Ball interview.

³³Ibid.

³⁴William Hogan, "Outrageous Melodrama," San Francisco Chronicle, October 14, 1974.

3. Ball began his studies at Carnegie-Tech as a designer. His aptitude for visual design has influenced his directing.
4. There seems to have been some cross fertilization from Ball's experience in operatic theatre in his Shakespearean directing. In many productions he has asked actors to "sing" their lines.
5. Ball is noted for strong pictorial groupings of actors and his theatrical visual flair. His productions have sometimes resembled masques. He likes simple platform sets and large numbers of actors in elaborate and striking costumes. He is also known for his vigorous movement of actors around the stage.
6. Ball has often radically edited Shakespeare's plays, cutting but also rearranging and adding lines from other plays. He has occasionally written new lines for Shakespeare.
7. There seems to be a little difference in the kinds of productions Ball did early in his career and those which have more recently been done at A.C.T. There may be some difference in what Kerr described as the "meticulous rate" of The Tempest (1960) and the freneticism of The Taming of the Shrew (1973).

Talking to William Ball makes one aware of his capacity to speak eloquently and inspirationally. Surely one of his greatest gifts is the rhapsodic quality of his discourse, which sometimes contains more emotion than careful thought. However, of all the directors interviewed for this dissertation, he is the one most prone to making statements of theatrical principle and aesthetics. His

principles of directing constitute an aesthetic approach to the theatre which may be identified as individualistic.

When asked to discuss Shakespeare's vision of the world, Ball thought for a moment and then delivered the following panegyric.

The human being is the champion of the universe. The human being, in his most demonstrative, most vital, most lucid expression, is the glory of humanity. It was a Renaissance world he wrote in, it was a world that was discovering itself with openness and wonder and muscle and vitality. Shakespeare is perhaps the greatest single person in all western culture. Who else is there? Jesus Christ and Michelangelo. After that they all get lesser and lesser. To be near him is comforting because it's like walking with a giant.

He loved life and he understood that the universe is one, and that all the forces that flow in it, no matter how disparate, no matter how different and vital they may be--they all flow in consonance and harmony, and he sang that with such tremendous vitality that it's an example for human beings. If you read the works of Shakespeare your sense of wonder leaps and, if one person does it, then it can be done again. If we didn't have Shakespeare, we would wonder what the outside boundaries of the human language were, but he drove it to maximum and there left us a place where we can all aspire.³⁵

William Ball uses words romantically. His vocabulary is excessive and he speaks in superlatives. His favorite words seem to be "champions," "vital," "wonder," "glory," "greatest," "giant," and "aspire." When he speaks these words, his eyes become glazed and his hands gesture impressively. There is something "religious" in the way he speaks about Shakespeare and the theatre.

Writing specifically about his principles of directing Shakespeare at San Diego, Ball once expressed himself in an essay entitled, "Give the Audience a Chance," first printed in Theatre Arts,

³⁵Ball interview.

August, 1961, and later reprinted in Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy's

Directors on Directing:

A new production of Shakespeare is often treated like oleo-margarine--it is proclaimed to be better than the real thing; it is packaged in excessively ornate, easily recognizable design (derived in the main from homespun American culture or repressed sexual drives); it is brought into focus by cliches and snappy slogans aimed at the coddled average American mentality; and the final coup: the gimmick is calculated, if all else fails, to rescue the supposedly inferior product and bludgeon the naive consumer into a dazed conviction that the pretty girl on the package does in fact make the contents more palatable. . . . To stimulate his own tired palate and the palates of those he considers his audience, the director hunts among the sauces and the spices for a new recipe. . . . Recently two phrases from Shakespeare--"Lend me your ears!" and "On your imaginary forces work"--have most strongly influenced my work at the San Diego Shakespeare Festival. An audience's perception of Shakespeare is often muddled by an overloading of visual effect.³⁶

This essay, written before Ball's Shakespeare productions at A.C.T., is interesting in that it seems to condemn the kind of overly-decorative Shakespeare that he himself has sometimes produced at A.C.T. He has maintained his interest in the "sound of the language," but has often substituted visual effects for audience involvement with the play's content.

Looking back at this essay, in which he had condemned time and locale transplants of Shakespeare, Ball commented in his interview with me,

I don't know that I really completely agree any longer with that thing I wrote in Directors on Directing. You know, the one about not liking souped-up Shakespeare. I mean, there have been wonderful productions because people have taken imaginative sidetracks with the plays. Troilus and Cressida under Guthrie was very beautiful. And that his production of The Alchemist done in contemporary, mod England. Since I wrote

³⁶ William Ball, "William Ball," Directors on Directing, ed. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 429-430.

that article I do believe it's possible to do wonderful, glorious, imaginative productions by transposing, but you have to be brilliant at it. Everyone seems to think I've done it with The Taming of the Shrew but I don't think I have.³⁷

For William Ball it doesn't matter what period one puts the play in or what locale. "The most important thing is that you keep the cadence coming--every beat: da dum da dum da dum da dum da dum. Don't take any pauses for effects or glances or anything. Just keep the iambic pentameter going. If you do that and cut most of the lines which are obscure, or don't further the action, you'll be all right. Cut for maximum clarity and flow."³⁸ The lack of pauses in Ball's Shakespeare is partly to aid the accumulative power of the iambic pentameter and partly to facilitate a short running time for the plays. "I hate plays which are longer than two hours and ten minutes. I get bored easily in the theatre; maybe that's why I've started cutting Shakespeare so much and playing with so few pauses. I don't know, I just think one ought to get on with it. I think audiences are bored easily too."³⁹ Ball feels that the actor must speak rapidly to keep up with Shakespeare's rate of thought.

You gradually get the idea when you see a successful performance that it works when it's moving rapidly--and when the actors are staying just slightly ahead of the audience, and when the actors are being pulled forward by the character. You see, actors have a tendency to sit down on their characters too frequently in Shakespeare; as an actor would say, to make himself comfortable in the part. To do this he will take a role at a speed which is comfortable. If an actor is comfortable in Shakespeare, he is probably going too slowly. He must always be falling forward, off balance. He must always be being drawn through the language by the playwright. He must always feel that he is moving more rapidly than he wishes he would have to. He should always feel that he is not quite ready

³⁷ Ball interview.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

to say what he's about to say, and has to rush his mind in order to say what's in the script. You have to think very rapidly in order to keep up with the minds of Shakespeare's characters.⁴⁰

This involvement with the rate at which the plays are performed suggests that Ball is a kind of musical conductor. Many of his analogies concerning acting, as well as his vocabulary, are drawn from music. The director credits his mother with having instilled in him a musical sensitivity in his early childhood, and admits that he sometimes wishes Shakespeare's plays were notated as music and that he could conduct them from a podium.

I think of the plays as music. From the moment the curtain goes up until the applause . . . it's a question of musical experience. The emotions can be more strongly awakened by the ear than by the eye. The eyes have only about eleven percent power. The ear has eighty-seven percent power to awaken the emotions. If you see a picture of a baby crying, it doesn't upset you very much, but if you hear a baby crying in the next room, you can only stand it for a short while. Our eyes--they're busy systems--discerning danger or help. The ears are not that busy. The thing that moves you in the theatre is the tone of the actor's voice, not the way he looks. It is usually not their gesture but how they sound that draws you in.⁴¹

Ball, of course, is also a highly visual director and admits that he gets many of his effects from painting. He is famous for keeping large files of pictures from magazines and reproductions of paintings from which he will get ideas. Stuart Wurtzel says, "Almost every production I ever worked on with Bill, he gave me pictures of things he wanted."⁴² Ball is keenly aware of all the sensual elements of the theatre and controls them carefully in his productions. He

⁴⁰Ball interview.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Wurtzel interview.

believes intensely in what he calls "the general beauty" of a production, a term he says he got from Michael Chekhov. "All plays are music and painting. I mean, all you're dealing with is time, space, and sound."⁴³

His involvement with the externals of a production has earned him a reputation for being anti-method. He insists that he uses Stanislavsky's techniques. "To act is to use Stanislavsky. I mean, there's no other way,"⁴⁴ but he does see himself as an opponent of the exclusively internal concerns which typified the American method which dominated the New York theatre of the fifties.

New York is still dominated by the method. I hate the way internal, psychological concerns constrict New York actors. New York actors have tremendous strictures. You can see it the minute they walk through the door for the interview. They lock their arms across their bodies, and they furl their faces, and they lock themselves up in their legs and feet. It frequently takes them ten or fifteen minutes to open up and respond. But that's what the New York theatre has taught them.⁴⁵

Ball's concern with the externals of acting technique, as well as his revolt against the method, began at the same time that the Shakespeare festivals were beginning to hire actors capable of acting Shakespeare, the period described in this dissertation.

There has certainly been an evolving ability of American actors to handle Shakespeare. When I first started it was wicked. There were very few actors who could do it, and they were being intimidated by the Actors' Studio, who were constantly saying that they were imitating English actors and that they were being phoney--which, of course, was untrue. The Actors' Studio took no interest whatever in the actor's ability to do the classics, in techniques for the classics. You can't play Shakespeare in the Actors' Studio manner. You would shoot yourself.⁴⁶

⁴³Ball interview.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

The Shakespeare festivals, Ball feels, were greatly responsible for breaking up New York's method monopoly on theatrical thinking in this country. The rise of the regional theatres also contributed to this in their need for actors capable of playing in different styles, and of these Ball's theatre is certainly one of the foremost.

For Ball, Shakespeare is best produced in a repertory ensemble theatre which has an acting conservatory attached to it. He feels these three constituents, (1) repertory, (2) ensemble, and (3) conservatory, are essentials to excellence in Shakespeare as well as other classical writers.

The idea of the American Conservatory Theatre was to create a theatre which allowed the actors to be in training while they acted in the most demanding world dramatic literature. Ball wanted actors who were secure enough within an ensemble to trust one another and to develop an individual style.

Ken Ruta, who spent five years at A.C.T., feels that the repertory system is the only creative system available to an actor. "You simply can't keep a role fresh by playing it every night."⁴⁷ Ball insists, "Actors must be constantly stimulated by new challenges. Only repertory allows that sort of stimulation and challenge."⁴⁸

Why ensemble? "You have to have a group of actors who get to know each other well enough to trust one another, who learn each other's strengths and weaknesses and become a family. I want to

⁴⁷Ruta interview.

⁴⁸Ball interview.

have a theatre that has its own personality. You can't get that constantly jobbing in strangers."⁴⁹

The conservatory attached to A.C.T. is perhaps its most unique feature. "This is an unprecedented kind of theatre. It's the only theatre in the country that does such a broad range of plays, and all the while the company is in training. I teach as well as direct."⁵⁰

Ball's original idea for the conservatory was that all of his actors would take classes every day. This idea has been somewhat tempered in recent years; some of the actors have resisted this "post-graduate" training. But the conservatory is very much alive with many permanent members of the company teaching younger acting students and journeymen who aspire to the company. At any given moment the acting company in its lower ranks is filled with graduates of the conservatory acting program, guaranteeing a consistent approach and acting skills which give A.C.T.'s productions a stylistic unity.

Part of the raison d'etre for the conservatory grew out of Ball's frustration with the New York commercial theatre.

As a director in New York I found myself working with casts who were 80% strangers. You get to know their work during the rehearsal period and that's an artistic investment. Then you leave the actors in a long run of that show and go on to another--with the result that you're always working with strangers. I found that I spent a great deal of rehearsal time teaching these strangers basic acting techniques. For

⁴⁹Ball interview.

⁵⁰Judy Stone, "The Right to Fail--and to Succeed," New York Times, May 7, 1967.

instance, at Lincoln Center I had to teach three actors who were very experienced performers how to do a double-take; they didn't know how to do it and they didn't know why it was funny. I didn't mind teaching them, but I didn't want to continue teaching basic techniques to one strange cast after another. I thought how wonderful it would be to teach a cast once, and then we might go on to something more sophisticated than double-takes.⁵¹

In 1969, my wife and I attended the A.C.T. Summer Training Congress where we took classes for two months. Five days a week for eight weeks (from 10 A.M. until 4 P.M.) we took classes in voice, speech, acting, mime, African dance, ballet, commedia techniques, stage movement, theatre games, sight reading, phonetics, rhetoric, and scansion. There was a variety and eclecticism to the classes. Ball seems to want to experiment constantly with new techniques.

Shakespeare is specifically served through the scansion and rhetoric classes. Also, scenes from Shakespeare as well as monologues and soliloquies are standard fare at the school in the acting classes.

Ball himself delivers lectures on scansion and then has assistants drill the students in the techniques. Scansion is the technique whereby actors analyze the iambic pentameter verse of Shakespeare, looking particularly for variations in the rhythm which Ball feels are sign posts to actors as to the way the lines were intended to be read. For instance, short lines such as Hamlet's "O vengeance" need the vowel sounds to be held long enough to last the time that a regular line of iambic pentameter would take.

O V E N G E A N C E !
1 2 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

⁵¹Quoted in "Backstage Newsletter," A.C.T. #3, May 1968.

Half lines ending the speech of one character and finished by another character beginning his speech need to be accomplished quickly as if they were one continuous line. In other words, the cues must be quickly picked up, as in this example from Macbeth:

Did not you speak?
 When?
 Now.
 As I descended?

Ay.
 Hark!

Scansion, of course, tells what words to stress in a line. "Always use regular iambic pentameter if you possibly can,"⁵² is Ball's dictum.

According to Ball, scansion can also give us clues into character and even produce emotional responses in the actor. I remember Ball illustrating with a speech in King Lear how the destruction of the iambic pentameter in Lear's speech mirrors the collapse of Lear's rational mind.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs. (3)

Though women all above; (3)

But to the girdle do the gods inherit, (5)

Beneath is all the fiends'; (3)

There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit, (5)

Burning scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! (7)

⁵²Ball interview.

u l / u u / u l u / u l u l u
 pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, (7)
 / u / u l u l u u l u u /
 Sweeten my imagination. There's money for thee.

When Ball read these lines for us, his pounding out of the irregular stresses evoked emotions in all the listeners as well as in himself. We tried this technique and found it to work.

Rhetoric is another class directly related to Shakespearean acting. Rhetoric, in A.C.T. terms, is a technique using mounting, or rising inflections to create excitement and emotion with a speech. First we were asked to sing scales, then speak scales, using rising inflections. Finally, we were given speeches from Shakespeare--one from Julius Caesar ("Wherefore rejoice? What conquests brings he home?") and Paulina's "What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?" from The Winter's Tale. We were asked to structure the speeches, progressively rising to higher inflections, until the speeches came to pitch and volume climaxes somewhere near the ends of the speeches. We were not allowed to take pauses but encouraged to increase our tempo as pitch and volume increased. The effects were often quite theatrical if bombastic at times. I have recognized this technique in all of Ball's productions of Shakespeare that I have seen. His Petruchio in Shrew uses a rhetorical build in his soliloquy beginning "Thus have I politically begun my reign." It is a model of the technique we were taught in class. It draws on the skills learned in other classes--particularly voice work--which tries to help you increase your vocal range, resonance, and power without increasing throat tension.

One course not taught while I was at A.C.T. is one Ball himself teaches in "Heroics." This course uses material from Shakespeare and the Greeks in an attempt to get actors trained in the naturalistic theatre to be "bigger than life."

Essentially it's getting a piece of heroic, rhetorical material and making it just as big as it can possibly be. The actor makes it big without feeling it, without any kind of personal involvement. It's usually so big that it is frightening to him. Then later he fills it with feeling. Now when those two things come together again, when the actor feels himself experiencing the largeness of the material, he's usually astonished because he has never been that big before. Once he has been that big and heroic and witnessed his power, he can always explode with size on the stage. Usually an actor is going to be picayune until someone encourages him to be a giant.⁵³

Ball's desire to see "giants on stage" is a constant refrain in his statements. "I want to see champions on stage. I've seen enough ordinary actors in my life." Ron Bausson, a classmate of mine at A.C.T. who later graduated into the company and was a member of it for three years, has stated, "One hears that word 'champion' from Bill so often that it loses its meaning. Also, you begin to feel like an athlete or a prize race horse."⁵⁴

One recognizes in Ball's desire for the "heroic" a desire to transcend what Michel St. Denis once called "the mud of naturalism." He sees Shakespeare's characters in a grandeur and size which he feels are not served by a limited, realistic, and internal approach to acting.

My feeling is that God didn't, or my parents didn't, or my school didn't, give me the wit of Hamlet, or the passion of Macbeth, or the resentment of King Richard; most of us have very modest lives, but one look at the words these chaps use

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ron Bausson interview, Costa Mesa, California, December 9, 1976.

shows them to be much more expressive men than we are. Our range of expression tends to be polite, modest, fretful, and somewhat frightened--certainly constrained in vocal and physical expression. We are not inclined to "roar" as often as they do. Something has to be done with the actor to increase his vocabulary of expression so that he can find "roars" within him. An actor has all sorts of expressive devices at his command-- jubilation, violence, roars, groans, and giggles that he never uses in the daily vocabulary of conventional behavior."⁵⁵

One of the most memorable classes at A.C.T. was a lecture which Ball delivered on his philosophy of "positionation." He began by eliciting from the audience a series of cliches and metaphors for the concept of "up." Things that make us feel happy are "uppers:" "high as the sky," "over the rainbow," "hitch your wagon to a star," "shoot for the sky." Things that are negative are "downers" and suggest death: "down in the dumps," "under the ground," "down at heels," "underwater." Ball maintains that creative work can only be achieved in a positive, uncritical atmosphere. "Achievements are always in the ascendant and defeat in the form of falling."⁵⁶ Ball's concept of "up" relates to the way he likes speeches to have upward inflection, bodies to have uplifted postures, and the way actors view their work and that of their fellow actors.

I had been in the theatre for about eight years, and I had directed and acted in a number of productions, and I had been in several festivals, and I had seen theatres with great energy being torn apart by internal factions and criticisms and fights. People putting each other down, criticizing each other's performances, even whole theatres falling apart because people took sides, and my feeling became that we could get nowhere while there was such an ocean of negation in the theatre. The condition of the theatre at A.C.T. is to take some sort of active step, not just to observe this negativity, but to make

⁵⁵Ball interview.

⁵⁶Quoted in Judy Stone, "The Right to Fail--and to Succeed."

some sort of frontal attack on it. We say it is below standard for us. You see, negativity leads to what I call lateral motion, from side to side like ping pong. And it's wasted energy. You have to have everyone in a theatre going in the same direction, the same as on a ship. If you get everyone's cooperation you'll be in better shape. Actors don't want to be surrounded by criticism and negativity. As soon as you free them from that, they're thrilled. You say, "From now on, it's yes all the way." They test it for three or four days to see if it's going to work and then they find they're in a happy garden. This creates security. You feel good if no one's going to criticize you. No matter what you do, no one belittles you. When you have positive reinforcement all around you, the likelihood is that you let your more secret thoughts and intuitive ideas flow easily.⁵⁷

"Positation" at first seems like a healthy philosophy for a theatre. Ron Bausson points out that in spite of all the public praise one receives from Ball and fellow actors, there is a vague sense of fear at A.C.T.

Partly it's because you never know if you're going to get good parts or be rehired. All you ever get is positive reinforcement, so you never know how you're really doing in the eyes of the powers that be. Also, you always feel that big decisions are made behind your back at A.C.T. There seem to be secrets everywhere and the walls have ears. I imagine it's a little like living in a police state where on the surface everything is positive and beautiful and "officially" hunky dory, while people are carried off screaming in the middle of the night.⁵⁸

For Ball "positation" is a policy which encourages actors to work with their optimum energy, a commodity prized and demanded by him. He has stated of his actors, "They're all so energetic. They're like spring colts. I hire them for that quality."⁵⁹ Along with energetic actors, he demands actors who are totally dedicated to A.C.T. and the theatre. He believes in keeping actors extremely busy. "Actors

⁵⁷Ball interview.

⁵⁸Bausson interview.

⁵⁹Ball interview.

are only happy when they are busy. I engage actors who love the theatre more than anything else, and they long to act. Having a busy schedule for them means fulfillment. They're being used, they're being witnessed. Their validity as human beings is being reinforced."⁶⁰ When asked if his actors have time for personal lives, he replied, "I don't take all their time. But their personal lives tend to involve each other since they see each other every day."⁶¹ Ron Bausson feels that the actors at A.C.T. are so busy that

. . . they don't even have time to get to know each other. Of course, I don't think Bill Ball has any real personal life so he doesn't see any need for it in others. Sometimes I would go to my mirror in the dressing room at the Geary, exhausted from rehearsing and teaching all day, and sit there dreading going on, not knowing where my energy would come from for the show and feeling that I knew no one around me. It's really a very large and impersonal place where everyone is kept very busy.⁶²

Ken Ruta affirms this view of A.C.T.

Sometimes an actor needs to be alone with himself--to get away from the theatre. Ball has even tried to organize that, with his meditation room. But he really doesn't want actors to have separate, independent lives. An actor must have time to rest and think and feel. Or else he has nothing to take back to the theatre.⁶³

Ball demands a great deal from his actors and most of them find they cannot keep up his pace for more than three years. "Most people last two or three years and then have to leave because they're exhausted."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ball interview.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Bausson interview.

⁶³ Ruta interview.

⁶⁴ Bausson interview.

For the director of A.C.T., the theatre demands energetic and religious dedication from its disciples. "The theatre is a ritual . . . a unique ritual, a very old one, and it has strong ties to the 'let's pretend' games of our earliest years. In some ways it is the closest we get to the fantasy and play of childhood."⁶⁵ The theatre should also serve as a positive experience which encourages us as human beings. "The experience should remind us of our own potential as human beings and restore our faith in the finest of our aspirations."⁶⁶ The communal nature of theatre is also important to Ball as well as a general belief in "beauty":

The theatre ought to provide us with tangible evidence that when people work together with understanding and mutual respect, it is possible to create something of beauty. We have always needed beauty and it seems to me that the need may be greater than ever before. . . . Our society must commit itself to the creation and preservation of beauty if we are to avoid despair. We need the theatre as a forum where we reaffirm communally our potential for strength and joy and wonder, our indomitability.⁶⁷

The messianic tone of William Ball makes it quite clear that above all he considers the "beauty" of theatre to embody a spiritual purpose. Ball sounds like a dispossessed priest who, having lost his church, makes the theatre his temple.

From the previous discussion, Ball's principles of directing may be set forth as follows:

⁶⁵ William Ball, "Director on the Stage," San Francisco Examiner, October 17, 1973.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

1. According to Ball, Shakespeare believed that "the human being is the champion of the universe."
2. For Ball, the most important aspect of a Shakespearean production is the rhythm and uninterrupted flow of the iambic pentameter.
3. A production of Shakespeare must maintain a fast rate of speech and action. This rate adds to the musical exhilaration of the production and allows the audience to get out of the theatre in about two hours running time.
4. Plays are music and make their primary effects through sound.
5. Plays are also painting.
6. While Ball appreciates Stanislavsky's contribution to acting, he is against an exclusively internal approach such as typified the New York method of the 1950s.
7. Ball believes that the classics are best served by a repertory theatre which has a permanent ensemble acting company.
8. Ball believes that a conservatory should ideally be attached to a classical theatre in which acting techniques are explored and acquired.
9. Three specific skills are stressed in his Conservatory which help the actor in Shakesperean acting:
 - a. scansion
 - b. rhetoric
 - c. heroics.
10. Actors need to be busy continually. Ball believes in keeping actors working at high energy levels.
11. Theatre is an art which flourishes best in a "positive" atmosphere.

12. The purpose of theatre is the creation of "beauty."

When asked to name the Shakespearean production which had most accomplished his goals, Ball chose the popular 1973 version of The Taming of the Shrew. Revived during the 1974-75 and 1975-76 seasons, it was also seen on Public Broadcasting System's series, "Theatre in America," aired on November 10, 1976. I saw the television production shortly before my interview with Mr. Ball in San Francisco on November 12, and it was fresh in my mind for our discussion.

Ball's Taming of the Shrew is a highly stylized commedia dell'arte version using scores of clowns and proceeding in an acrobatic, dance-like fashion. The costumes are all white with red touches. Long, floppy, Pierrot-like costumes topped with tall, white hats give an abstract, out-of-this-world quality to it. They are commedia clowns, but not sweaty, Italian, and Fellini-like.

Nor did the production follow Shakespeare's script presenting the Shrew story as a play-within-a-play given for Christopher Sly. They perform in some rarefied world of pure imagination. The action takes place on a platform stage which seems to exist in pure space. The stage with poles holding fragments of white cloth suggests a ship floating in space. The clowns come to life out of the shadows and act as a chorus to the action of the play. Everything is broad slap-stick humor. The clowns have brickbats, take pratfalls, and act in the most extravagantly physical manner. The pace of the lines is very fast with no time for pauses or thinking. There is something manic and nightmare-like about the pace. Petruchio makes an entrance

swinging on a rope like Tarzan. He is wearing a very revealing costume with a huge cod piece. There is much bawdy business concerning his physical attributes. Kate looks at the audience after getting a look at Petruchio's body and gives us a look of sexual appetite. Who is the pursuer and who the pursued? The wooing scene is extraordinarily fast with much screaming and physical hitting, ending with Petruchio holding Katherina over his head with one arm.

The most extraordinary moment in the production occurs at the end, after Katherina's speech in the final act. She has pronounced Petruchio her lord and "placed her hand below her husband's foot" to every other character's amazement. For the first time there is a very long pause as Petruchio and she look into each other's eyes and he raises her to her feet. After the break-neck speed with which the play has progressed, this moment has extraordinary power.

Ball undertook Shrew after having directed The Crucible and facing a production of The Cherry Orchard. "I wanted to do something light and fun as a kind of wing-ding so I didn't have the kind of tension I normally do going into rehearsals."⁶⁸ An article printed in the Sunday San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner revealed something about Ball's unusual personal fears when undertaking a new show. "Before a show goes into rehearsal, Ball is habitually beset by attacks of jitters and is assigned a twenty-four-hour bodyguard (by his executive producer) to ensure his presence at the theatre."⁶⁹ With Shrew, however, this did not seem to occur. "I knew that I had to go into rehearsal the first day with what I had and have trust. I think

⁶⁸Ball interview.

⁶⁹Fran Fanshel, "It's All Bill Ball," San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner, February 22, 1976.

I was in love at the time and that always helps, and it just flowed right out."⁷⁰

To Ball, the idea of putting the play into commedia dell'arte setting did not seem innovative but an obvious choice. In an article which appeared when the first Shrew made its appearance in October of 1973, Ball justified his commedia approach in these terms:

The Taming of the Shrew is written in the tradition of commedia. Petruchio is the Bragging Captain, the Shrew is a stock character in this sort of commedia comedy, and here too you can see both the Stupid Servant and the Conniving One, the Pedant, the Pantalone, the Foolish and the Romantic lovers. Most of the characters are sort of goony, not three-dimensional. Katherina and Petruchio are the most physical and become more human and grow into more stature.⁷¹

In my interview with him, Ball said that the commedia idea evolved out of his difficulty with making sense of the wooing lover, Hortensio.

Hortensio was the problem. He didn't fit. He didn't belong in the play from the structure of other Shakespeare plays. Hortensio seemed like an extra character. I kept trying to find his reason for being in the play. What sort of person was he? The way he does belong is if one thinks of him as Pierrot, as the Young Lover clown. So Hortensio was the key to wanting to do it as commedia.⁷²

Asked how he arrived at the specifically dream-like quality of the show, he answered, "I look at painters very much. The production is inspired by Callot's and Tiepolo's clowns. I had hoped to reawaken all the clowns from history as if they were sitting there from way

⁷⁰Ball interview.

⁷¹Quoted in Paine Knickerbocker, "'Taming of the Shrew'--An Italian Commedia," San Francisco Sunday Chronicle and Examiner Date-book, October 14, 1973.

⁷²Ball interview.

back, as if you opened a book and they sprung out at you in their traditional ways."⁷³ It must be remarked that the white set with its touches of red color is reminiscent of Peter Brook's A Midsummer Night's Dream, which also had an abstract white setting and featured much acrobatic movement. Ball denies an influence: "I didn't see that production. But certain ideas are in the air at certain times in history."⁷⁴

In his rehearsal work, Ball analyzes the play for its "general beauty" and its "central idea." The dream-like commedia was the play's "general beauty." The "central idea" of Shrew was articulated by Ball for himself and then discussed with the cast at the first rehearsal. Completely uninterested in the political possibilities of women's liberation in dealing with the play, he saw Kate's taming as a necessary social inevitability.

We are, I know, living in a time when women's lib seems to throw light on the play for some people. That doesn't really interest me very much. What does interest me tremendously is that in life (now, this is superior to their sexuality in the play which does exist), there is an argument which goes something like this: "I want what I want in my way when I want it." Now that may be a woman or a man or any human being. And we know people who say that--who are so intent on getting it "my way" that nothing else is tolerable to them. Now a person who says "I want it my way" is going to be provided with a wet shower from nature. A person will say, "My way, my way, my way" until something says "No, the way of the community, the way of the flow of life, not your way." And, until you understand that you must go with the flow, you will not live a happy and prosperous life. So, it happens that Kate, who says "my way" against all the world--nature delivers to her someone who says, "Not your way, the way of communal flow."⁷⁵

With this interpretation--obviously anathema to feminists, who do not see female servitude as necessarily "nature's way"--the final moment,

⁷³Ball interview.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

when Kate accepts Petruchio as her master, becomes Kate's moment of greatest happiness. Through service, Kate will become happy. This is the most "human" moment in Ball's production and he makes it quite clear that Katherina has given up her desire to dominate.

Ball read the play through quickly to the actors the first day of rehearsal and discussed briefly what he wanted to do with it. "Mostly I told them that I wanted them to do most of the work. I told them that the play is a celebration and a piece of music. I wanted the production to be very athletic and full of vitality."⁷⁶ After the discussion, Ball took the entire cast to the San Francisco zoo. The actors were asked to pick out animals which seemed to embody the essence of their characters. Katherina chose a wildcat, Petruchio a gorilla, Grumio was a spider monkey and Baptista a racoon. Bianca was a preening heron. "The actors did animal characterizations. This is a technique I had used before in order to get actors to affect broad extrovert characterizations with much physical vitality."⁷⁷ In rehearsals the animals evolved into human types who embodied the same characteristics as the animals chosen. "We refined the animals in rehearsal so that the animals could do anything before we put them into the play. The animals could go to the opera, could have a tea party, could talk and discuss politics."⁷⁸ Ball conducted improvisations with the animal characters before he ever began blocking the play. "What happens is that the animal vocabulary tapers just slightly so that the audience never notices somebody is

⁷⁶Ball interview.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

imitating an animal, but it gives tremendous physical vitality to all the characters."⁷⁹

In the early rehearsals, Ball spent a lot of time analyzing the text. Mornings were spent on the animal characterizations while afternoons were spent doing the line work. "You make sure everyone understands the text very, very clearly, and that they know what the main ideas of the play are. We talk about what the words mean and paraphrase a good deal. Then, when the script is flowing it tells you that it wants to get on its feet."⁸⁰ The early line rehearsals also included work on scansion and rhetoric. "I analyze scansion with them in early rehearsals. I say, 'I think if you scan that line you'll see that the stress should be on such and such a word.'"⁸¹ Fredi Olster, who played Katherina in all three productions of the play, feels that Ball very much implants the rhythm and pace he wants a production to have in these early line rehearsals.

Bill is so sensitive to the rhythm of iambic pentameter--to its driving insistency--that through immersing us in that rhythm he gives the play its shape and form before it's ever on its feet. He conducts you, and that rhythm gives you a certain excitement which you have to live up to physically, mentally, and emotionally. In this way Bill creates the shell of a performance that the actor must continually fill with vitality and energy.⁸²

Ball also asks for rhetorical builds. "I frequently will say to an actor, 'Look, you're breaking it up into two or three things. Try to let it go up the side of the mountain so that the last point

⁷⁹Ball interview. ⁸⁰Ibid. ⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Fredi Olster interview, Los Angeles, California, December 8, 1976.

is the most important."⁸³ The whole wooing scene of Katherina by Petruchio is really one long rhetorical build, climaxing when he proclaims, "Will you, nil you, I will marry you!" Ball insists that he does not give specific line readings but admits that he sometimes "whistles" the melody and rate of the text the way he wants it to be read.

The blocking for the play grew out of the actor's physical abilities. Trained for the most part at A.C.T., their talents were considerable. Many of the actors had studied commedia dell' arte techniques with Carlo Mazzone, who had taught in the conservatory, as well as circus techniques with Hovey Burgess. All the actors had studied mime, various types of dance, and acrobatics. Few productions that A.C.T. has ever attempted so thoroughly used the physical skills taught in the conservatory. Ball did not use a choreographer nor a commedia consultant on the production. He commented that the "business" of the production was arrived at communally. "We work it all out together. They know what I'm after is their maximum expressivity. They say, 'Maybe I could do this--or maybe I could do that.' I say to them, 'Do you have something you could do here?' I take a lot from the actors."⁸⁴ Ron Bausson, who played Grumio, said, "Ninety percent of the business came from the actors. Bill acted as a sort of cheer leader, jumping up and down a lot, egging us on, daring us to go further."⁸⁵

At this point in his career, Ball does not pre-block a play on paper.

⁸³Ball interview.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Bausson interview.

I used to pre-block. When I was doing operas I would even do the gestures. I don't have time to pre-block any more, and in a funny way, experience has made it so I don't have to. Of course, long before I go into rehearsal I know all the important moments--where they'll be played, what positions the actors will be in. Well, actually, in every scene of the play I know what positions the actors will be in, so, in a way, I guess I do pre-block. But the thing is that I don't write it down. After you go through a scene a certain number of times, it dictates its needs to you, so part of a scene has to be downstage center and certain sections . . . would be better if she were sitting on a sofa and if he were standing behind her. You want to frame certain moments or lines or make a piece of telling business--you make those four or five telling spots which you know you want in certain locations and then you string them together in a natural manner.⁸⁶

Ron Bausson told me that the Shrew rehearsals were "among the most exhilarating experiences of my life."⁸⁷ He remembers the rehearsals as "great fun," and that "He [Ball] was more relaxed than I remember him having been and most enthusiastic. He laughed very hard at the actors' shtick and was a terrific audience. We used to come out of those rehearsals exhausted but happy. I really think it was the best work we did at A.C.T. We worked as a company better on that than on anything else."⁸⁸

The second and third seasons the production was revived, Marc Singer, the original Petruchio, had left the company and Anthony Teague took over the role. Given eighteen days to prepare it, Teague was terrified at the task. He had not acted with the company for ten years and had never performed in Shakespeare. "I'm sure I was sub-standard when I first began, but I got tremendous help from my fellow actors. They were terrific and really pulled me through.

⁸⁶ Ball interview.

⁸⁷ Bausson interview.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Also, Bill has this faith in you and assures you that you're wonderful when you know you're not. So your reaction is to say, 'Wait till you see what I can really do.' He's a magician."⁸⁹

Gino Barcone, Ball's assistant director, guided both revivals of the production.

A.C.T. has the most incredible stage managers you have ever seen. Once a show is done, everything about it is meticulously recorded so that when they want to redo a production they have an exact record of what was done the first time. Sometimes the revivals are done too quickly without enough new thinking. Ball's productions, in particular, are religiously remounted exactly as they were done the first time.⁹⁰

In the spring of 1976, Ball filmed Shrew for the Public Broadcasting System at the University Auditorium of the Berkeley campus of the University of California. He cut thirty more minutes out of the script. Marc Singer, the original Petruchio, recreated his role. Ball had these recollections: "We filmed it twice. These actors of mine are so energetic. They give 140% all the time. The first time we did it it was too energetic. They were leaping through the tube. I told them, "'Just give 70% and it will be enough for the television screen.'"⁹¹

These are the techniques revealed during the Shrew rehearsals by William Ball:

⁸⁹ Quoted in Fanshel, "It's All Bill Ball," p. 27.

⁹⁰ Bausson interview.

⁹¹ William Ball, "A Creative Moment Lasting Hours," Focus, The Public Broadcasting Magazine of KQED, San Francisco, November, 1976, p. 12.

1. Ball analyzed Shrew for its "general beauty" and "central idea." It was to have a dream-like quality suggested by Callot and Tiepolo. The idea of the play was Kate's taming as necessary "communal flow."
2. Ball discussed his approach with the actors at the first rehearsal. He told them that the play was a "celebration" and a "piece of music."
3. Trips to the zoo and observation of animals yielded characterizations for Shrew. (Stanislavsky was also known for this technique.)
4. The company used their animal characterizations in improvisations developing "physically vital" characters.
5. Ball did extensive textual work on both the meaning of the lines and Shakespeare's poetic devices, particularly scansion and rhetoric.
6. In Shrew, business evolved from actors' schtick and gymnastic abilities. There was little pre-blocking. Movement was arrived at communally.
7. Ball knows what positions he wants his actors in at important moments. He lets the actors naturally link these moments.
8. Ball acts as a kind of cheer leader in rehearsals encouraging actors to give optimum energy.
9. Ball is extensively concerned with the externals of performance: physical business, orchestrating sounds, setting the timing of lines in relation to actions.
10. He draws extensively on the skills taught in the conservatory.

The critical reception to Ball's Taming of the Shrew has been consistently mixed. After its first unveiling in 1973, Paine Knickerbocker of the San Francisco Examiner, enthusiastically endorsed the production, recognizing the celebration Ball had intended.

The Taming of the Shrew which opened on Saturday night before a continually delighted audience at the Geary is part commedia dell'arte, perhaps with a shadow of Peter Brook, a good deal of Will Shakespeare, but happily also with a great deal of William Ball and the talent, energy, and audacity of the American Conservatory Theatre. . . . It is as if no one in the cast has ever learned to walk. Instead they fly, climb, tumble, fall, wrestle, wallop, and collide. The production is endlessly breathtaking. See it quickly before someone gets hurt, for it is unlike any Shrew you may have ever seen. . . . So vigorous and triumphant is the action, beginning with the confrontation of Petruchio and Katherina that on four occasions the play is stopped by wild applause. . . . It is an extremely visual show with the percussion instruments used for witty effects.⁹²

Dan Sullivan of the Los Angeles Times saw the production and also enjoyed Ball's intended "wing ding."

It is of course theatrical, being directed by Ball it would have to be. There is brightness, speed, and a million "laffs." It is commedia, Terrytoons, Harpo Marx. It could get tiresome but the actors don't insist that we find them funny. They are masters of light, clean slapstick rather than the heavy which can wear an audience down. . . . A.C.T.'s exuberant, play-it-out style comes together here.⁹³

Stanley Kauffmann reviewed it for the New Republic, voicing objections to Ball's treatment of Shakespeare. He obviously felt Ball should have done something different with the play.

⁹²Paine Knickerbocker, "A Dynamic and Appealing Production of 'Shrew,'" San Francisco Examiner, October 22, 1973.

⁹³Dan Sullivan, Los Angeles Times, May 22, 1974.

If a director really doesn't want to do The Shrew, this is a pretty good way not to do it. The fast physical text is a trampoline for antics. Some minor characters are commedia, others are more or less Shakespeare's rammed into a brisk wrestling match and the text goes down under Ball's cleverness. Shrew isn't everyone's favorite Shakespeare and physical farce is part of its process, still it's written pretty well and here even the best scenes are handled solely as opportunities for leaping, catching, swinging, quasi-judo, Tarzan displays to make the audience gasp. . . . Ball treats plays in an appropriate self-displaying manner; in some the process has been more subtle. He's not a commonplace director but a thaumaturge of the second rate.⁹⁴

The San Francisco reviews on the whole were favorable the second year of the production. At its third revival in 1976, however, it got harsher treatment. Jeanne Miller, calling Ball's production "at best a sexist tract," attacked the play for its "rough and tumble horseplay, wrestling and mauling to the detriment of the poetry within Shakespeare's best known comedy." Miller saw in Ball's treatment of Katherina a "distintegration from a high spirited sharp tongued girl to a servile, spineless punching bag." Admitting the production to be "visually stunning" and "a crowd pleasing show," Miller concluded her review calling it a "relentlessly unfunny insubstantial animated cartoon."⁹⁵

Bernard Weiner, who had written favorable reviews of it in previous seasons, found Shrew still "great fun" but had become troubled by certain camp elements in it, as well as the brutality visited upon Katherina by Petruchio.

⁹⁴ Stanley Kauffmann, "Theatre," New Republic, December 15, 1973.

⁹⁵ Jeanne Miller, "Shrew Tamed in Wild Arena," San Francisco Examiner, March 3, 1976.

Kate nearly swoons at her first sight of Petruchio (perhaps she's influenced as everyone else in the play seems to be by the large bulge under his cod piece) which in no way is indicated in Shakespeare's text. The physical brutality visited upon Kate by this wild wooer is certainly theatrical, exceedingly well choreographed, visually fun to watch but it simply is out of line, excessive, internally grating. (The same process--of a woman loving her SM debasement at the hands of a brutal male shows up in Wertmüller's "Swept Away"--and without the ironic wink.)⁹⁶

Weiner brings up an interesting point when he questions Ball's audacity in presenting a male chauvinist version of Shrew, ". . . at a time when women have risen en masse to protest their treatment as sex and marital objects over the centuries. . . . Whereas Shakespeare was merely reflecting the prevailing male chauvinism of his time, Ball's interpretation has compounded that point of view to an unpleasant degree."⁹⁷ From Ball's comments and his noted lack of interest both in political and women's problems, I think it is safe to say that in Shrew Ball was not making an anti-feminist statement but was intent on showing a sexual struggle in which one character masters another and the mastering is found to be pleasurable to one of the partners.

John J. O'Connor, reviewing the television production, praised its "distinctive charms, most notably in a youthful vitality that occasionally threatens to transform the proceedings into a gymnastic contest." O'Connor saw the production as a "celebration and ringing endorsement of male chauvinism." This interpretation was most clear in the portrayal of Petruchio, a performance of male exhibitionism.

⁹⁶Bernard Weiner, "Third Thoughts on A.C.T. 'Shrew,'" San Francisco Chronicle, April 1, 1976.

⁹⁷Ibid.

By far the most startling and dominating characterization is Marc Singer's Petruchio, the shrew tamer. Mr. Singer is a mass of well developed muscles . . . [His] imposing physique is given maximum display. In his first scene with Katherina, attractively played by Fredi Olster, he strips down to a pair of tight pants and a necklace. In this instance it is the hero instead of the heroine who is obviously flaunting what used to be called, with inimitable delicacy, an amply endowed chest. If the tired businessman can have his show girls, the bored housewife presumably can have her Playgirl centerfold. Evidently commedia dell'arte can encompass anything.⁹⁸

O'Connor fails to mention but hints that the unclad display of Marc Singer has a touch of homosexual camp. Even the negative statements on Ball's production indicate that Ball achieved his "celebration." He was bound to upset liberal reviewers with his endorsement of Kate's taming. The negative comments are recorded here as a clear indication that Ball achieved exactly what he wanted.

William Ball is a unique and exciting director. As a theatricalist, he stands apart from the mainstream of American theatre, which for the most part has been realistic and life-like rather than fantastic. His vocabulary reveals him to be a romantic idealist, a benovolent dictator, who tends to think of his actors as vehicles for his talents: "horses" and "champions." His productions are often sensual and theatrically exciting but sometimes emotionally and intellectually vapid.

Theatre critics and writers have enjoyed analyzing the Ball personality and art over the past ten years. Julius Novick, after interviewing Ball with much difficulty (Ball does not like interviews and is generally elusive), wrote the following:

⁹⁸ John J. O'Connor, "T.V. 'Shrew' as Commedia dell'arte," New York Times, November 10, 1976.

The autocrat of the A.C.T. is a strange and picturesque creature: slim, pale, exquisitely dressed, disorganized, hypnotic, and charming. . . . But, if Mr. Ball were not slightly mad, the A.C.T. would probably not be the exciting company that it is. . . . Mr. Ball's policies are utterly, wildly impractical, yet somehow they get carried out, and they have made his company one of the best in the country.

Ball is the American Reinhardt. He is eclectic, committed to no particular kind of drama or style of acting or social role for the theatre. He will try anything; he often seems determined to try everything. His only commitment is to the theatre theatrical, with the emphasis on the director; he loves to create "ostentations" and "wonders" to use two of his favorite words.⁹⁹

Martin Gottfried, after seeing the repertory of A.C.T. in 1968, wrote enthusiastically of Ball, "To watch him is to see sheer genius."

Gottfried saw in Ball's work an important criticism of the Stanislavsky school of American acting.

This is the basis of Ball's acting approach: "Do the act and the feeling will follow." He doesn't want his actors to think: how does the character feel, he wants them to look it. The audience doesn't know what the actor is thinking. The audience only knows how the actor looks. It doesn't matter to the audience--or the theatre--whether the actor believes what his character is doing. It only matters how the actor looks. . . . Whatever it is, it is of the theatre. And it represents an expressive, uninhibited kind of acting that Stanislavsky almost murdered with his "inner-beingness." Ball is after the foot stamped in rage, the voice raised in anger, the arms waved in fury, the speaking up and out, the walking and trotting, running and skipping.¹⁰⁰

An analysis of Ball's techniques in relation to his stated principles reveals the following:

1. Ball creates an atmosphere of energetic "positation," a kind of romantic euphoria in his rehearsals. Through his

⁹⁹ Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 226.

¹⁰⁰ Martin Gottfried, "A Director Performs," Opening Nights (New York: Putnam, 1969), p. 161.

affirmative enthusiasm for the actors, he encourages them to extend their abilities. This atmosphere contributes to the romantic, larger than life quality of his productions.

Shrew was this kind of production.

2. Ball's interest in Shakespeare's "music" is put into practice through extensive rehearsals spent on the poetry of the text. The specificity of Ball's conducting gives a tight musical structure to his productions. Shrew's tight pace evidences this kind of directing.
3. Ball's pictorial "moments," actor groupings artfully arranged, testifies to his desire to make theatrical "paintings." The opening moments of Shrew with its perfectly posed clowns made this effect.
4. Ball's interest in animal characterizations, his stress on physical business, his preoccupation with language show that his main acting interests are external rather than internal. He believes that the internal quality of a work of art comes from finding its specific external form first.
5. Ball tends to "use" actors. He takes blocking from them and keeps them busy, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. He feels that actors are happiest when they are being "evidenced" in this way. Talks with some of the actors in the company have revealed that Ball's perception of his company's happiness is not always accurate.
6. The Shrew rehearsal period showed Ball using skills taught in the conservatory. Some of these skills might not have belonged to the actors if they had not been trained at A.C.T. Therefore,

the conservatory training can be said to have been an essential ingredient of Ball's Taming of the Shrew.

7. Ball has created in A.C.T. one of the few true ensemble repertory theatres in America. His belief in this kind of theatre has been actualized in the reality of American Conservatory Theatre.

Perhaps Ball's greatest contribution to the American theatre has been his reminder that the theatre may be a place of extrovertism and unabashed theatricality. For Ball art is greater than life and supersedes life in that it is a place of magic and fantasy, a place of the imagination rather than a place which mirrors reality. Behind his quasi-religious statements on theatre is a philosophy of aestheticism which presumes that art and beauty are their own "excuse for being."

In championing art, Ball at times restricts the humanity and life of his productions. He controls them tightly in the same way it must be admitted he tries to monopolize the lives of his actors. However, of all American directors he has consistently been the one who has experimented with acting techniques which have enlarged American approaches to the acting of classical, heroic material. In this way he has specifically been influenced by and has greatly influenced the growth of American abilities in Shakespearean acting.

CHAPTER VII

EDWARD PAYSON CALL

Edward Payson Call has directed "half of Shakespeare's canon,"¹ mostly in Shakespeare festivals and regional theatres away from the scrutiny of New York critics. His national reputation as a Shakespearean director comes from work at Antioch's "Shakespeare Under the Stars," the San Diego Globe, and the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. He has directed Shakespeare at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, and in various universities throughout the country. Having worked on the east coast, the west coast, and in the midwest, Call has been witness to and producer of regional theatre all over this country. Unlike many of the directors discussed in this dissertation, he is not primarily associated with one institutional theatre. He is an itinerant director of American Shakespeare.

Call inherited this itinerancy from "wandering" actor parents who gave up the theatre while Call was in his teens. Born in Connecticut, he later moved to Maryland and still later attended prep school in Massachusetts. After one year at George Washington University he decided, "What I really wanted to do was hitchhike around the

¹Edward Payson Call interview, San Diego, California, August 29, 1976.

country."² He travelled to Mount Rainier, Washington, where he "met somebody who knew Glen Hughes at the University of Washington in Seattle."³ He enrolled there for one year, left it and came back east. He worked in Washington, D.C. and then registered at the University of Maryland where he completed his Bachelor of Arts in theatre.

Looking back at his education, Ed Call considered his years spent in universities "a waste of time."

Sad to say I don't think I started to learn anything until 1963 when I went to the Guthrie and started learning from Tyrone Guthrie and Douglas Campbell. I think I wasted an awful lot of time in college when I should have been out there, in the profession, trying to do it. That was the time when academic institutions would not acknowledge that they were in the business of training creative talent. Mostly they were teaching teachers to teach.⁴

He remembers with some resentment that he discovered his vocation--directing--in a class which he almost flunked.

In this directing class at the University of Maryland, I directed Candida, the first play I ever directed. After I had been directing for about three days I said, "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life. This is my vocation." I directed that play and it was successful. Then having finished it, I had to submit a paper and put it all down in proper academic formulations. I just balked at this. I finally did turn in something too late and got a D minus in the course. I resented deeply the kind of academic shackles that this program had.⁵

One of the ironies in Call's life is that he now spends a good deal of time teaching and directing in university theatres.

After graduating from the University of Maryland, Call went to New York "to become an actor." He worked in summer theatres such as the Avondale Playhouse, the Sharon Playhouse, and the Barter

²Call interview.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia. His primary source of income in New York came from stage-managing at Circle in the Square where he worked with Jose Quintero and Theodore Mann. He also began directing at Equity Library Theatre, where he did Arms and the Man, The Torchbearers, and The Merry Wives of Windsor.

In the mid-fifties Call went to Yellow Springs, Ohio, as a resident actor at Arthur Lithgow's Antioch Shakespeare Festival called "Shakespeare Under the Stars." No longer in operation, the festival at Antioch was unique in its ambitiousness:

Arthur Lithgow used to do incredibly ambitious seasons. His first season in 1952, he did all the history plays, seven of them. He cut Henry VI and made it one play. One other summer they did all the Roman plays. In six summers they had done all the plays. It's a shame more people don't know about that place because Ellis Rabb and Bill Ball also got their starts there. I started as an actor and ended up as artistic director.⁶

In 1959 Lithgow moved the festival to Akron, Ohio, and made Call the artistic director. In that summer, Call directed Richard II, Henry IV, Parts I and II, and Henry V. "We did the plays traditionally, in a pseudo-Elizabethan theatre that I designed for Akron. I guess I discovered early on that I had a flair for showmanship. The histories served that showmanship rather well. I really didn't know anything about Shakespeare."⁷ Call's primary memory of these productions was that he had "great fun doing realistic battle scenes and waved a lot of flags."⁸ Included in his battle scenes were a Henry V scene at the breach at Harfleur in which a local archery club "standing on a six-story building fired arrows down at the stage, toward the audience, terrifying the front rows."⁹

⁶Call interview.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

In the early sixties, Call started hearing about the new theatre that Tyrone Guthrie was starting in Minneapolis. Because of his stage-managing experience and an acquaintance with Peter Zeisler, manager of the Guthrie, Call was hired at Minneapolis as an assistant stage manager. "As soon as I got to the Guthrie I started doing workshops. I had this staged version of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land I used to do in those days. Pure directorial razzle-dazzle--but I guess I made an impression on them."¹⁰

Call feels that working with Tyrone Guthrie was "the greatest experience of my life. He was a great influence on me."¹¹ During my interview with him, Ed Call talked extensively about "Dr. Guthrie." Here are some excerpts from his remarks:

I felt that I had my own taste in theatre legitimized by a kind of sympathy with him. You got from him by osmosis, by the kind of excitement he created. He hated to be bored.

.....

I've never seen anybody in rehearsal who could work as quickly as he could. His interest in a production usually grew with the number of people on stage. When he got to ten people on a stage that was something to watch. I remember the first night we got the extras in Hamlet. I was taking down the blocking. This man was going hammer and tongs for five hours. He was in his late sixties then, and he had had a serious heart attack. Everybody else was just frazzled afterwards.

.....

He used to give extremely specific blocking. Sometimes people wouldn't move fast enough for him. He'd just get up on the stage with them and move them around physically. Douglas Campbell used to call him "the headmaster." His attitude to actors was that of a super pedagogue. A lot of actors loathed him because they thought he didn't give them enough latitude. He wouldn't talk personally to you. Actors needed resilient egos around him.¹²

¹⁰Call interview.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

Apparently Guthrie was sufficiently "sympathetic" to Call to allow him to direct Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle in 1965, for the Guthrie Theatre's third season. Call remembers that he was amazed at the freedom Guthrie gave him. "I had never directed a major production there and they gave me this huge play to do. Of course, I had been bothering them for a chance to direct, but I didn't think I'd get anything that important. I kept asking Guthrie to come and watch rehearsals and give me advice. He never did."¹³

The Caucasian Chalk Circle under Ed Payson Call's direction was a critical and popular success. Henry Hewes saw the production and called it "the finest achievement in this theatre's distinguished three-year history." Call chose to emphasize the fact that the audience was watching a play within a play. "By constantly keeping alive the relationship between the prologue's villagers, whom he seats around the periphery of the stage, to watch the play performed for them, the audience feels that it is in the Caucasus with them and watching the play within the play with the same concern as the townspeople."¹⁴ The sets and costumes were constructed out of odds and ends, "what country people might be able to produce out of everyday materials."¹⁵

Call cited this production as "one of the few that really worked. I called it a celebration of goodness in a dark world. To me the whole sense of celebration became the key to the play."¹⁶

¹³Call interview.

¹⁴Henry Hewes, "Brecht at the Guthrie," Saturday Review, November 20, 1965.

¹⁵Call interview.

¹⁶Ibid.

Along with Shakespeare, Brecht is one of the playwrights Call has most successfully directed during his career. He did a production for the Guthrie in 1967 of The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui which received some attention when the company took it, along with Guthrie's The House of Atreus, to New York for a limited engagement at the Billy Rose Theatre. He also directed Brecht at the Mark Taper Forum in 1973 with a production entitled Brecht: Sacred and Profane, a double bill containing The Little Mahagony and The Measures Taken. "You'd be amazed at the fear raised by The Measures Taken. Hollywood is still afraid of communists. But it was a powerful evening and very popular."¹⁷ Call evinces great admiration for Brecht. "I just have great empathy with that man and his work."¹⁸ I asked him if he had ever seen any connection between Brecht and Shakespeare. (For me, Call's Shakespeare has certain Brechtian overtones.) He answered: "I never thought about that. Of course, they're two great poets. Brecht is probably the greatest theatre poet of the twentieth century and we don't really know it because of the half-assed translations we have to do. But both Shakespeare and Brecht use the poetry of the theatre as well as poetic language. I guess that's why I like them both."¹⁹

Call's affinity for Brecht will be recalled later in this chapter as I investigate certain of his Shakespearean productions and attempt to discern his particular approach to Shakespeare.

¹⁷ Call interview.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

As You Like It in 1966, Call's first production of Shakespeare at the Guthrie, gained national recognition, largely because of its post-Civil War setting.

I was very happy with As You Like It. It was not my idea, actually. Douglas Campbell suggested it to me--the post-Civil War setting. So many things fell into place for me. Silvius and Phebe were delightful in southern accents: "Thou hast my love, is that not neighborly?" Moss-covered trees and the romanticism of the South served the play charmingly. Jaques was a kind of disillusioned Robert E. Lee. Adam was a black slave. The men in the forest were like Confederate soldiers who refused to go back to a Yankee-controlled South. Duke Frederick was a carpetbagger. The girls wore pretty crinolines until they changed into men's clothes. The biggest problem was what the fuck do you do with Touchstone. Tanya Moiseyevitch and I were going through a Civil War book and finally we found an article on the potato famine, so we made him an Irishman. An Irish entrepreneur-entertainer.²⁰

The production contained a hoedown at the marriage ceremony at the end of the play as well as many unfurled Confederate flags. It gently mocked Shakespearean pretension through its use of Southern accents. Philip Kerr, a member of the ensemble, called the production ". . . the most successful, because the most irreverent Shakespeare I've ever been in. Part of the fun of that production was shocking the audience by doing Shakespeare with southern accents. You know something, it was the most lyrical Shakespeare I've ever been in."²¹ As we shall see, Call enjoys shocking Shakespearean piety.

The last play Call directed for the Guthrie was Julius Caesar. He was also scheduled to do Twelfth Night in 1969 but got mononucleosis and had to bow out. "Julius Caesar was a good straight production. I tried to talk about political assassination using Roman costumes and

²⁰Call interview.

²¹Philip Kerr interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

Brechtian subtitles. I don't remember too much about that production actually, as I was starting to get sick."²²

The years 1969-1972 were inactive years for Ed Call and Shakespeare. Before leaving the Guthrie in 1969, he had directed Twelfth Night in 1967 at the San Diego Globe. This was an association which was to continue through 1976 when Call directed Troilus and Cressida, which I saw last summer. These San Diego Shakespearean productions need to be investigated in some detail.

Peggy Kellner, costumer at the Globe, remembers Call's Twelfth Night fondly. "That was a lovely production. Everything in it was covered with dust and cobwebs. It had a warm feeling to it."²³

Twelfth Night is a play which Call has directed four times: once at Globe, once at A.C.T. in San Francisco, a student production for New York University, and a student production at Purchase, New York. I saw this last production on December 10, 1976, and will discuss it briefly later in the chapter. A "Director's Comment" in the Twelfth Night program from San Diego gives us some indication of Call's thinking on this first Twelfth Night: "There is such pure fun in Twelfth Night, such an abundance of disguises and such a lot of infatuation, that one is tempted to think of the play as a kind of carnival festivity. . . . Does not Viola undertake the disguise for a single, simple, liberating reason--it would be such good fun? After all, what else is Illyria for?"²⁴

²²Call interview.

²³Peggy Kellner interview, Tucson, Arizona, December 7, 1976.

²⁴Edward Payson Call, "The Director Comments," Summer Program for The San Diego Globe Theatre, Summer, 1967.

Julius Novick described the production in Beyond Broadway as follows: "The play began with soft music; then Feste, the jester, on the forestage straightened the furniture, picked up his cap and bells and put them on. He blew the dust off his lute and began to strum, as other characters slowly awoke. They cleared away the cloths that covered the forestage, straightened out the front curtain, and drew it back, revealing Orsino and his court in tableau."²⁵ This opening is starkly different from the one I recently saw in the production at Purchase, which began with Orsino comically being carried into his court supported by fawning males and females, all obviously pining for him as he pines for Olivia. He was so weak he collapsed onto the pillows. Several courtiers, male and female, reclined around or on him, giving a satiric note to the lovesickness of Orsino's court and establishing a definitely androgynous atmosphere. Asked about the changes in his view of the play, Call commented, "I see Twelfth Night more ironically and less romantically than I used to."²⁶ Malvolio in the Purchase production was treated with excessive cruelty, and there was not a laugh in the whole evening after his scene with Feste in prison.

Richard III in 1972 was Call's second production at the Globe.

Peggy Kellner remembers it as

. . . a blood and thunder melodrama, very decadent and very exciting. Allen Fletcher had done it in 1961 with Douglas Watson as a sympathetic Richard III. Ed Call had Anthony Zerbe play Richard as totally evil. I remember Call's production was much faster than Fletcher's. Ed had people running all over the theatre. He added little balconies at the sides of the

²⁵Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 317.

²⁶Call interview.

stage. He loves to have actors run around the house. All the costumes looked like they were dipped in gold and were very decadent and heavy.²⁷

King Lear, also done at San Diego, in 1973, was another of Ed Call's favorite productions. "That was an example of the way a show can be successful in spite of yourself."²⁸ The production, which starred Ken Ruta, borrowed its look from Eisenstein's film, Ivan the Terrible. Call gives Kellner the credit for the idea. She recalls that she had just seen the film and thought that the period and feeling were right for Lear. "The thing about Lear is that it needs to be both elegant and barbaric."²⁹ Call reiterated this theme as the rationale behind the production choice. "Ivan the Terrible of Eisenstein had a great combination of sophistication and cruelty. How can you talk in iambic pentameter and put out people's eyes? King Lear has to start with great elegance and strip down to nothing. The play is about a man losing all his outer garments and protection."³⁰ Kellner said that for Lear's first entrance she devised a costume with many outer layers. "That man looked six feet wide. And as the play progressed we stripped the layers off him until on the heath he was practically naked."³¹

Henry IV, Part II was Call's production for the Globe in the summer of 1974. In a review for the Shakespeare Quarterly, the production was particularly praised for its affectionate treatment of Falstaff.

²⁷Kellner interview.

²⁸Call interview.

²⁹Kellner interview.

³⁰Call interview.

³¹Kellner interview.

The lively street entrance devised for Falstaff was delicious. The heroically bandaged Knight, accepting the embraces and tributes of the citizens, calmly picks their pockets. But, left alone after the noisy tribute, Falstaff collapses wearily; he grows too old and creaky to sustain for long the cheerful front. . . . Mr. Call has emphasized the theme of aging and failed hopes as personified by Shallow and Falstaff:³²

This review also noted that the battle scenes were played in a barrage of smoky dry ice, an effect of which Mr. Call is apparently very fond. (The Troilus and Cressida I saw there in the summer of 1976 also used this effect.) "I am convinced that Mr. Call is part owner of a condensed smoke company. Again this year the stage and front rows of the theatre were obscured by a thick mist which served to symbolize the treachery of Gaultree forest but which shrouded several later scenes."³³

Call also put some nudity into Henry IV, Part II. Hal and Poins stripped down to shirts and were seen "cheerfully bedding two excessively voluptuous ladies of the evening." Apparently this business raised some controversy in San Diego, which delighted Call. The two productions of his that I have seen also contained touches of nudity. In Troilus and Cressida Helen was topless and in Twelfth Night Feste took off his pants and stuck out his "ass" in a "moon" gesture of defiance to Malvolio.

The Troilus and Cressida in the summer of 1976 was, according to Call, "not totally successful." Since I saw this production, I include here an eye witness account:

The tone of the production is very ironic. Black comic elements are emphasized. Call uses a combination of modern props and stylized Greek costumes. Cressida wears sunglasses and

³²Lynn K. Horobetz, "San Diego National Shakespeare Festival Silver Jubilee, 1974," Shakespeare Quarterly, Autumn, 1974, p. 416.

³³Ibid.

has her nails done. Ulysses carries a briefcase. The Chorus is dressed in army fatigues, a battered survivor of Vietnam. Ulysses demonstrates his speech on "degree" with a chart, mocking the Elizabethan world picture. The Greeks are fascistic. They have a fascistic salute and wear lots of studded leather. The Trojans tend to be very homosexual. Pandarus is an outrageous queen, openly soliciting guards and attendants. There are two "Satyricon" type slave boys who bump and grind their way through the Trojan camp. The characters look and act like cartoons. Menelaus's helmet had ram's horns, mocking his cuckold state. Troilus is played straight, but the actor is not good enough to gain any sympathy for the character. The set looks like a sauna bath. The battle scene is played as farce until Hector is impaled on pikes and raised above the heads of the audience. Characters keep score of the numbers dead on point cards and cheer when their "side" wins. There are lots of cheap visual gags; the production seems to have no sympathetic center. Everything in it is mocked and ugly.

My perceptions of the production correspond to Call's intentions.

How can you take this play seriously? Shakespeare was mad at everybody when he wrote it. If there's a central character, it is Thyestes, who sees the world as a diseased sore. Pus, that play is pure pus. People say they know Shakespeare. Do they know Troilus and Cressida? Do they know how modern that man's consciousness was? That is the gooniest play that ever was. I only got a quarter of the play in the production. I was very rushed in rehearsals. I hated every moment of it.³⁴

This brief look at Edward Payson Call's creative history shows influences and qualities of directing which appear in his work.

1. Tyrone Guthrie's love of the theatrical is an obvious influence. Also, Guthrie's energy is a quality Call admires in a dramatic production. Like Guthrie, he admires "blood and thunder" effects.
2. Productions are often "joyful celebrations" or "carnival festivities."

³⁴ Call interview.

3. Call likes to embellish and perhaps mock Shakespeare with accents, nudity, and outrageous caricatures.
4. He will sometimes use Brechtian alienation devices which remind an audience they are watching a play or which take a critical attitude toward a character.

There appears to be some movement in Call's work away from "joyful celebrations" to a more ironic view of the plays. The change can be seen in a comparison of his first and last productions of Twelfth Night as well as in a comparison with the earlier fun-filled As you Like It with the bitterly ironic Troilus and Cressida. (Of course, Troilus and Cressida is a much darker play than As You Like It. However, Call chose to do Troilus because, "Where else but at San Diego would I have the freedom to do such an ugly play?")³⁵

When asked whether or not he thought Shakespeare had a coherent or consistent vision of the world, Call paused a long time, scowled, and finally answered:

No, I don't think Shakespeare had a vision of the world. Or, I think it changes with every play. I mean, is that the same man who wrote Love's Labour's Lost and Troilus and Cressida? Do those worlds have anything in common? I've done fifteen productions or so of Shakespeare and I think the man was a hack. I think he was like those people who write for Norman Lear; he was just out to make a buck. It just happened that he was the greatest poet who ever lived. He was working in a commercial situation. He retired in his forties and said, "Fuck it." He'd made enough money to buy a farm in Stratford and had had enough. I don't think he gave much of a shit about what happened to his work, except when they published those bad quartos of Hamlet. I guess he saw to it that the good quartos were published.³⁶

³⁵Call interview.

³⁶Ibid.

Call's response to this question partly reflects his dislike of "academic formulations." Also, one recognizes in him a kind of anti-intellectual pose, a "tough-guy" persona. He says, "I never think philosophically about the plays."³⁷ This statement, I think, is untrue. His productions reveal definite attitudes toward his material which are not superficial. His anti-philosophical stance reflects a modern existential point of view. "General statements are always untrue. Each play is its own experience. Beware of pretension." He has a cynical distrust of generalizations. He also likes the ironic contradiction of the idea that "the greatest poet who ever lived" was a "commercial hack."

Most of our interview time was spent discussing what Call considers to be his "primary message to the world concerning Shakespeare."

We've got to do our homework concerning the text. I don't think most Americans know anything about the way Shakespeare's verse is put together. We've lost a tradition of speaking Shakespearean verse. Maybe we lost it when Barrymore went to Hollywood. I decided a couple of years ago that I didn't know shit about Shakespeare and that very few Americans know anything. I mean, so few of us seem to even really know what the words mean, what is really going on in a scene. I want an actor to speak Shakespeare so that I really understand what he is saying. I don't want to hear a lot of words and big effects.³⁸

Call recounted to me his experience at the Guthrie with Patricia Connolly, an actress playing Portia for him in The Merchant of Venice.

What impressed me so totally about her was the way she made sense of everything she said or did. She worked with a kind of precision I was not used to in an American actress. After the production opened, I asked her, "What had you done to get this kind of precision?" She told me she had studied with a

³⁷ Call interview.

³⁸ Ibid.

man named Barry Voys who had been a protege of Bertam Joseph's. Then she introduced me to this book of Joseph's, Acting Shakespeare. I think the introduction to that book is the best thing ever written about Shakespearean acting.³⁹

Bertram Joseph's theories concerning Shakespearean acting may be seen in the following quotation from the above-mentioned "Introduction":

The actor's task is simply nothing more than the truthful creation of character as completely as the dramatist requires. But when the dramatist is Shakespeare, the actor can only carry out this task when he gives attention to the aspects of the play often regarded as literary rather than dramatic. But this dichotomy is indeed false; for on the one hand, the poetic quality of the lines can only be fully realized when they are spoken in character; yet, on the other, the completely imagined and truthful character can itself only be realized when the qualities of the literary text are taken into account at some stage of preparation.⁴⁰

Call's remark about American ignorance of verse suggests that for him American actors have been fulfilling only half of their responsibilities in their acting of Shakespeare. "We aren't aware of how the poetry is put together, so we don't know how the poetry reveals character."⁴¹ According to Joseph, awareness of the poetic devices Shakespeare uses leads one to a keener understanding of the characters. Understanding the mechanics of the poetry, the scansion, the rhymes, the figures of speech, have become Ed Call's main interest.

Knowing all those things tells you what to stress in a line in order to make sense. Audiences get turned off Shakespeare when they don't know what's going on. Too often it's because

³⁹Call interview.

⁴⁰Bertram Joseph, Acting Shakespeare (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1960), p. xvii.

⁴¹Call interview.

the actors don't understand how the language works. . . . I think people have got to learn the mechanics of the verse, the exquisite care with which you choose the word you stress. I think they've got to learn what exuberance the authority over text can lead to; where it's a kind of verbal feast that you give the audience, the joy in giving it and their joy in receiving it.⁴²

Peter Brook's A Midsummer Night's Dream was for Call a consummate Shakespearean production. "The rest of us have got to rely less on lighting, costumes and sets, the way Brook did. We've got to do more work in Mr. Brook's little white box."⁴³ For him the most extraordinary aspect of that production was the way the actors handled the language. "The incredible thing about Peter Brook's Midsummer, which none of the critics picked up on, was the incredibly beautiful and meaningful handling of the verse. Every word was clearly charged with meaning."⁴⁴ Call agreed with me that Brook's production had a quality which seemed as if the actors were spontaneously creating iambic pentameter as they spoke. "Yes, they did all their thinking aloud with the words."⁴⁵ This quality of producing the language spontaneously is a desired end for Call. "I think spontaneity in the language is achieved by actors thinking the images as they say the words. Thinking and speech are simultaneous. I tell my actors over and over, with Shakespeare you cannot act between the words. You cannot act in the pauses. You can do a little bit of subtext when you're listening sometimes. But, when you say those words, that's all you deal with."⁴⁶

While Call has become more interested in "the mechanism of the poetry," he has also become "less interested in the niceness, the

⁴²Call interview.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

elegance of language."⁴⁷ One of his more startling principles in his fondness for regional American accents in Shakespeare.

A part of the puzzle fell into place for me watching Raul Julia in Two Gentlemen of Verona. I thought, "Jesus Christ, it doesn't make any difference what kind of an accent he has. He has a sensitivity to the verse and speaks rather well." Suddenly the homogenization of speech became very unimportant to me, as long as it wasn't woefully tasteless. That used to be an important idea, that everybody say their vowels and consonants the same way. . . . We used to all try to sound like bush-league Oliviers. I remember after I first saw Henry V I used to stand in front of my mirror and practice "O for a muse of fire that would ascend the brightest heaven of In-ven-shee-on [in a British accent]. Garbage! Somebody should have hit us over the head and said, "Look, you're an American, it's the same language."⁴⁸

Call's ideas about accents also come from Tyrone Guthrie. He recalled when Guthrie directed George Grizzard in Hamlet that Guthrie wanted Grizzard to use his own "nasal" voice. Grizzard had spent a year consulting with "your Sir Johns and Sir Ralphs" in order to learn the "proper way to do Shakespeare."⁴⁹

Dr. Guthrie wanted George to give a terribly American performance. That was why he cast him. He wanted a shockingly American performance. He wanted to have the critics with froth coming out of their mouths. But George wanted to prove that he could act in the grand tradition. He was guided by people like Gielgud who had a very specific and romantic vision of the role. Guthrie comes into rehearsal and George is doing "And shall I couple hell?" in a British accent, and Guthrie says, "No, dear boy, don't do that--do those method things like you do." Guthrie wanted him to talk like George Grizzard in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? I think Dr. Guthrie had a vision of Hamlet as a rather nasty and distasteful child who was a pain in the ass to everybody in a rather swinging court. Grizzard could have done that. But I'm afraid we wound up with a rather traditional production. Guthrie finally saw that it was impossible to change George around.⁵⁰

Along with a desire for actors to use their own accents, Call likes actors to "personalize" their roles. Whenever possible he will

⁴⁷ Call interview.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

make the character as much like the actor as possible. "Casting is so very important. You have to be sensitive to inner qualities that an actor has which may resemble what you see in the character."⁵¹ Call recounted his casting of a Bronx student because the actor was very much like Sir Toby Belch. "Sal Vasculo from the Bronx was an Italian and he had an accent. He was a guy who adored beer and always wanted to take you home and give you pasta. When he said, 'Dost dou tink dat becuz dou art virtuous dere shall be no more cakes and ale?' there was an authority about it that was unmistakable."⁵²

Call believes in giving the actors the illusion that they are free to try anything they want. "I'm different from Guthrie in that. I think it's wrong to inhibit an actor's creativity. Sometimes you have to listen to a lot of unoriginal ideas from unoriginal people so that the person who has a really good insight will not be stifled the next time he or she has a good idea. I think it's terribly, terribly important that you never say 'No.' Say, 'Let's try it. Let's see how it goes.'"⁵³ He also believes that no ideas are too far out to try in rehearsal. He likes to use improvisations and games. "Sometimes you throw out a lot of what you try. But something is always gained."⁵⁴

While he allows actors freedom, he also believes that in Shakespeare a director must be very much in control of the actors:

To do Shakespeare correctly, I think you have to have tighter reins on the actors than most American directors have. You've got to be able to say, "No, you're stressing the wrong word." American actors don't like to hear that. Professional actors

⁵¹Call interview.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

think they're above that. They say, "Don't give me line readings!" Sometimes you have to give them line readings. You have to be able to show them, to say, "I don't understand what you're saying. Pick up the pace here. Why are you taking a pause in the middle of that line?" They say, "Oh, come on, man, let me feel it. Let's stop all this technical shit." Well, you can't stop all the technical shit if you're doing your job right.⁵⁵

The tightness of the director's reins comes in part from being totally prepared, pre-blocking the show on paper, and knowing exactly what you want to do. "Unless you control the disciplined form, if you work off the top of your head too much, you don't have as much latitude. You don't have as many choices as a little preparation would give you. I always think if I can get it to look right, then it will be right."⁵⁶

Along with this pre-blocking Call tries to distill the play down to a single statement of what the play is about. "This takes a lot of time and often I don't have the time. It's also awfully hard to do it with Shakespeare. . . . Sometimes I realize in words what the production was about after it's closed."⁵⁷

Call's principles of Shakespearean directing may be summed up as follows:

1. Shakespeare has no consistent philosophical message.
He was a commercial showman.
2. Call is not afraid of theatricalism using poetic rather than realistic stage devices.

⁵⁵ Call interview.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

3. The most important thing that a director must do is make sure the actors understand what the words mean and how the verse works.
4. Call believes that Americans should use their own regional accents in speaking Shakespeare.
5. Actors should "use themselves" in their characterizations.
6. Actors should have the freedom to try anything in rehearsals.
7. A director must have tight reins on the actors and be able to give them technical criticism.
8. The director should know what the play is about and know how he wants to block it before going into rehearsals.

I was surprised at Ed Payson Call's choice for the Shakespearean production he considered his most successful to date. It was a student production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, produced at Purchase, State University of New York, in December, 1975. I was also happy at his choice as I had coincidentally directed the same group of students in Wycherly's The Country Wife in the spring of 1976. I had heard the students enthusiastically describe their experience with Ed Call and I knew the acting problems with which he had dealt. Asked why he chose this production, Call answered: "I say it was my best production because it was the production in which I learned the most; where I felt I controlled the material better than I ever had."⁵⁸ Remembering Call's complaint against professional actors who did not like detailed technical instruction, his choice made sense.

⁵⁸ Call interview.

"Students are more apt to do what you tell them than are hardened professionals. They're more trusting and easier to inspire."⁵⁹

The Purchase campus of the State University of New York, located about an hour away from New York City, is a relatively new college, founded in 1971. The school is intended to be the state university college most professionally equipped to train arts students. A professional theatre training program under Norris Houghton and Joseph Anthony, instituted a unique curriculum. It was their concept that each entering class would constitute an acting company which would stay together under a "mentor" for four years. It was hoped that in this way true ensembles would be formed which might stay in existence after the companies had graduated. Joseph Anthony was the mentor for the first company which graduated in 1976. Kay Carney, a veteran of Off-Broadway who had studied with Grotowski in Poland, led the second company. Ed Call directed this second company in A Midsummer Night's Dream in their third year.

It is important to know something about the training this company had received in its first two years to understand Call's achievement. A Midsummer Night's Dream was only the second play which this group had produced. Kay Carney had directed an experimental production of W. B. Yeats' The Player Queen the year before. The rest of the company's work had been in class. Because Carney was a disciple of Grotowski, much of the work was physical. Carney once expressed to me the idea that her purpose was to train actors who were totally free and uninhibited. She did an enormous amount of

⁵⁹Call interview.

game and improvisation work. Her primary objective was to get the students to "be themselves."⁶⁰ She was very suspicious of character work. The students had used words abstractly in exercises but they had done little scene work and almost no speech work. Once a student told me that although they had taken speech classes, most of them had felt that these were less important than the physical, experimental work Carney was doing.

The year before he retired, Norris Houghton hired Call to give the students beginning work in Shakespeare and specifically to acquaint them with problems arising from plays which largely rely on language for their effect.

The girl who played Hippolyta for Call voiced the general fear which most of the students had in approaching Shakespeare. "I was scared to death. I didn't know what the words meant."⁶¹

Call had twelve weeks with this company. He decided that he would spend the first six weeks working on problems of poetic text and the second six weeks rehearsing A Midsummer Night's Dream. "The thing that made this experience so good was those first six weeks in which we got to know each other and we really got into the problems of verse speaking."

Call tore up a book of Shakespeare's sonnets and gave several to each student. "I didn't know the sonnets. I told them I didn't want to read them or know anything about them. I just wanted them as

⁶⁰Kay Carney interview, New York, New York, January 10, 1976.

⁶¹Karen Werner interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

clearly as possible to communicate the meanings of those words so that I could understand what the poems were saying."⁶² The class spent many long sessions puzzling out some of the more difficult sonnets. "He didn't want us to act them, or emote them, or dance to them or anything we had been used to doing. Some of the work was very tedious."⁶³

One incident Call related to me seemed to be typical of some of the classes,

Meliora recited something one day, I said, "Melly, did you know there's a rhyme scheme in that poem?" She said, "No." "Well, there is. Would you recite it again, please, making the rhymes manifest to us? Also, would you make transitions where there's an end to a quatrain and another begins. Just take a pause. Do it completely technically." Peter Green got up and said, "This is ridiculous! This will not work." Those kids were awfully pre-set in some of their ideas. Peter said, "This is like kindergarten." Of course, I didn't know what the results would be. Mel said the poem again, doing all those technical things and suddenly we all understood the poem. Peter stood up and said, "I stand corrected." That was my first foot in the door and from then on I began to see the light at the end of the tunnel. You really had to prove things to those people.⁶⁴

The students graduated to monologues from Shakespeare after their sonnet work. Call's procedure was to make them clearly understand every word, to see the images specifically, and for them to want to "do something" with the words. "I had them read Bertram Joseph's Acting Shakespeare while we were doing the monologue work."⁶⁵ One of the difficulties encountered was that the students

⁶²Call interview.

⁶³Gerry Goodman interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

⁶⁴Call interview. ⁶⁵Ibid.

were so used to doing very personal work that they "were afraid to be big with the language."⁶⁶ Call tried to get them to enjoy the language and be more presentational with their monologues. "He made me sing one of my monologues one day. I felt so silly but it really helped me to get into it."⁶⁷ In reply to a questionnaire I submitted to the company regarding Call's procedure with Shakespeare, this answer perhaps best reflects Call's technique with the verse: "Mr. Call likes Shakespearean acting that invites the audience into the poetry. He believes that all ambiguities can be cleared by careful enough scrutiny of the text, and that the most important thing is that the actor understand precisely what he or she is saying, in order that the audience will."⁶⁸

Call's concept for A Midsummer Night's Dream was in part dictated by the lack of production funds at Purchase. "We did Midsummer Night's Dream in modern dress because the department didn't have any money. I decided we'd let the costumes evolve in rehearsal along with the characterizations."⁶⁹

Dean Joseph G. Stockdale, Norris Houghton's replacement as head of the theatre section at Purchase, recalls a somewhat different evolution of the production concept.

There had been a set created for the production, a kind of romantic purple monster which Ed Call really didn't like. However, Ed was not at all sure of what he wanted to do with the production. I suggested that they might use rehearsal

⁶⁶Call interview.

⁶⁷Werner interview.

⁶⁸Gerry Goodman Questionnaire, November 28, 1976.

⁶⁹Call interview.

clothes of their own choosing as in the Gielgud-Burton Hamlet. Ed Call is a little like that Mastroianni character in Fellini's 8½. He doesn't like to commit himself to concepts early on, which is fine for the actors but when you're working with scenic artists, it gets a little difficult. Of course, it's true we didn't have a lot of money so I suggested doing the show in rehearsal clothes to solve two problems.⁷⁰

After a week of auditions, Call cast students in roles which were "closest to themselves. I was very careful casting that play. I didn't want to encounter problems of character work while I was working heavily on text."⁷¹ One of the actors seemed conscious of this procedure. "He generally liked to work with the 'givens' of the actor's personalities. He would take the actor's mannerisms and extend them until they became dramatic characters. For instance, the actor playing Lysander knew how to tap dance and was rather charming, so he incorporated a brief dance into one of his speeches."⁷² Call's modern-dress version employed character types familiar to the students and similar to themselves. "I had a black, sexy girl to play Titania. I put some bumps and grinds in for her. Gorman, who was Bottom, was his goony self. Jim West, who played Snug, was his California self. Snout was a Puerto Rican garage mechanic. All the low comics were garage mechanics. Wally, who played Robin Starveling, was a cross between Ed Norton and Yogi Bear."⁷³

⁷⁰ Dr. Joseph G. Stockdale, Jr. interview, Purchase, New York, December 20, 1976.

⁷¹ Call interview.

⁷² Gerry Goodman Questionnaire.

⁷³ Call interview.

In the first days of rehearsal, Peter Green recalls that Call discussed briefly his concept of the play.

He saw the lovers as the center of the play. The lovers were like prep school kids, innocents just emerging into the world. They were caught between two worlds: The very tight bourgeois class represented by Theseus and Hippolyta and a rock world, spirit class represented by the fairies. The court was stifling and materialistic. In the forest they could be free. You could do things in the forest you were never free to do in the real world of the court. The forest was liberating. I guess the production was about liberation.⁷⁴

Call seemed to evoke this sense of liberation from the students partly by allowing them to do unorthodox things with Shakespeare. The mechanics spoke in Brooklyn and Puerto Rican accents. He let the students bring in contemporary clothes for their characters, some of which were found in fashion magazines. Hippolyta described her costume and attitude to me in the following terms: "I wore a red velvet skirt to mid calf with a white Mickey Mouse shirt. I was very rich and decadent. I could not stand Theseus. I was bored with everything. Theseus was like a very rich Long Island businessman who smoked cigars and wore double knit suits."⁷⁵ The lovers in this production were like school children. The men wore blue blazers and school ties. The girls wore school frocks. Hermia was a little more extravagant than Helena. She wore hiking boots, red tights, and a lime cardigan in addition to her school dress. Helena wore horn-rimmed glasses. "We ran through the forest in slow motion. We also ran all over the theatre. Puck pulled us together by invisible strings. We

⁷⁴Peter Green interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

⁷⁵Karen Werner interview.

experienced a kind of group orgasm before we finally collapsed together into a deep sleep."⁷⁶ Gerry Goodman remembers that they went through several ideas before settling on an ass head for Bottom. "We started out with a paper bag, then we made a plaster of paris head, and we finally settled on brown paper ears on wires and rouge on his nose."⁷⁷ This latter idea was borrowed from Peter Brook, unbeknownst to the cast.

What were the rehearsals like? "We worked for a long time on the text but then we started playing games. The mechanics played basketball together. We started the show that way."⁷⁸ "We used to improvise and paraphrase a lot. Occasionally Ed would give us business."⁷⁹ "He gave us a lot of freedom but I always felt he knew what he wanted."⁸⁰ "I remember he had Maureen and I do one hour of improvisation on our first scene and then sat back and said, 'We can't use that.'"⁸¹ "I always felt like I was bringing in a wealth of stuff to try in rehearsal. If he didn't like one thing, there was always something else to try."⁸² "He made us do lots and lots of run throughs. If a scene wasn't working, he'd make us run it over and over."⁸³

⁷⁶Meliora Dockery interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

⁷⁷ Goodman interview.

⁷⁸ George Moore interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

⁷⁹ Dockery interview.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Robin Mello Questionnaire, December 5, 1976.

⁸² Werner interview.

⁸³ Wally Rubin interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

Several of the actors noted that Call has a special way of dealing with actors if they had a problem. "He used to put his arm around you, take you aside and whisper things to you. Sometimes they weren't coherent or logical things but he communicated to you through the way he said things."⁸⁴ The girl playing Puck commented, "I remember him mumbling 'wet leaves' to me and I tried to be a wet leaf for weeks."⁸⁵ The actress playing Titania remarked, "He'd also give us very specific notes about line readings he wanted changed. Sometimes he would tell us what words to stress."⁸⁶

Part of the enthusiasm and energy of the production came from the fact that the students began to have fun early in rehearsals. They were happy to be doing a whole play after two years of exercises and they were amazed to find out that Shakespeare wasn't some monster to be afraid of. Karen Werner expressed her feelings during rehearsals. "The whole thing felt like a party."⁸⁷

Late in rehearsals, Call found he continually had to remind the students of the need for more energy. "I was particularly having trouble with Gorman who was playing Bottom. His energy was never consistent. I was very hard on him. He was just too erratic. He was brilliant in performance, but he only found the energy for the role two days before we opened."⁸⁸ Having worked with the same actor, I understand Call's frustration. Student actors may be easily inspired but they are not always able to reproduce a scene the way it is directed or rehearsed. Wally Rubin, Robin Starveling, commented,

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Mello Questionnaire.

⁸⁶ Giselle Wright interview, Purchase, N. Y., December 10, 1976.

⁸⁷ Werner interview.

⁸⁸ Call interview.

"His notes during the final week of rehearsal were just like any other director's, 'make it faster and funnier.'"⁸⁹

It was presented in early December, 1975 in the theatre known at Purchase as Studio D or the "Black Box." This is essentially a big, black room with movable seating. The set consisted of three platforms put together, about one foot high, in the shape of a flattened out "U." There was no other scenic element. Lighting was extremely simple. Call used some "rather romantic" and "sometimes ironic"⁹⁰ music, which was taped, written by Dan Schwartzman, a student in the music department.

Looking back at this account of Midsummer rehearsals at Purchase, the following rehearsal techniques are in evidence:

1. Pre-rehearsal study of verse speaking.
2. An evolving rehearsal process. The concept seems to have grown in rehearsals, using actors' talents rather than being predetermined.
3. The characters fit actors' personalities.
4. Discussion of play's meaning at beginning but not much philosophical discussion of ideas in the play thereafter.
5. Great concern that the actors understood the meanings of the lines.
6. Actors allowed freedom to create business and costumes. Call would accept or reject their ideas as well as give them specific business and instructions on costume ideas.
7. Extensive use of improvisation and games.

⁸⁹Rubin interview.

⁹⁰Ibid.

8. Many run-throughs.
9. Personal dealing with acting problems on the side.
10. Party-like rehearsal atmosphere.
11. Specific technical notes on line readings.
12. Concerned with performance energy later in rehearsals.

A Midsummer Night's Dream received no critical analysis.

Some indication of the production's reception and an attempt at evaluation will be made by noting the audience's response, the actors' feelings, and, finally, opinions of other members of the theatre faculty at Purchase. It played four performances. "The first performance was only half filled. The second night was full. By the third night the whole campus had heard what a great show we had. And the fourth night we had people standing in the aisles."⁹¹ When I got to Purchase to direct The Country Wife, the students assured me that anything their company would do would be sold out because of the fame they had achieved with A Midsummer Night's Dream.

For the students involved in the production, Ed Payson Call became a kind of theatrical god. While I was there I was constantly told, "Ed Call would never do it that way." I felt like a nasty stepfather who had been forced on children whose loyalty to their first and real father would never allow them to follow any other. These are some of the evaluative comments from actors in the cast:

The production was the best I've ever worked on. Ed gave to everyone of his actors. We respected the work because he respected us.⁹²

⁹¹Rubin interview.

⁹²Mello questionnaire.

The audience reaction was similar to my own: that the production was exhilarating. We (the actors and the audience) were swept away by it. By joining the personalities of the cast members to the precision of the text work, Mr. Call created a fusion of great vitality.⁹³

This was top notch classical work as well as top notch entertainment. Very rare.⁹⁴

I'd give anything to be able to work with him again.⁹⁵

It is hardly surprising that Call found the Purchase experience positive. Seldom do professional actors express admiration for their directors the way these students openly adored Ed Payson Call.

In addition to Call's abilities and charisma, it should be remembered that this was the company's first production with an "outside" professional director. They were discovering for the first time in their lives the joy of acting Shakespeare. In my experience I have never known a group of actors who have not found working on A Midsummer Night's Dream exhilarating. It is Shakespeare's most produced play. The simple reason for this is that it is always popular with audiences.

Kay Carney, the group's mentor, wrote me the following comments on the production:

The reason I think it was so successful was that he worked with the strengths of the group, he didn't just do another A Midsummer Night's Dream. He saw their sense of fun, physical responsiveness and literary brightness and emphasized the comic and physical elements, while making a clear through line. He also perceived their lack of speech skills, and the design tech department's weaknesses. Instead of trying to gloss these things over, he chose to mount a "modern"

⁹³ Goodman questionnaire.

⁹⁴ Denise Springer questionnaire, December 7, 1976.

⁹⁵ Green interview.

production where people wore contemporary clothes and the "rude mechanicals" spoke with working class New York accents. The production was true to Shakespeare in its essence and yet it couldn't have been done with any other group of young actors. It took them from where they were to a far more sophisticated level of expressiveness--and joy. It was in no way an "academic" theatre production, utilizing the youth, wildness and individuality of the people involved.⁹⁶

Dean Stockdale, Head of the Theatre Division, also found the production to be "a delightful experience."

I was very proud of the production in that it was the first thing I saw here in my first year as dean which indicated to me that there was any kind of professional training going on here. The performance was a positive experience for the students and students need to be successful; they need positive reactions to their work, so that they aren't riddled with tensions and self doubt. It connected with an audience who enjoyed it enormously.⁹⁷

Stockdale had some interesting reservations about the production as a learning experience for the students.

Ed really didn't address himself to the problems of teaching the students a uniform Shakespearean diction nor did he teach them anything about period movement, or how to wear a period costume. He avoided those really difficult problems. I don't know if the production would have been as popular if he had, however. But I think that part of our responsibility must be to prepare them to do Shakespeare in professional companies which use mid-Atlantic diction and traditional Elizabethan costuming. He used what they could do, so they didn't learn as much as they might have.

Also, while there were enormously enjoyable bits and pieces, I didn't feel that they played the plot line. The danger in "actor training" productions is that the actors like to put in what they call "enrichment of the play." This means that everybody pads their parts as much as possible in order to show that they have learned how to act and have imagination. The result is that the play written by the author is often obscured. Relationships between characters are often blurred and someone who didn't know it would have trouble following it.

⁹⁶Kay Carney letter, December 7, 1976.

⁹⁷Stockdale interview.

I also think that while the production was delightful, it pandered to a sense of freshness that doesn't really exist in the professional theatre. Also, I don't really like productions where playing the actor's personality is more important than playing the character that the playwright wrote.⁹⁸

Stockdale's comments show that he probably wanted a more "traditional" production. There is no simple answer as to what makes the best learning experience for a student.

Ed Call's aim was to direct the best Midsummer he could given the resources at hand. He seems to have done that very well. Obviously, part of that success comes from the fact that he did not try to remake his actors. In this sense his production was a "confrontation" of the script; a modern response to an old play. It may have taught them more about the essence of Shakespeare than a thorough study of mid-Atlantic speech and period costume would have done.

Doubtless Stockdale is right when he says that a "sense of freshness" does not exist in the professional theatre. The question arises: should one prepare students. Or, should one let the academic theatre teach the professional theatre that "freshness" is possible? Obviously one of the reasons Ed Call enjoyed this Midsummer so much was that it must have reminded him that "freshness" is still possible.

Analyzing Call's techniques in relation to his principles, particularly as they relate to the Midsummer production, reveals the following:

⁹⁸Stockdale interview.

1. Ed Call's philosophy that Shakespeare is a showman was obviously reflected in Call's "party atmosphere" rehearsals in which actors were encouraged to invent comic schtick. The repetitive use of the words "joy" and "delightful" in descriptions of the performance indicate that this production was one of Call's "joyful celebrations" or "carnival" festivities."
2. Call's insistence upon the importance of the text and the necessity for actors to understand how the verse works materialized in his class sessions previous to rehearsals of Midsummer. It is interesting to note, however, that this quality of clarity seems not to have impressed either Kay Carney or Joe Stockdale. The obvious energy and comic physicality of the piece seem to have overshadowed the actors' comprehension of what they were saying. This quality of clarity was much more in evidence in Call's Twelfth Night at Purchase in 1976, a production which used Renaissance costumes and no modern or regional accents. When I saw Twelfth Night I was impressed with the intelligence of the line readings and remember hearing a professorial-looking gentleman exclaim, "They seem to know what they're saying!"
3. Call clearly used his preference for regional American accents in A Midsummer Night's Dream. He used Bronx, Puerto Rican, and "black" speech for Titania.
4. Call capitalized on the actors' personalities in creating characters for Midsummer.

5. Call's rehearsal process for Midsummer revealed a great openness to allow the actors to try things out. His use of games and improvisations obviously kept the students interested in "what he would do next."
6. Call gave technical notes to the actors and held tight rein on the production. He acted as an editor of the actors' ideas. He made firm decisions on what stayed in or went out.
7. In the case of Midsummer, Call was not completely sure where it was going when he started rehearsals as evidenced by his indecision on the set as well as very sketchy general discussions at the beginning of the rehearsal process. However, the actors believed "he always knew what he wanted."

Edward Payson Call sometimes contradicts himself. He believes that actors should be given great freedom, yet he also believes that the director must have a tight rein. He says that Shakespeare was a showman yet he has a scholar's devotion to "what the words mean." Some of his productions are "joyful celebrations" while others are sardonic and coolly critical of their characters. He feels resentment at his early academic training, yet his "most successful production" was produced at a university theatre. Call poses as an anti-intellectual yet he is quite articulate and obviously thinks deeply about his productions.

Actually, these contradictions are only a seeming and indicate an interesting artist who combines theatrical savvy with a probing mind. Call tries to combine freedom and control, improvisation and form in his productions. He feels that the way for an

audience to enjoy what they are seeing is for them to understand what is being said. Call's description of The Caucasian Chalk Circle as a "celebration of goodness in a dark world" shows a director fond of celebration but cognizant of the darkness of the world. Call's dislike of his restrictive education indicates a desire for a more liberating education. The latter seems to have been his goal and achievement at Purchase with his production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

CHAPTER VIII

MICHAEL KAHN

Michael Kahn's success in the world of American Shakespeare came quickly. His first professional Shakespearean production was for Joseph Papp in Central Park in 1966. The play was Measure for Measure and it was one of the best-received productions in the history of the New York Shakespeare Festival. The next year, as guest director at the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, he directed The Merchant of Venice, and two years later he was appointed artistic director of that theatre.

Since 1969 Kahn has directed fourteen productions of Shakespeare's plays. In addition to running the American Shakespeare Festival for the past seven years, he became artistic director of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, in September of 1974, and is Head of Interpretation at the Juilliard School, Drama Division.

Born in Brooklyn, Michael Kahn attended Friends School there and later the Performing Arts High School. He states he knew he wanted to be a director from the age of five. He went often to the theatre, and "particularly admired the work of Tyrone Guthrie."¹ While an undergraduate at Columbia University, he directed Pericles for the theatre at Barnard. Most of his early work off-Broadway was

¹Michael Kahn, personal letter, September 7, 1976.

with contemporary playwrights. He attracted favorable attention as a director with such avant-garde works as Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro and Jean Claude van Itallie's Motel at La Mama. When Motel was later moved to a Broadway theatre, Kahn says he was not invited to redirect the work because of his "terrible temper." "But they did it exactly as I had staged it."²

After attaining some success with productions of The Rimers of Eldritch by Lanford Wilson and The Thornton Wilder Plays, for which he won a Vernon Rice Award, he got the job directing Measure for Measure for Joe Papp. "I was terribly lucky. It really was a fluke."³

Kahn saw Measure for Measure as a black comedy and set out to emphasize the "pustules, dirt, and disease of the play."⁴ It starred Barbara Baxley and Shepperd Strudwick as Isabella and the Duke, Tom Aldredge as Angelo and Christopher Walken as Claudio. Like many other productions in the late sixties, Kahn's opening for the play showed the influence of Peter Brook's Marat/Sade. Stanley Kauffann in the New York Times wrote of ". . . an opening pantomime of wretches, prostitutes and crippled beggars that is cut-rate Marat-Sadism."⁵

Ming Cho Lee provided him with an excellent set: a dirty, white brick structure with empty windows and fire escapes, which told us right away that this was not to be a pretty fairy tale farce: nobody was playing games. . . . In this production the action took place in a sick body politic suppurating with beggary, lechery, and cruelty. As Claudio

²Michael Kahn interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Stanley Kauffmann, "The Theatre: 'Measure for Measure,'" New York Times, July 14, 1966.

was led struggling and stumbling to prison for getting his fiancée with child . . . onlookers threw rotten fruit at him--and beggars scrambled to pick it up.⁶

Kahn's 1967 production of The Merchant of Venice, in which Morris Carnovsky played Shylock, was a bitter, melancholy reading of the play emphasizing the venality of the Christian characters. Dan Sullivan of the New York Times noted this "black" interpretation.

. . . Michael Kahn shows us that it is possible to stage the play as a sour little story in which nobody--including Shylock--comes off very well. . . .

Antonio's initial melancholy hangs over the proceedings like an enervating mist and makes the final reconciliation scene less than affecting. The lovers speed off to their lusty beds and the listless Merchant . . . is left alone to brood, as the lights go down, on the solitary life.⁷

Kahn returned to Stratford in 1968, this time directing two plays, Richard II and Love's Labour's Lost. By this time he was becoming known as an enfant terrible with a reputation for outraging idolators of the bard. The following quotations from two critics describe these two productions, both given "mod" settings and costumes.

The king's laziness and vanity are absurdly overplayed, the latter almost to the point of effeminacy. Richard sweeps around in clothes by Ray Duffin that would not be out of place in an old Joan Crawford movie, pets a kitty-cat color-keyed to the costumes, pronounces the words "high treason" as if high treason were rather a giggle.

. . . Granted that Shakespeare's Richard is weak and vain, there has to be some nobility about him . . . or why should we care what happens to him in the end?

⁶Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1968), p. 342.

⁷Dan Sullivan, "Theatre: At Stratford," New York Times, June 22, 1967.

Setting and costumes are in the look-at-me tradition that is one of the least happy aspects of Shakespeare in Connecticut. Ed Wittstein's setting oddly resembles a lunar observation platform (plastic, of course). . . . Costumes smack of the fashion show. . . . Why must even the gardeners look picturesque?⁸

This Love's Labour's Lost is a tribal-love rock musical version.

. . . In what seems to have been a desperate effort to give a contemporary look, if not meaning, to Shakespeare's original, Mr. Kahn has transformed the king of Navarre into a bearded, giggly Maharishi Mahesh, his lords into hippie disciples, and the Princess and her ladies into Honda-riding, mini-skirted maidens. . . .

. . . Incense, bells, flowers, sitars and the cymbals, create a most appealing atmosphere.⁹

Both Richard II and Love's Labour's Lost relied heavily on visual ornament for their impact. Modern elements which audiences would clearly recognize as contemporary (homosexual camp for Richard II and "Beattledom" for Love's Labour's Lost), were major aspects of both productions. Also, both productions took unsympathetic points of view toward their main characters. Richard II was reduced in stature to a "fop" and the lovers in Love's Labour's were seen as more silly than "romantic."

In 1969 Kahn became artistic director at Stratford and directed a controversial production of Henry V. At first loathing the play and much opposed to the war in Vietnam, he decided that Shakespeare had provided enough material in the play to turn it into an anti-war

⁸Dan Sullivan, "The Theatre: 'Richard II' at Stratford," New York Times, June 24, 1968.

⁹Vincent Canby, "Theatre: A Hip 'Love's Labour's Lost,'" New York Times, June 28, 1968.

statement. A program note for the production announced, "The play is set on a stage which is a playground--and the space is transformed, as the playground is, into whatever or wherever the players want it to be."¹⁰ The playground was seen as a battlefield on which men waged war for personal glory and territory. The actors wore athletic equipment; the French wore hockey padding. War was seen as an elaborate male game. There was a scoreboard of the dead.

Some of the devices used in the production are staple "avant-garde" techniques: pre-play improvisations, actors (who are clearly actors) putting on their costumes before the audience (a device also used by the 1975 Royal Shakespeare production of Henry V), amplified Brecht-style commentary. In answer to my question about what had been his inspiration for the effects, particularly the pre-show warm-ups he had devised, Kahn wrote to me, "The motive of Henry V was games--war games, political games, etc.--and we started with games that everybody plays."¹¹

Kahn

With this Henry V created an attention getting theatrical experience. Josef Sommer, who acts frequently for Kahn at Stratford, feels it was one of their most successful productions, meeting the challenge of the enormous stage there, which tends to swallow up actors. "One of the most successful things I've seen here was the Henry V that Michael did. It justified and filled that stage very

¹⁰"Henry V," Playbill, June 1969.

¹¹Michael Kahn, personal letter.

nicely."¹² The popularity of the production was such that it became the first Stratford production to move to Broadway, and in the fall of 1969 played a limited run at the ANTA theatre.

Taking a play which is generally considered a positive picture of great leadership and courage, Kahn turned the play upside down, taking a deliberately unsympathetic look at the characters in the play. Clive Barnes' review makes Kahn's approach quite clear.

Mr. Kahn is trying to see Henry V as so many war games. He starts the play on a jungle gym. . . . To help us, Mr. Kahn provides little Brechtian subtitles to most of the scenes. Thus, before the Crispian Day speech, portentously, "The Machine creates the ultimate lie, point of No Return". . . . Mr. Kahn is full of invention. . . . After the final massacre he has his victims walking around like a ghastly, stylized chorus wearing bloodstained deaths-head masks . . . even in this condition watching the triumphant Henry woo the melting Katharine.¹³

The critical reception to this anti-war Henry V tended to be radically negative. Brendan Gill's review in the New Yorker epitomized the reaction of a majority of the reviewers. "I may as well say straight off that I consider it a sort of American Krakatoa--a disaster on a hitherto unprecedented scale, in which vulgar patronizing of Shakespeare is carried to the point where the original work of art is almost totally pulverized."¹⁴

¹² Josef Sommer, interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

¹³ Clive Barnes, "Theatre: Bard Returns," New York Times, June 9, 1969.

¹⁴ Brendan Gill, "Bending Author, Bent Director," New Yorker, November 22, 1969.

Regardless of how one felt about it, Henry V caused people to become more aware of Michael Kahn. It was the kind of production that makes a theatrical reputation. It was a concept production, a director's piece. In going deliberately against the main thrust of Shakespeare's heroic play, Kahn raised an important critical question: must the director be true to the author's intention? Why should it matter, if the theatrical event as staged is a vital piece of theatre which speaks to a contemporary audience in a "relevant" way?

In his interview Kahn noted with amusement that of all his productions his "notorious" Henry V is the one which still causes people to ask, "Why did you do it that way?" He feels that he has changed greatly since then and would no longer do Henry V in the same manner. "If I were going to do Henry V now I would manipulate the play less. Now I would show the vigor, humanity and necessity for Henry, as well as the violence."¹⁵

In 1970 Kahn directed Othello with Moses Gunn and All's Well That Ends Well. In the case of Othello, it was the actor's work and not the director's which stirred the interest. From the remarks of the critics, it would seem that Kahn deliberately understated and played down every aspect but the starring role, avoiding effects that would call attention to themselves:

Mr. Kahn is being patient this season, and patience is a great virtue, especially when you have a virtuoso like Mr. Gunn about. Instead of trying to constrict the play into a pre-conceived production design (as he did last season, fatally, with Henry V), Mr. Kahn is this year giving Shakespeare his

¹⁵Kahn interview.

head, more or less trailing him about and honoring his each whim or inspiration separately. It is an improvement; we are hearing more; above all there is more room for the individual performance.

. . . There is something neutral about the look of the production, as though it were all taking place in . . . limbo, or perhaps in an international railway station.¹⁶

All's Well That Ends Well, in the season of 1970, also offered no new conceptual approach to the play. Kahn himself sees the All's Well production as a turning point in his career. He says, "At first I approached the play as a black and bitter comedy. But somewhere in the rehearsal process I gained respect for Helena's love for Bertram, and decided the play was really a romance. . . . Since then my productions have tended not to be so emphatically pessimistic as they were before All's Well That Ends Well."¹⁷

It is fascinating to note this radical change in Kahn's work. It is as if the bitterness of Henry V had totally exorcized itself. From 1970 on, the "black" aspect of Kahn's work is almost totally absent. A "rose" period replaces it; romance replaces bile. It is remarkable also that All's Well That Ends Well should be the first production to show this change since the script has definite "black" possibilities which Kahn chose to ignore at this time. Clive Barnes' review noted Kahn's interpretive choice. "Mr. Kahn's reading of the play . . . devotes more time to charm than bitterness, more space to redemption than sin. The nastiness of the play remains, but

¹⁶Walter Kerr, "Mr. Gunn, Joyously in Love with Shakespeare," New York Times, June 28, 1970.

¹⁷Kahn interview.

Mr. Kahn scents it most elegantly."¹⁸ Walter Kerr criticized the "picture post card universe" of the production but also admitted, "the play is fairy tale enough to fit into this stereopticon slide view."¹⁹

In 1971 Kahn directed The Merry Wives of Windsor with W. B. Brydon as Falstaff and Jane Alexander and Lee Richardson as the Fords. It also was a "pretty" production which aimed to please the Stratford audiences. "Pratfalls, belly laughs, and general good cheer"²⁰ in a spectacularly wooded Elizabethan setting made this another example of Kahn's new "rose" period.

In 1972 Kahn offered the Roman plays, Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra. Both were "actors'" productions. "I just wanted people to look at the beauty of those plays and to become involved with the characters and the story. I purposefully used no conceptual approach to them."²¹ Walter Kerr who had chastised Kahn for his radical Henry V now criticized him for his lack of adventure." There is a soft and uneasy sense of pleading in both of Connecticut's new productions . . .

¹⁸Clive Barnes, "Theatre: Shakespeare in Connecticut," New York Times, June 16, 1970.

¹⁹Walter Kerr, "'All's Well that Ends Well' Even Begins Well," New York Times, June 21, 1970.

²⁰Clive Barnes, "Theatre: 'Merry Wives of Windsor,'" New York Times, June 14, 1970.

²¹Kahn interview.

as if in fear that the gods or the gallery might take umbrage and intervene."²² Kahn feels that there is no way an artist can win with the critics. "It's funny. When you use a concept the critics call you gimmicky, and when you don't, they call you unimaginative."²³

The year 1973 brought another controversial "concept" production in the tradition of his Henry V, Kahn's Macbeth with Fritz Weaver and Rosemary Murphy. Kahn feels that Clive Barnes understood what he wanted to do with the production in his review of the play.

The play itself is obsessed with witchcraft. . . . This seems to be the point of departure for Mr. Kahn's production. . . . This Macbeth is fleeing from demons, enmeshed in diabolic plans scarcely of his own making. . . . The church is negligently fighting the forces of evil. The staging, incidentally, is full of crucifixes. Mr. Kahn--if I am not misreading him--has an image of the play as a battle between the forces of Christianity and chaos, between order . . . and the riot of unmotivated evil.²⁴

Kahn commented, "I wanted to create a very sympathetic vision of Macbeth, a man caught in forces he cannot control. I wanted it to be very frightening."²⁵ The set, modernistic and geometric with steel teeth biting into each other, was meant to symbolize a vise which impersonally destroyed its victims.

In 1974, the year in which he also became producing director of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, Kahn did a transplanted risorgimento Romeo and Juliet which also played the Kennedy

²²Walter Kerr, "Of Killing and Kissing," New York Times, June 25, 1972.

²³Kahn interview.

²⁴Clive Barnes, "Stage: A 'Macbeth' Beset by Demons," New York Times, July 16, 1973.

²⁵Kahn interview.

Center for a limited run. It featured Roberta Maxwell and David Birney as the lovers and Kate Reid as the Nurse.

When asked why he set the play in this period, Kahn answered, "I wanted to do the most romantic Romeo and Juliet possible. What is more romantic than the nineteenth-century? One has to do something different from the Italian Renaissance; to look at it freshly. Zeffirelli's film has made that play almost impossible to do."²⁶ Kahn began his production with the death of the lovers and "flashed back" to the beginning of the play. Also, he added several sonnets to the text, in his mind, adding to his "passionate view of the play." "Romeo and Juliet has got to be filled with the emotion of young love and that's what I tried to do."²⁷ Walter Kerr, for one, did not find the production warm enough and accused Kahn of "painting the lily, gilding the rose."²⁸ The risorgimento setting seems to have overwhelmed the production. John Conklin, the designer, also felt that he and Kahn got carried away and overwhelmed the play with too much Nineteenth Century detail. "Romeo and Juliet tended to get lost in all the frou-frou."²⁹

In 1975 Kahn staged The Winter's Tale, revived it at the McCarter Theatre in the winter season of that year, and revived it again at Stratford in the summer of 1976. This production will be

²⁶Kahn interview.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Walter Kerr, "Lots of Tinkering and Little Energizing," New York Times, July 7, 1974.

²⁹John Conklin interview, New York, New York, July 18, 1976.

analyzed in detail later as it is the production Kahn chose for me to discuss as "one" of his most successful productions.

Kahn's most recent production of Shakespeare was As You Like It produced in the summer of 1976. With Eileen Atkins as Rosalind and Tovah Feldshuh as Celia, it was a "transplanted production" set in the English eighteenth century. The setting consisted only of bare limbed trees. Color came from the Gainsborough-like costumes. Aside from the transplant, I saw little innovative in the production. Overall it was a muted, melancholic approach to the play.³⁰

The preceding review of Michael Kahn's creative history reveals the following influences and qualities:

1. Kahn's early directing experience in contemporary drama with such writers as Langford Wilson, Jean Claude van Itallie, and Adrienne Kennedy may have influenced his desire to find "modern" ways of doing Shakespeare.
2. Kahn's production of Measure for Measure for Joseph Papp was specifically influenced by Peter Brook's Marat/Sade. Kahn has expressed admiration for the work of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. He thought Peter Brook's A Midsummer Night's Dream to be "the greatest production of anything I have ever seen."³¹
3. Kahn's first five productions of Shakespeare (Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, Richard II, Love's Labour's Lost, and Henry V) were all cynical, "black" looks at their material.

³⁰I saw the production at a final preview July 13, 1976 at Stratford, Connecticut.

³¹Kahn interview.

4. Kahn likes modern "chic" settings, many of which seem influenced by ideas from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. His sets often use plastic materials (Richard II, Love's Labour's Lost, The Winter's Tale) and have costume designs which suggest contemporary high fashion.
5. With All's Well That Ends Well, Kahn's vision of Shakespeare became less dark. He began to direct romantic productions of the plays with "story-book picture" settings and costumes. These productions (All's Well that Ends Well, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Romeo and Juliet, and As You Like It) aimed to entertain their audiences.
6. Kahn has also done productions which he considers "actors' productions." These are productions in which directorial concepts have taken second place to actors creating believable characters. Productions in this category would include Othello, Julius Caesar, and Antony and Cleopatra.

It will be noted that there is a definite progression in Kahn's work away from the "black" to the "romantic." The "actor's productions" all tend to fall somewhere in the middle period. One constant in all the work is an emphasis upon design and the visual look of the production. This tendency, present from the beginning, is evident in his latest work, The Winter's Tale (1975 and 1976) and As You Like It (1976), a production which Kahn called "an actor's production," but which had a visual picturesqueness which sometimes took focus away from the actors.

Today, Michael Kahn feels that his philosophy of directing is quite different from what it was when he was younger. He sees himself as a pragmatist and an eclectic, someone who has consistently given over more of the creative decisions to the actors.

I don't have a certain plan about what I want to do with Shakespeare. The thing I like about Shakespeare is that each play tends to speak somewhat differently to me. Something happens between what is interesting to me and what is in the play. My productions of Shakespeare are an evolving search, an accumulation of things I've learned. Right now I'm very involved in getting to what I think the play is about, rather than what my ideas are about.³²

As I talked to Michael Kahn, I became aware of the way in which the director personalizes Shakespeare's vision for himself. "Of course, the changes in my way of dealing with Shakespeare are all related to ways in which I've changed in my personal life. I used to be terribly cynical and so stressed the blackness of the plays. Now I think I'm more of a romantic. I think people really want people to get together, don't you?"³³

The relativism of Shakespeare's vision is the quality which most appeals to Kahn. For him Shakespeare takes a fatalistic view of reality.

He will think certain things at one time and other things at another. Shakespeare always looks at a situation from several points of view.

Everything that happens is what life is really about. You can't be disappointed in life because, in a way, what you get is what is. . . . I don't think you can sit there and say "I've been betrayed" or "The world is a pile of crap," because basically it is--that is the world. Therefore, when you come to understand that, I don't think you're any longer cynical. I think understanding this leads to acceptance of life on its own terms.³⁴

³²Kahn interview.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

This relativism and acceptance of the human conditions is for Kahn the dominant vision in Shakespeare's plays. This is a reversal in philosophy from the active protest against the human condition which marked his early work, such as the bitter Measure for Measure of 1966 and the anti-war Henry V of 1969.

Aesthetically, Michael Kahn would seem to be a formalist.

"Things that move me in the theatre tend to be aesthetic. When it's all perfect, visually and rhythmically--a certain formality, a working-out of aesthetic problems, moves me more than human situations--like a dance."³⁵ Kahn is less interested in realism or emotional involvement. He states he wants an audience to be continually aware of the fact that they are watching a work of art and wants their chief pleasure to come from the way in which things are done rather than what is being done.³⁶ His use of the words "formality" and "balance" suggest the temperament of a classicist. Kahn attends the dance frequently. Classical ballet is a favorite pastime and he confides, "I learned everything I know about directing from the dance."³⁷

Theoretically Kahn would like to develop a permanent ensemble with a longer rehearsal period for each play, an ensemble that would stay together and have rehearsal time in which to explore other things besides the scripts. He would like to develop workshops and classes to take place before and during the rehearsal process. "I'm disappointed that because of economics we have no classes, no workshops. My dream is to have a rehearsal period when we don't have to begin with the play. I was only able to do that once, with Henry V, and it

³⁵Kahn interview.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

showed results. Four weeks' rehearsal for Shakespeare is crazy. Right now we're struggling just to get the shows on."³⁸

The American Shakespeare Theatre is continually beset with economic difficulties. There was some question as to whether or not the 1976 summer season would be cancelled. As late as May 11, 1976, the New York Times reported that Michael Kahn "was hard at work trying to build a program on very short notice and only very recently acquired financial underpinnings."³⁹ Apparently the \$300,000 required for the summer season was obtained at the last minute. In view of this, one wonders whether or not the revival of The Winter's Tale was not at least partly a practical economic move.⁴⁰

Another principle which Kahn says has influenced some of his more recent productions is a desire to produce what he calls "chamber Shakespeare."

The Winter's Tale and As you Like It productions have no more actors in them than there are definite characters. No lords, attendants, extra peasants or foresters. In fact, I have used in Winter's Tale one actor for several roles. Hermione also plays Perdita, and so forth. I think I share with the Royal Shakespeare Theatre a desire to do "stripped down" Shakespeare. I think this lets us concentrate on the script more and eliminate those nineteenth-century aspects of spectacle from Shakespeare which have nothing to do with the play.⁴¹

This idea may also to some degree be based on the economic necessity to hire fewer actors, a necessity which Kahn admits. "Yes, I wanted to do Winter's Tale cheaply."⁴² For masses of extras, Kahn has substituted

³⁸Kahn interview.

³⁹Robert Berkvist, "Boom Time for the Bard," New York Times, May 16, 1976.

⁴⁰As of this writing it is doubtful whether there will be a 1977 season of the American Shakespeare Festival.

⁴¹Kahn interview.

⁴²Ibid.

other rather spectacular and arresting scenic effects. It would therefore be wrong to see him as a neo-William Poel. He is, in fact, a theatricalist who in The Winter's Tale uses moving scenic pieces and lighting to achieve his "spectacular effects" rather than large number of actors.

In summation, Michael Kahn's principles of directing may be enumerated as follows:

1. He is eclectic and pragmatic. He does not believe in any exclusive theatrical philosophy.
2. He believes that a director must serve the play, find out what the play is saying.
3. The director must personalize the play.
4. Shakespeare is a fatalistic relativist. Productions must reflect this.
5. Aesthetically Kahn is a formalist.
6. He likes stripped down "chamber Shakespeare."

Although Kahn says he is "never happy with any of my productions," of his recent work, The Winter's Tale is one that he is "reasonably happy with. . . . Winter's Tale is close to what I wanted to do with Winter's Tale."⁴³ It was first produced in late July of 1975. It played for nineteen performances in Connecticut and was later revived at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, where one of Kahn's assistants restaged it with a largely new cast, "while Michael

⁴³Kahn interview.

was busy with some other project with Eileen Heckart."⁴⁴ The revival opened the 1976 season at Connecticut in June, after four weeks of additional rehearsal time which was shared with a new production of Arthur Miller's The Crucible.

A comparison of the two cast lists of principle roles will show only five or six actors from the first cast were retained:

Time.....	Powers Boothe	Time.....	Powers Boothe
Leontes.....	Donald Madden	Leontes.....	Philip Kerr
Polixenes...	Jack Ryland	Polixenes...	George Hearn
Camillo.....	Brian Petchley	Camillo.....	Josef Sommer
Hermione....	Maria Tucci	Hermione....	Maria Tucci
Antigonus...	William Larson	Antigonus...	William Larson
Paulina.....	Betty Henritze	Paulina.....	Betty Henritze
Shepherd....	Richard Dix	Shepherd....	Richard Dix
Autolycus...	Fred Gwynne	Autolycus...	James Cahill
Florizel....	Richard Backus	Florizel....	Victor Garber
Clown.....	John Glover	Clown.....	John Tillinger

Kahn states that there were no reasons, other than prior commitments of certain actors, for the cast changes, "--although with other actors new values came out."⁴⁵ However, Donald Madden, the first Leontes, was unhappy in the production, and his departure seems to have been agreeable to all sides. In an interview he stated that he had gone into the role with the understanding that Claire Bloom would be doing the Hermione/Perdita roles.⁴⁶

This writer has found some divergence between Kahn's statements of his aims and methods, and the final look of The Winter's Tale.

⁴⁴ Philip Kerr interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

⁴⁵ Michael Kahn, private letter.

⁴⁶ Donald Madden interview, New York, New York, July 21, 1976.

While Kahn sees a movement away from conceptual productions in his work, his Winter's Tale is clearly a director's piece. The most striking aspect of this production is its visual atmosphere, which in turn dictates the feel of the performances.

Donald Madden, the first Leontes, felt the play and his performance were overwhelmed by the white set and costumes which he described to me as "an Alaskan ice palace."⁴⁷ This visual concept dictated the aesthetic style of the performance so that, while Kahn left the actors relatively free within the set, everything they did was largely dwarfed by the setting.

It is probably for this reason also that the replacement of half the original cast did not really change the feel of the production since it is so fully controlled by the director's vision. Philip Kerr, the second Leontes, stated, "It was not the happiest arrangement for an actor. I was very aware of the fact that I had to fit into a production concept which was very strong and predetermined before I got into it."⁴⁸

I saw The Winter's Tale in its second season at Stratford on June 16, 1976, before my interview with Michael Kahn. What follows is a description of what I saw, written immediately after the performance.

One comes into the large theatre and sees an abstract white setting. Hanging center is a disc, perhaps a sundial, on which are painted Renaissance astrological signs (references to the seasons?). All is white. The floor has a central circular dais covered with what looks like a white carpet. There are some silver or steel accents. The whole thing is probably derivative

⁴⁷Madden interview.

⁴⁸Kerr interview.

of Trevor Nunn's white Winter's Tale for the Royal Shakespeare in 1969, which was all white and abstract and also featured astrological signs.

At the beginning of the play a figure dressed in white beachcomber pants hold a long barren branch and waves it around. Soon lights come up on two men, also stripped to the waist, who are locked in a wrestling position. They are revealed to be Leontes and Polixenes. Set looks like an ultra-modern apartment with white carpet covering everything, set and wings. Plastic strips hang above. The movement of the actors is slow, balletic, masque-like. The central mime-figure plays several roles: a ferryman, a guard of Hermione, a messenger, Time as chorus. He also plays Apollo, and the bear which pursues Antigonus (done in a gold mask). His movement is sensual and larger than life. In the trial scene a piece of sculpture comes down which is made up of many white faces staring at the audience.

All the costumes are white, heavy, Italian-Renaissance cut, touches of fur. Even the peasants who find the baby are dressed in what look like quite elegant sheepskin suits. When spring comes in the fourth act, Time's branch has a few leaves on it, the hanging plastic tubes are painted green with light, and the costumes become pastel green, chartreuse, and yellow--ice-cream colors--some with flowers.

One is aware of what seem to be great distances between the actors. They tend to stand still and deliver lines; a kind of formal, rhetorical stance, vaguely neoclassic. At the most potentially moving moments, such as the announcement of the death of the son, the movement becomes very stylized: all characters sway, mimelike, as if blown about by the wind. All of this tends to distance the human moment.

My interview with Michael Kahn revealed that most of my perceptions of the production resulted from effects intended by the director. When asked about his pre-rehearsal working habits, Kahn used The Winter's Tale as an example of the kind of thinking process he goes through. He tends to translate his reading into immediate visual metaphors leading to a design concept.

I knew pretty quickly that things had to be circular. The play is cyclical, and very much a fable. We can learn a great deal about themes, spines, of Shakespeare if we look at the titles. He called The Winter's Tale a winter's tale and not "Leontes." That I think is a frank admission that we are to take it as a kind of fable. We don't have to make the same

demands of it that we make on a realistic piece. I think those people who are upset by the play, who feel it is unreal and full of terrible coincidences . . . that it is not a good nineteenth century psychological study, are simply misreading what was the actually stated intention of the writer, which is to write a good story. . . . I thought it was very necessary right from the start to emphasize the cyclical nature of the play and the story aspects.⁴⁹

The "cyclical nature" of this story of the seasons suggested to Kahn that he wanted a setting made up of circles. "I had never worked in circles before." The wintry aspect of the play gave him an image of a predominantly "glacial setting." He had several sessions with designer John Conklin and asked him to submit several designs before he was satisfied. "At first he brought in a design with four potted trees with branches on them. They would have to be moved around by extras. I hate that in Shakespeare--when little men come out dressed as servants or something and move things around. I kept asking him to make it more abstract--more of a distillation. I'm very pleased with what finally came out."⁵⁰

John Conklin, the designer for the production, admits the concept took longer to evolve than usual. "At first the concept was more realistic: a series of dead trees wrapped in burlap, which would later bloom. Michael kept saying, 'It's a fable--give me something more abstract.'" Conklin felt that The Winter's Tale was different from most of the productions that he had done with Kahn, all of which have been more realistic, including the nineteenth century Risorgimento Romeo and Juliet in 1975. He says he likes to work with Kahn because "Michael knows painters." They often work together on a visual idea

⁴⁹ Kahn interview.

⁵⁰ John Conklin interview, New York, New York, July 18, 1976.

for a production taken from a painter. Conklin also likes the fact that Kahn "has a knowledge of history and a feeling for historical style."⁵¹

Kahn felt he needed a narrator to hold the play together, since this was to be a "story." He decided to use the figure of Time, which Shakespeare provides in the fourth act, at the beginning of the play as well. He did not know when rehearsals started that this figure would also play many minor roles. "I actually took many of those parts away from actors and gave them to Powers [the actor playing Time]." When I noted that his conception of Time as a young, androgynous man was unusual, Kahn replied, "I knew I didn't want a cliché father image with a beard and sickle. I wanted a strong, forceful figure like something out of a da Vinci. I took as much of his clothes off as possible."⁵² He finally decided that this narrator should play all the small characters who change the play in some way. "I was struck by the great number of odd characters, like a mariner, a gaoler, Apollo, and so on, who change the course of events in the play."⁵³ In his production these characters became one, a central narrator-figure who slinks around in various disguises.

The formalistic, ritual quality which Kahn sees in the language and the mythlike story of the play, was to be matched with dance movement, "part Martha Graham and part second-act Giselle."⁵⁴

It is striking that many of Kahn's metaphors come from the other arts. He told me that music is also a strong influence in his

⁵¹John Conklin interview, New York, New York, July 18, 1976.

⁵²Kahn interview.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

formation of a concept for Shakespearean productions. "I think Mozart involves me with most of the comedies. . . . The Magic Flute is the thing which always came to my mind when I was working on Winter's Tale. I suspect that if I ever did The Magic Flute it would come out looking something like The Winter's Tale."⁵⁵

Although Kahn had a strong sense of the final style he wanted for the production, he had worked out few specifics for his actors to help them achieve this style when he went into rehearsals. He is fond of saying that he leaves many things unanswered before he begins rehearsals. Doing so many of Shakespeare's plays has brought him to the realization that they are more difficult than he first thought, "more rich and resonant." He no longer analyzes the play to find the one theme that is expressed in a particular play. "I no longer think a play of Shakespeare's is about one thing. It's about a lot of things a lot of the time." The secret of doing Shakespeare, he believes, is to "try not to make too many decisions. . . . One must try to keep things open."⁵⁶

Given a commercial theatre's traditional rehearsal period of four weeks, and the necessity to have all design decisions made in advance, this is rather difficult. Casting itself commits a director to certain conceptual decisions. One suspects that in many instances these decisions are made instinctually and without very much prior intellectual analysis. Many decisions, particularly in an institutional theatre like the American Shakespeare, are based on economics and available talent.

⁵⁵Kahn interview.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Beyond the necessity to make design and casting decisions before beginning to rehearse, a great deal is left to the actors. Kahn insists that he doesn't pre-block. In his earlier days he was more of a dictator. Now he feels it is only the insecure young director who pre-blocks or is very specific in his instructions to actors. He likes to tell the actors, "You're the creative artists: you do the creating." He noted, "In the beginning I was insecure. I'm never happy about my work but I think I'm a good director--and so I don't think I have to go to rehearsal and prove myself to those actors--that I know how to direct."⁵⁷ He looks on the rehearsal process as a search for the "key to the play" which he says he and the actors find together. Finding the key to the play happens in rehearsals and comes from "not making too many prior decisions."⁵⁸

His rehearsals start with reading in a "very large circle." He does not discuss the play with the actors a great deal, "except to tell us what the period and locale are going to be."⁵⁹ In the beginning of his career, Kahn used a somewhat different technique: "I used to make the actors face me in a line and did more discussing."⁶⁰

During the early readings he works to make sure the actors know exactly what they are saying. "You'd be surprised how many actors of Shakespeare do a play without really knowing what they're talking about."⁶¹ He deals with scansion to some extent, although most problems of scansion and diction are dealt with outside the rehearsal period with a specially hired coach. "I would like a more consistent

⁵⁷ Kahn interview.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Sommer interview.

⁶⁰ Kahn interview.

⁶¹ Ibid.

diction," he says. "What we do here is barely adequate. What we try to do now is take away the glaring errors of one kind or another. I think when you've only got three and a half to four weeks rehearsal, too much attention to diction will make the actor artificial."⁶²

After making sure the actors know what they are saying, Kahn asks them to think more about why they are saying what they are saying. One by one actors spontaneously get up in the circle surrounded by the company and begin to walk their scenes. "It's all rather like a theatre game. . . . Then I know it's time to begin to block."⁶³ Kahn insists that in blocking he merely tells actors where they come in and where they go out.

Actors confirm that Kahn gives them a great deal of freedom which, for the most part, they seem to like. Josef Sommer, who played Camillo in the second production as well as many other roles for Kahn, finds this method creatively stimulating.

He certainly is not one to dictate or force a characterization on the actor. He is very anxious to see what actors will bring to him and go on from there. He's not the kind of director who sits at home and decides, "This character's going to be this way, that character's going to be that way, this character's going to move from A to B and that will be that." I'm not saying that doesn't work but it's a little less happy for actors because they feel very regimented and very locked into things, particularly if you don't think the thing the director's come up with works. Then you're usually in trouble. So, the more open way of working that Michael has is usually more satisfactory.⁶⁴

Philip Kerr, the second Leontes, also sees Kahn as a "liberal" director. "He doesn't like to impose things on actors. He bounces

⁶²Kahn interview.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Sommer interview

off actors. He needs actors who will go ahead and do things for themselves."⁶⁵

In this kind of rehearsal process, actors have to do a great deal of "homework." Kahn says, "An actor who doesn't do homework with me is rather lost. By homework I mean figuring out what's going on in a scene and coming in with some ideas of how to play it, developing a life for the character."⁶⁶

Negatively, this kind of procedure can be frustrating for actors. Josef Sommer noted that Kahn will sometimes say, "'Everyone just get up there and say the words and let's see what happens in the scene.' He may not know at all what the scene is about the first time through. I think the actors sometimes resent not knowing."⁶⁷

Once he has been stimulated by the actors, Kahn feels he begins to think too quickly. "I take a long time to get started but once I do get started I work much too quickly." He also begins to tighten his reins on the actors. He wants to see results. "After I've been very nice and dear and wonderful with them I tend to cut them down desperately."⁶⁸ A tendency toward impatience was noted by Josef Sommer and Philip Kerr. "He talks in terms of results even though I know he doesn't want actors to work that way."⁶⁹ "Michael wants to see results pretty fast. He pretty well wants to see what he's gonna get, particularly if it's an actor he doesn't know."⁷⁰

⁶⁵Kerr interview.

⁶⁸Kahn interview.

⁶⁶Kahn interview.

⁶⁹Kerr interview.

⁶⁷Sommer interview.

⁷⁰Sommer interview.

This concern with results illustrates itself in Kahn's habit of working on large sections of the play at one time. He likes to have a lot of run-throughs, working for an overall rhythm. "Michael is perhaps less patient in working over a scene until you come up with something. He wants you to do it at home."⁷¹

Although trained in the Stanislavsky method and conversant with its techniques and vocabularies, Kahn at this stage in his career is not very concerned with "truth of emotion" nor does he like to spend much rehearsal time helping actors to find their "moments." "I think to him personally these things are less important. He will deal with them if you can't, or won't, or go to him--but he is often impatient with them."⁷²

Along with his impatience, Kahn can be "extremely moody," according to Sommer. He can become personally difficult. "When Michael is in a poor mood he lets it all out, and you know right from the top that that's the way it is. Things are not going to go particularly well that day. He'll end the day depressed and pretty much communicating that to the cast, saying, 'It all looks pretty terrible. The production is a disaster.' One can take that with a grain of salt. The next day one will see a different and clearer approach from him."⁷³ This emotionality is apparently somewhat less than it has been in the past. Kahn denies he has much of a temper any more, and, laughing in memory of an earlier self, he roared, "I used to have a fierce temper, an awful, awful temper."⁷⁴

⁷¹Sommer interview.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Kahn interview.

He reflects that he likes actors in general, but agrees that they sometimes have battles. "Tovah Feldshuh [to play Celia in As You Like It] and I have had a wonderful time beating up on each other."⁷⁵ He tends to be impatient with actors who play presentationally, for effect rather than remaining within his design. He mentioned that there had been some friction between himself and Donald Madden on the first production of The Winter's Tale. Madden, in an interview in July of 1976, said that he had found it "terribly hard to be anything but . . . [a] stick figure in that set and costumes." Apparently Madden identified so closely with the character that he still persists in the mistaken notion that Leontes is justified in suspecting Hermione of adultery. "Polixenes has been there for nine months and Hermione is falling all over him, a pregnant woman. Leontes, if he is to be anything but a fool, must not look too insane." He emphasized the frustration he felt in trying to give the role emotional warmth in an abstract setting. "I had a terribly difficult time trying to give the depth of emotion and passion I think this play is written with in that icy winter wonderland. I think it put the frost on the emotions too early in the play. . . . The picture-book isolation of the production made it very hard to communicate any emotion. I found it very difficult to heat up that stage."⁷⁶

In the rehearsal process, Kahn often shies away from discussion of psychological motivation for the characters. When asked about Leontes' motivation, which in the production I saw had strong

⁷⁵Kahn interview.

⁷⁶Madden interview.

homosexual overtones, Kahn replied, "Yes, I think Leontes is partially motivated by repressed homosexuality as well as the desperation of male menopause. I'm not suggesting that Leontes wants to go to bed with Polixenes. But I really don't like to talk about it at all."⁷⁷ (The opening tableau of the play had Leontes and Polixenes stripped to the waist and locked in a wrestling hold, which Kahn confirmed was inspired by Ken Russell's film of Women in Love.)

When Philip Kerr assumed the role of Leontes, he asked Kahn to help by inventing blocking between Hermione and Polixenes which might look as though the two were in some sort of collusion, to help motivate Leontes' insane "out-of-nowhere" jealousy. "I don't really think it works too well, though," Kahn now states, "Shakespeare really wants it to come out of nowhere, as a mystery."⁷⁸ There are mysteries both in the play and in the production which it seems Kahn would prefer to leave undiscussed.

My investigation of the pre-rehearsal and rehearsal process for The Winter's Tale has revealed the following:

1. The design concept of the production was early on formulated by Kahn. He based the design on thematic concerns of the play. In a sense the set and costumes were metaphorical embodiments of the play's meaning.
2. He is very concerned in giving the production "unity" (witness the narrator figure, color keys, etc.).

⁷⁷ Kahn interview.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

3. He borrows ideas from other arts (dance movement and musical analysis).
4. He does not pre-block.
5. He does not make acting decisions for the actors.
6. Rehearsal process is a search. (This is true for the acting problems but they must always be made within the strong visual concept of the show which has been pre-determined.)
7. The actor must do a lot of homework. Kahn does not give the actor much. He tends not to deal with "truth of emotion."
8. He is at times personally temperamental with the actors and will sometimes berate them.
9. He prefers not to discuss psychological motivation.

An investigation of the critical reception for The Winter's Tale indicates that for the most part Kahn was successful in communicating the kind of production he wanted, regardless of whether one liked or agreed with it or not. Many critics thought this late play of Shakespeare's difficult to stage. "The play is an enormous challenge to the director. Beneath its surface is a pearl, but it is a pearl that has to be searched for."⁷⁹ The improbable plot, in addition to Shakespeare's more than usually pronounced mixture of genres, make it "one of the Bard's most dangerous plays. But every ten years or so someone tackles it--usually to his regret."⁸⁰ All seemed to

⁷⁹ Clive Barnes, "Stratford 'Winter's Tale,' A Model of Style," New York Times, August 1, 1975.

⁸⁰ Sylviane Gold, "A Hot and Cold 'Winter,'" New York Post, August 1, 1975.

recognize it as a "complex, difficult work to stage."⁸¹ Because of these difficulties, it was felt that a particularly strong directorial hand was required to bring unity to the disparate pieces of the play. "The Winter's Tale is called a director's play because, unlike the comedies and tragedies, it won't flow on its own."⁸²

Clive Barnes, who over the years seems to have grown into one of Kahn's champions, was perhaps the most enthusiastic, calling the production, "a model of style, sense, and poetry." He responded to the look of the production "which set the play in a world of mystery and under-stressed beauty." Kahn's aesthetic sensitivity to verbal and visual poetry, and, one suspects, the dance-like quality of the production, brought approbation from Barnes. "Mr. Kahn is very properly concerned with developing the verbal and even the visual beauty of the play."⁸³

Carl Tucker of the Village Voice found some of Kahn's stage symbolism full of "cosmic mumbo-jumbo," but also admitted that the direction ". . . is daring, ingenious, and intelligent." He seemed genuinely impressed that the play could work on the stage. "I never suspected that this poem could persuade as a play." Tucker ended his review with a general tribute to Kahn for raising the quality of productions at Stratford. "Again thanks to Michael Kahn, there is more to the Stratford experience than the picnics."⁸⁴

⁸¹ Christopher Sharp, Women's Wear Daily, August 1, 1975.

⁸² Carl Tucker, Village Voice, August 11, 1975.

⁸³ Barnes, August 1, 1975.

⁸⁴ Tucker, August 1, 1975.

All the reviewers praised Maria Tucci's "noble" Hermione, but a few found her too old to play Perdita. Donald Madden was often praised but Clive Barnes had an interesting reservation about the performance: "Donald Madden, who must have the most mellifluous voice on the American stage, made a noble but at times overly-stagey Leontes. It was a trace too self-conscious, but had a classical confidence that few American actors can muster."⁸⁵

In the summer of 1976 the reception was again mixed, though Philip Kerr seemed to come off a little better than Madden. Barnes noted that Kerr "has a poetic depth to him that is most impressive, he gives jealousy a kind of grandeur." He found all changes in the production "of emphasis rather than anything else," and felt they concentrated on the "director's essentially lyric approach to the play." Kahn's aestheticism again found approval from Barnes. The question whether or not the play succeeds as drama was less important than that it was "a lovely production that has the reverberations of poetry."⁸⁶

Walter Kerr in his Sunday column in the New York Times liked the fact that the production stressed the artificial, fable-like quality of the script. "Director Kahn and designer Conklin give us all the guidelines we need, teasing us into joining the fun by asserting its artifice." For Kerr the style of the production illuminated the narrative quality of the play, tying all the parts together as a story. Less appreciative of the pastoral scenes, Kerr wrote,

⁸⁵Barnes, August 1, 1975.

⁸⁶Clive Barnes, "Stage: A Lyrical 'Winter's Tale,'" New York Times, June 18, 1976.

"The second half diminishes the fun because Mr. Kahn tries to have too much of it." James Cahill was "unable to find the witticisms" in the difficult comedy role of Autolycus.⁸⁷ Kahn himself has remarked that Fred Gwynne in the first production was more successful "because audiences know and love Fred. The part requires a star personality."⁸⁸

Analyzing Kahn's principles in relation to his techniques and the communicated results of his work, the following statements are possible:

1. He is less eclectic than he says he is. There is an underlying aesthetic to his approach which gives prominence to the visual experience of a production. His primary concern seems to be to find the design concept for his production first.
2. Kahn tries to analyze what the playwright is saying in any given play. In this way he is concerned with Shakespeare's vision. He translates this perception into visual terms embodied in the design.
3. Kahn's changing interest in the plays, as well as the changing emphasis in his productions (from cynicism to romanticism), reveal that his productions are personalized and come out of the way he feels about the world at any given time.
4. Characters tend to be dwarfed by powerful scenic elements in Kahn's productions. In a way, this is a metaphor for a fatalistic universe.

⁸⁷Walter Kerr, New York Times, June 27, 1976.

⁸⁸Kahn interview.

5. Actors' comments that Kahn asks for certain effects, as well as his reviews discussing the poetry or beauty of The Winter's Tale, reveal that Kahn is an aesthetic formalist.
6. Kahn's belief in a permanent ensemble theatre is not substantiated by his practice. Very few actors have been rehired by him over a long period of time; nor has Stratford been able to achieve any ensemble identity.
7. Kahn does give actors freedom, but as Donald Madden's comments reveal, the actors' effectiveness is sometimes restricted by the overwhelming importance of the visual design of his productions.
8. Kahn's productions are "stripped down" of inessential characters but they are far from scenically bare. They are humanly and emotionally stripped down.

Michael Kahn's production of The Winter's Tale revealed a director whose main concern is style rather than content, aesthetic rather than human. The visual elements dictate a desired formalism and unity of style. He is a formalist who says, "I like things to fit together."⁸⁹ The human element, including the actors and their roles, he lets go their own way. His preference in design indicates a certain fashionableness, a fondness for stark bareness, which on the whole gives an abstract quality to the production. He tends, as do most of the Royal Shakespeare directors, toward an abstract Shakespeare, in which the poetic, lyrical qualities of the text are underscored.

⁸⁹Kahn interview.

It is fair to point out that these directorial qualities are especially prominent in this production of The Winter's Tale, a play for which they can be justified. It was written for the indoor Blackfriars Theatre, and has certain masque-like qualities (as do many of the later plays) which make this approach valid. It may also be that at this point in his life The Winter's Tale is a particularly suitable vehicle for Kahn's directorial philosophy, which has moved away from an angry black vision to a more rarefied poetic aestheticism.

In this "paring down" and through the importance which visual elements achieve in his productions, Kahn creates a Shakespearean world less realistic, more symbolic, ritualistic, and dream-like than many of his contemporaries. Like Peter Hall, John Barton, Trevor Nunn and Peter Brook of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre he is interested in producing abstract "modern" types of Shakespeare in productions like The Winter's Tale. There is in Kahn's work an emotional coolness which moves the theatre away from human identification toward distanced aestheticism.

CHAPTER IX

NAGLE JACKSON

Nagle Jackson, the youngest director whose work is examined in this dissertation, is a product of the Ashland Shakespeare Festival. Relatively unknown nationally, he has achieved a reputation in regional theatres such as the American Conservatory Theatre and the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre where he has served as artistic director from 1971 to 1977. His Shakespearean output is not enormous--eight productions; however, he finds a place here as an example of a director who has found opportunities at Shakespeare festivals and regional theatres.

Jackson's education is also typical of directors producing classical repertory in the United States in the seventies. He received his education at a small liberal arts college, Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where he majored in English and French. Shakespeare was a part of Jackson's early childhood. His father, Dr. Paul Jackson, was a Shakespearean scholar who taught in the English Department at Whitman. "I just kind of grew up with all those characters, Prince Hal and all the others. My father was a specialist in Shakespeare and Chaucer. The first influence on me was a literary one, which could have been dangerous, but my father also had another streak in him which was show biz. He loved musical comedy and jazz, particularly Dixieland."¹

¹Nagle Jackson interview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 6, 1976.

With a scholar for a father, Jackson as a child was treated to a year in Europe at the age of ten, during one of his father's sabbaticals. "At the age of ten I saw Richard Burton in Henry V (I didn't know it till years later looking at an old program) and Michael Redgrave as Richard II. I remember finding that tedious. It has since become one of my favorite plays. I saw a very funny Midsummer Night's Dream in Regent's Park. We also spent a good deal of time in Paris and I saw boulevard shows in French. My father took me everywhere with him."²

While an undergraduate at Whitman, Jackson came under the influence of his college director, Rod Alexander, who later became head of the drama department at Dartmouth College. "Rod was a master of farce and had terrific comedic skills. He was a good teacher."³ It was also during his undergraduate career that Jackson began to spend his summers at the Ashlant, Oregon, Shakespeare Festival. "I started in 1957. I carried lots of spears and was lucky enough to play Speed in Two Gentlemen of Verona."⁴ "I went back every summer even after I was living in New York. I spent four summers there as an actor and three as a director."⁵

After graduating from Whitman, he won a Fulbright to study mime with Etienne Decroux in Paris. "Most people asked to study with Marcel Marceau. They didn't get Fulbrights. They hadn't found out who was Marcel's teacher, namely Decroux."⁶ The French theatre influenced Jackson, "not in the traditional or grand classical style of the Comedie Francaise, but in early Molière like Les Fourberies de Scapin and the little shows on the boulevards."⁷

²Jackson interview. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid. ⁷Ibid.

Returning from Paris, Jackson became a nightclub entertainer and musical comedy performer. "I started singing in nightclubs and got my first Equity acting job doing musicals in Vancouver at Theatre under the Stars. I did all those secondary comic roles in shows like Can Can. I still dearly love those things and think they're great training. I trust people who can do musical comedy. It usually means they can take direction and are quick. They also can communicate to an audience."⁸

During his years in New York he was a member of the Julius Monk Revue at the Plaza Hotel, and studied directing with Alan Schneider at the Circle in the Square theatre school. "Alan told us the first day that no one could teach directing, but that he would just tell us whether or not our work communciated to him. He was the first person to teach me the necessity to simply 'tell the story' clearly and directly."⁹ Jackson also first encountered Bill Ball at the same school in a course in classical acting which Ball taught. "Mostly he taught scansion and rhetoric. I really think Bill would have been happy in the Comedie Francaise. He always wanted to hand down or make up a classical tradition. But I learned a lot, especially about scansion, from him."¹⁰

It was during his summers at Ashland that Jackson developed a desire to direct Shakespeare. The director he worked under at Ashland whom he respected most was Bob Loner. Jackson describes the Ashland approach as "terrific discipline for a director."

⁸Jackson interview.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

They tried to create an absolutely faithful reproduction of the plays as they would have been staged. It was good for a director to come up through that school because you, as the director, while the most important person in the production, had to be the least noticed. If you had really done your work well, no one really knew that you had done your work. The directing had to fit that stage exactly and there wasn't much room for directorial gimmicks.¹¹

Two other directors with whom he did not work but observed were B. Iden Payne and Allen Fletcher. "I didn't get cast by Dr. Payne in Midsummer which he directed while I was there. Prior to auditions, I had learned all the lines of Flute and decided on a lot of business. I don't think he wanted any of that. I was glad later that I wasn't in it. All of his productions were staged in his head. He knew every line reading and gave them to the actors."¹² He was more favorably impressed with Allen Fletcher. "I was dying to act for Allen. The year before I went there as an actor was his last year as a director. I saw his 1956 productions of Richard III, which was marvelous, and his Love's Labour's Lost, which was the first time I had really ever laughed uncontrollably at Shakespearean comedy. That production is still with me."¹³ Acting at Ashland was also good training for a director "because so many of the directors at Ashland left you alone you were forced to come up with your own 'business' in order to save yourself. I think that sink-or-swim situation made me an inventive actor and that inventiveness has served me well as a director."¹⁴

In 1965 Jackson directed Volpone at Ashland, ". . . my first production in a theatre of any note. It was, thank God, an enormous

¹¹Jackson interview.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

success, and based on that, I was asked back the next summer for Two Gents and the summer after that for Pericles, which turned out to be the most important show in my career because based on that, I was asked to A.C.T. as an associate director, working first on Twelfth Night with Bill Ball."¹⁵ Two Gentlemen of Verona, in 1966, was Jackson's first production of Shakespeare directed at Ashland. It was a "wild and wacky production which they still remember for its Max Sennett chase sequence."¹⁶ "I lost several years of my life staging that. They had never had a Max Sennett chase on that stage. That was what challenged me. The idea of doing a Max Sennett chase with an inner-above and below. They lend themselves to chases and I'm sure Shakespeare used them for that purpose at times."¹⁷

After Two Gentlemen of Verona, Jackson began to be known as an inventive director of comedy. "Marx Brothers movies had a great influence on me but also Abbott and Costello. Seventy percent of what they do is bad, but thirty percent of it is pure gold. I also learned comedy listening to the radio as a child. I loved Fred Allen, Jack Benny, George Burns and Gracie Allen. I learned how to time lines listening to them."¹⁸

The seldom-produced Pericles served as a spectacular directorial vehicle in 1966 for Nagle Jackson. Using the mime he had learned with Decroux in Paris, he inserted many mime sequences which added to the theatricality of the production. His program notes give an indication of his approach:

¹⁵ Jackson interview.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸
Ibid.

Incest, murder, shipwreck, cannibalism, piracy, white slavery, wizardry, pagan idolatry: these are some of the ingredients of Shakespeare's most popular play, Pericles, Prince of Tyre--most popular, that is, in his own day. . . . Pericles has been described as an Elizabethan Around the World in Eighty Days, and there is also a touch of James Bond exotica in this free and fleshy travel story. . . . It is hoped that Pericles, with its realization of total theatre and its brazenly erotic and exotic audience appeal, will once again find popularity. . . . But above all, Pericles is a tale, a story of the sea, and the almost biblical narrative of a man fighting uncertainly a wilful and careening universe in which

"The seaman's whistle
Is a whisper in the ears of death
Unheard."¹⁹

Pericles' success took Jackson to A.C.T. where he started as Ed Hastings' assistant on Twelfth Night and ended up directing a second production of the play.

When Ball's production of Twelfth Night opened, what had seemed beautiful in rehearsal went terribly wrong. It had been overdirected, overstaged, had become sentimental and stylized. It was stunning to look at but there was too much icing. Bill had originally wanted to have three different casts under three different directors do Twelfth Night. At first I was not scheduled to direct one of them. But, as always happens at A.C.T., suddenly there was a shakeup and I found myself in charge of putting in the second company. Talk about having something "thrust upon you." There it was and I had to deliver. All the cast was new except for Ken Ruta as Malvolio. Little by little, while keeping the outlines of Bill's production, I began to soften the stylized edges. I was terrified, but after it opened I received the greatest compliment of my life. Bill was doing a little talk to the audience, a seminar on the play. I came out to join him on the set at the Geary Theatre. He turned to me and said, "I want everyone to know that this man has improved on my production." You could have knocked me over with a feather.²⁰

¹⁹ Ashland Shakespeare Festival Souvenir Program, Summer 1966, p. 6.

²⁰ Jackson interview.

However, Ball did not give Jackson any other Shakespearean plays to direct. His work at A.C.T. included In White America, Little Malcolm, Room Service, and Little Murders. "Ultimately I had to leave A.C.T. in order to do Shakespeare as well as other big directorial productions. In those days only Bill did Shakespeare."²¹

In 1970 Jackson went back to Ashland to direct Comedy of Errors, and Richard II. The latter is regarded by Jackson to be his "best production of Shakespeare to date"²² and will be discussed later in the chapter. Comedy of Errors was a production "of which I am ashamed," Jackson has commented.

Before they built the indoor theatre at Ashland things were getting a bit dangerous. Some of us began to do things on that outdoor stage that never should have happened in the name of inventiveness. I was one of the main perpetrators. I tried to play around with the idea that the Elizabethans may have built little mansions on their stages. Actually I was building a detailed set over the Ashland Elizabethan facade. It was ghastly. I put the production behind a proscenium. The audience liked it. They laughed but I really didn't like it. It was the same summer I did Richard II, and that was the best thing I've ever done, so all was forgiven. Now that they have the indoor theatre you can do different kinds of experimenting and the outside theatre has been restored to its necessary formality.²³

Judging from photographs of the production, one gets the impression that the Comedy of Errors set erased Ashland's Elizabethan stage. The costuming was stylized, cartoon-Elizabethan. A trick was played on the audience at the opening of the show: when the play began, all the actors were dressed in black robes on a black set. Once the action began they threw off the robes revealing their colorful garb. The inner-arena was transformed into a clock tower in which mechanical

²¹Jackson interview.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

men appeared doing comic stunts in imitation of Gerald Freedman's Central Park staging of 1966.

Jackson became artistic director of the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre in 1971. There he has been able to do both large productions and many productions of new plays, for which Milwaukee has a unique reputation among regional theatres. His credits at Milwaukee are interesting and assorted. They include: King Lear, The School for Wives, The Visions of Simone Machard, Cat Among Pigeons, The Journey of the Fifth Horse, The Cherry Orchard, Prisoner of the Crown, Our Town, Joe Egg, and The English Mystery Plays.

King Lear was an important production for Jackson. "It was the first tragedy I had directed, and marked a turn in my work toward more serious drama, which I have tended to do since then."²⁴ The Lear program carried the following note giving us an indication of Jackson's approach to the play:

The tragedy of King Lear is the tragedy of a man who finds himself alone in the universe, that there is not divine providence at vigilance for him, that not even the natural ties of kinship retain in all circumstances. "All myself . . . no seconds" the old king cries from the depth of his lunacy and runs into the woods to hide himself. He is captured, revived, captured again, and driven to the final emotional exhaustion of death.

It can be argued that Lear is truly mad in the first section of the play and achieves reason later through suffering.

As if to heighten its horrors, Shakespeare has couched this progress in despair in innocent surroundings. King Lear has all the dimensions and colors of a folk tale, a folk tale that goes awry. There is the ritual dividing of the kingdom; there are the two evil sisters and the young good sister; the good brother and the bad; the court jester, and so on, all trappings of a traditional folk tale. Accordingly, our production begins that way, and there is nothing in the colors

²⁴Jackson interview.

of the costumes nor the behavior of the actors to betray that this little kingdom will be steeped in blood and despair. True horror happens unexpectedly, as in a fatal car crash, and is only slowly realized.²⁵

In this description, Jackson sees King Lear as an existentialist drama in which Lear's essential action is the realization of life's absurdity. The universe is a place of horror where, in isolation, human beings may be destroyed at any moment. He developed an original interpretation for the Fool's character:

In Lear I got a strong visual image for the Fool. I got the idea reading one of those numberless scenes that end with the Fool saying, "Take me with you, nuncle." Why is he always saying this? I got the idea that this guy doesn't have any legs. I put him on a little cart and Lear literally had to drag his conscience around with him everywhere he went through the heath, so it makes sense in the end that the Fool is stranded. I mean, he's literally stranded. They take Lear away at the end. I also introduced real Bedlam beggars. At the very end of the play, after Edgar carries off Cordelia, I left an empty stage and then, way up center on his little cart, came the Fool. We smeared his mouth with blood. We played that they had cut out his tongue. He comes in and he's trying to say "nuncle" and all that comes out are sounds. Then the Bedlam beggars crawl over him, and the last thing that we see is this hand going up for help.²⁶

As we shall see in the discussion of Richard II, Nagle Jackson likes to add scenes or characters which seem to embody certain symbolic overtones. The Fool in Jackson's mind seems to represent human helplessness before an indifferent universe while the cruelty of the beggars symbolizes unexplainable human evil.

²⁵ Nagle Jackson, program to King Lear, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Company, September 12-October 19, 1975.

²⁶ Jackson interview.

The preceding description of Jackson's career to the present indicates certain clear influences and tendencies in his directing:

1. The major influences in his early training were a Shakespearean-scholar father, early exposure to French and English theatre, coupled with an attraction to popular entertainments like musical comedy and night club revues.
2. His training in mime gave him a series of physical skills and his productions reflect these skills, as in the staging of Pericles and Two Gentlemen of Verona.
3. His direction of the comedies as well as his invention of original business for the Fool in Lear reveals a director who is very aware of "stage business" which is original and theatrical.
4. His statements on Lear show that he is becoming more interested in tragedy, although he still feels a "responsibility" to do the comedies, "because I know I can do them well."
5. His taste in comedy tends toward classical farce rather than sentimental comedies: Two Gents and Comedy of Errors rather than As You Like It or Much Ado About Nothing. He has stated, "If there were people I could meet, it would be Feydeau and Ben Johnson, preferably together in the same evening."²⁷ There is a hardness in Jackson's comic taste, a hardness which is also reflected in the cruel absurdity of King Lear and the power politics of Richard II.

²⁷Jackson interview.

Jackson does not see in Shakespeare a philosophy or view of the world which is particularly relevant to him. "I mean, he was a Christian and I am an atheist."²⁸ Shakespeare's most appealing quality for Jackson is his story-telling ability.

Shakespeare is so much a part of my life, going back to my childhood, that I suppose he seems like a familiar to me. I become more amazed at his philosophical statements, particularly in things like Lear, but above all, to me Shakespeare is a wonderful story teller. There are lots of things that Shakespeare thought which are not my cup of tea at all. When I think of the plays I think of them as stories. What I love in a story is a lot of things happening. That's why I adore Pericles. It's a silly play but it's a wonderful story. So much happens! I like Hamlet for the same reason--so much happens. Romeo and Juliet has so much happening: the party, the fight, and then the apothecary. One looks in vain, frankly, in modern plays for a lot happening. Not much seems to happen in so many of our plays. But Shakespeare created a world full of events.²⁹

This preoccupation with action relates to Jackson's philosophy of acting as well as his view of Shakespeare. At A.C.T. in 1969, I attended classes where he taught an approach to acting which concentrated on the specific actions of a character. Asked to reiterate his system of "the five parts of an action," he gave the following explanation:

Acting is nothing but the performing of actions: what is the person doing? Never concern yourself with what the person is. That comes afterwards from his actions.

I have discovered that all actions have five components: focus, determination, preparation, attack, and release. Actually I got this system from mime exercises. We see an object (focus); we make up our minds to deal with it or dismiss it (determination); we prepare to do something to it (preparation); we attack; and we release the energy. It's a wonderful device for comic timing. You can accentuate the determination or the

²⁸Jackson interview.

²⁹Ibid.

preparation or the release--which is a sure laugh. But it's equally important for serious dramatic moments. I'm convinced we go through these five steps every moment of every day. It's the natural rhythm of behavior. I use it as a director when scenes aren't working. Usually it's because an actor is skipping one of the steps. I even approach whole plays that way. In Shakespeare's five-act plays there is a feeling of 1-2-3-4-5 (though I assure you the acts do not conform to the five parts of an action).

I took this mime exercise which I had learned originally from Rod Alexander, and expanded it when I had to teach an acting class. It's a wonderful tool for forcing beginning actors to do something rather than to be something.

I am becoming more and more disenchanted with that term, "building a character." I am coming to think that it is a false road to travel because I think that what one has to do is build the behavioral pattern, build up what the character does moment by moment, and then when you have put it all together, someone will come up to you and say, "You are playing a melancholy Dane." In your own life, when you stop to think about it, you don't build a character. . . . You just do things and then at the end you go to an analyst and he tells you what character you have built. Art should imitate that process more. I try to present actors with purely plot and physical problems.³⁰

The insistence upon doing rather than being reminds one of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential idea that human nature is not something fixed but something which is constantly being created by our actions and choices in acting. Of course, Jackson's ideas also remind us of Stanislavsky's "system of physical actions." Near the end of his career, Stanislavsky had come to rely less on emotional memory and to concentrate on having his actors perform tasks or actions on stage which would lead them to their objectives.

The creation of a "loving atmosphere" is an important aspect of his directing to Jackson. He believes in giving actors a lot of approval.

³⁰Jackson interview.

I try to create a very special atmosphere with every play I do. I try like crazy to have everyone love me in a very real way, and sometimes things get very emotional. I bend over backwards to be warm and kind with actors, and actors like working with me. I have never yelled at an actor. I perform. Any good director performs. The part I play is "someone who loves them" and loves the play. I don't always love all of them, of course. It's a conscious thing, like a night club performer, in the way that my projection of ego is conscious. All performers want to be loved and all directors do too. I look for ways that I can warm them up. I love actors, truly. It's important that I was one of them for such a long time. I try to create a mystique for each show and a very warm feeling.³¹

Along with this atmosphere, Jackson likes relaxed, extrovert actors who have "had a wide variety of exposure to different disciplines, especially musical-comedy training."

I trust an actor who's got musical comedy on his resume more than one who does not. I think, "Now this is a guy who not only knows how to act, but he can also take choreography or three-part harmony. This is a person who knows how to channel his energies and knows the obligation to communicate," which is the most important thing I look for in an actor now. I feel that a person who has a background in commercial or musical theatre will know how to use his rehearsal time and won't get lost in a role to the point of losing himself in the part . . . or losing the show. The only actors I don't like are the Strasberg imitators, who are only concerned with the "truth" of their role, regardless of the style of the show.³²

In preparing for a production of Shakespeare, Jackson likes to read the original sources on which the plays are based. "The most important outside work for me is the original sources. I love to read folktales and epic poems, all those things that Shakespeare read. I think that begins to put me on a wavelength with the playwright."³³

Although Jackson reads criticisms of the plays and enjoys "the hoary old masters like Granville-Barker and Bradley,"³⁴ he finds that when

³¹Jackson interview.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

he is preparing a production he does not consult them. "I always find myself going back to the original sources, rather than to criticism."³⁵ Nor does Jackson find theatrical theoreticians inspiring. "I heard Jan Kott lecture once, and that put me totally off him. I've read Peter Brook and Dr. Guthrie--he produced 'good schlock.' I'm turned on to a lot of them when I read them, but they don't seem to influence my directing much."³⁶

When he directed Richard II for the second time at the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, he reset the play in the early part of the twentieth century prior to World War I. His rationale for this "transplant" was that Richard II is a tale about the end of divine rule and that "the funeral of Edward VII marked the Götterdämmerung of the European monarchies. . . . The old world died in 1914. . . . The last court of Europe was that of Edward VII."³⁷ In the program for this production Jackson wrote a defense of transplants which, while obviously constructed to defend one particular production, still suggests certain principles of producing Shakespeare in general:

The greatness of the theatre in Shakespeare's day lay in its accessibility. It spoke to the audience of its time in its own dialect, it behaved according to its own mores and it dressed in the accepted clothing of the day. All Shakespearean productions were "modern dress" productions; historical accuracy in costume and in behavior is a relatively modern notion. . . . One of our problems in dealing with these plays for modern audiences is finding the same accessibility. Too often, particularly in a small theatre such as ours, the fully dressed Renaissance production turns out to look like the school play; all these odd people standing around in large, hostile costumes

³⁵ Jackson interview.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Nagle Jackson, program note to Richard II, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Company, February 7-March 22, 1975.

with funny looking beards and wigs. The actors we have loved as people become mannequins. All too often people think that's the way Shakespeare should be done. In fact, it is the way to submerge it.³⁸

This statement is a good defense for the modern-dress production of Shakespeare. In my interview with him, Jackson stated, "I don't completely believe all that."³⁹ The statement was also a justification for a less expensive mounting to an audience which might have expected Renaissance grandeur. However, one implication of this quotation, and a basic aim of all of Jackson's work, is his desire to make the plays "accessible." This might be claimed for all the directors in this dissertation, but it seems to me that Jackson, like Papp and Freedman, goes out of his way to make the plays "democratic and popular," including in his productions elements from the popular entertainment fields in which he has had experience. "Theatre has got to be entertainment. Shakespeare is a great entertainer. Our productions have got to reveal Shakespeare as that great entertainer."⁴⁰

Nagle Jackson's directing principles for Shakespeare may be enumerated from the preceding discussion:

1. Shakespeare's greatest quality as a playwright is his ability to tell a story. Shakespeare offers Jackson no particular philosophical point of view. A production's first responsibility is "to tell the story."

³⁸Richard II program, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Company.

³⁹Jackson interview.

⁴⁰Ibid.

2. Acting is doing. He teaches acting according to a system which breaks every action into five parts. Whether an actor uses this system consciously or not, he enacts all five parts when he is acting well.
3. He consciously strives to create "a loving atmosphere" in rehearsals. Presumably he believes that this atmosphere relaxes the actors and inspires them to perform more honestly and openly.
4. He tends to like actors with external skills: mime, singing, dancing, comic timing, and so forth. He feels that actors with these skills, many of whom have performed in musical comedy, understand "the obligation to communicate," which for Jackson is the actor's most important responsibility.
5. His most important reading is of the original source material for the plays. The tales obviously emphasize the story elements he finds so important in Shakespeare.
6. He tries to make the plays as "accessible" as possible, through staging them in modern dress or through the introduction of mime and farce elements. The productions must be "good entertainment."

Richard II at Ashland was "the last great performance of Michael O'Sullivan, who had come up to be the Equity guest artist for the summer."⁴¹ Jackson had known O'Sullivan at A.C.T. in San Francisco and had directed him in Room Service. That summer of 1970 O'Sullivan replaced an ailing Angus Bowmer as Shylock in The

⁴¹Jackson interview.

Merchant of Venice and also played Doctor Pinch in Jackson's The Comedy of Errors, in addition to playing Richard II. Jackson began his talks with O'Sullivan for Richard II while the two were still at A.C.T.

That play is a one man show. It will live or die on that character. Michael and I started working on it in San Francisco, and Michael, who was a very eccentric actor, decided to be totally conventional in his approach, and we began to look upon it as a political play. I knew that would be the right approach because Michael himself--I mean, it would be silly to talk to Michael about playing the emotions of a distraught king: he does that like brushing his teeth in the morning. So I thought, "Let that take care of itself, because God knows Michael is an eccentric . . . the minute he hits that stage." My worry was that he'd be too eccentric or sentimental or homosexual--any of the traps of Richard II. None of those things happened because we played it as an action play, about politics and struggle--there was, however, this fascinating man who was Richard.⁴²

When asked exactly what political statement Richard II makes, Jackson said he saw the play as "a dark comment about politics. Might makes right. A monarch has to be a practical man. Bolingbroke destroys divine right. He shows, 'Yes, you can take a crown. You can take things into your own hands. There's nothing in the heavens stopping you.' Richard still believed in divine right. I think that is the most important thing in the play--that you have a man who belongs to an older form fighting the practical politics and practical people with a new way of doing things."⁴³ In the program note for the Ashland production, he stressed the play as a play of political action rather than a play of character. "During the last three hundred years, Richard II has been turned into a romantic play about a poet-king misunderstood by

⁴²Jackson interview.

⁴³Ibid.

the rough world about him--a sort of Plantagenet Hamlet. In fact, Richard II is so political a play that in its day its performance was often commissioned to make a political point or to threaten a monarch. . . . It is not Hamlet nor was it meant to be. It is the story of an action and a time."⁴⁴

Jackson's preparation for Richard II followed his general practice in reading the script.

I try to erase everything I know about the play. I've probably seen it a couple of times or done scenes from it as an actor. I guess every director does what I do. You just read the play and you get these feelings. Usually I can only talk logically about a production after I've done it. I find the play as I'm doing it usually. It's an emotional response and a visual response. I usually see one moment and from then on the whole play begins to come. Afterwards I will find out why I saw that.

For instance, in Richard II it was only after working on it that I realized my feelings about the end of absolute monarchy. But right from the start I had this image for the play. It was a strong visual image that haunted the whole production. I think it was my first image--Richard leaning on a page. That page ultimately became one of the most interesting characters in the play. It was an added mime role. He was with Michael wherever he went. I cast a boy with a beautiful face that was absolutely expressionless as he walked through the play with Richard. When they're trying to depose him, he instinctively reaches for his page. Northumberland comes up and grabs the page by the neck and pushes him offstage. It was the most shattering moment in the production. The last moment was the page alone on stage. After everyone left, the page walked down, now dressed in Bolingbroke's colors, and put his hand on Richard's white coffin the way Richard had always put his hand on the page, and that was the fade-out.⁴⁵

At first read-through, Jackson gave a long lecture about the politics of the period. "The actors found this stimulating."⁴⁶ This lecturing process is one which Jackson feels changes from play to

⁴⁴Ashland Shakespeare Festival Souvenir Program, Summer, 1970, p. 36.

⁴⁵Jackson interview.

⁴⁶Ibid.

play. "At the first reading I always talk a lot about the play, different for every play; sometimes history, sometimes the way we'll do the play, sometimes design--whatever I think will get the strongest emotional response from the actors. For Lear, I read the old folk tale the play is based on. For Richard II, I outlined the politics of the period and talked about power politics in general. I try to give the actors something they can use."⁴⁷

Kit Carson, who played Edmund, Duke of York, remembers the importance Jackson placed upon historical research by the actors. At the first read-through he assigned them to write "autobiographies of the original personages the characters were based upon. Nagle made us go to the library and research our actual historical characters. We had to turn in papers, too. Then we shared our research. We had to write out autobiographies. I found it to be a profitable exercise. I found out that Edmund was a bungler. He really fouled up everything he attempted. That research became the basis for my characterization."⁴⁸

The first reading also is a time when Jackson points out rules of scansion and insists that the actors be able to scan their lines. "I have become a stickler for scansion. I find that few actors have ever heard of it. Bill Ball taught it to me and I find it a wonderful device for finding out what words and syllables to stress as well as giving a rhythm and energy to the scenes."⁴⁹

⁴⁷Jackson interview.

⁴⁸Kit Carson, telephone interview, Tucson, Arizona, to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, February 28, 1977.

⁴⁹Jackson interview.

It was also at this first read-through that Jackson expressed a personal sentiment on the importance of Richard II for him. "He told us that Richard II was his father's favorite play, and that he was particularly happy to be doing it as sort of a gift to his father, who is a professor of English at Whitman College."⁵⁰

It was Jackson's practice to read the play for several days before getting it up on its feet. However, the limited rehearsal time at Ashland forced him to start blocking immediately after the first read-through.

At Ashland you are working on four other productions at the same time. You only work every other day for three and a half hours for one and a half months, calling "specials" of scenes early in the mornings, but always working against other directors' needs. You run scared. Also, there is the very green company. I find it best to get into the staging right away so they'll know where they are and what they're doing. With the histories, though, I always go to staging right away, because the histories have such mammoth staging problems--traffic and so on. Also, you always want to finish those bloody court scenes early, which can only be done a finite number of ways.⁵¹

Jackson is usually thoroughly prepared for his rehearsals. Ron Bausson, who played a small role in Richard II, commented, "He is always completely prepared. He knew where he wanted everyone to be all the time. On that production Nagle was all business."⁵² Jackson admits that he likes to have "at least minimal blocking specifically prepared."⁵³

⁵⁰Carson interview.

⁵¹Jackson interview.

⁵²Ron Bausson interview, Costa Mesa, California, December 9, 1976.

⁵³Jackson interview.

It's more comfortable for me to pre-block, particularly in Shakespeare, where there are so many characters. I also think it's more comfortable for the actors to have at least minimal blocking. To say, "You move down here on this line," tells a great deal about what you think about the character, about everything. It gives the actor a corner from which to work, so everything has "a local habitation and a name." Only then can you say, "Gee, this doesn't work!" I don't think you can say that from reading around or working theoretically.⁵⁴

Interestingly enough, the actors with whom I spoke about Richard II did not find Jackson particularly loving to them. "I would call him business-like. He commanded a lot of respect and he was always very kind to the actors, but I wouldn't say he was particularly free and open with us. I think he felt the pressure of mounting two shows that summer in so short a time. . . . I always feel that Nagle is just a bit reserved. He works at being friendly but he's not always spontaneous."⁵⁵ Kit Carson described the general feeling between director and actors as one of "mutual respect" rather than love:

I liked Nagle very much, but there was some tension and complaint at Ashland from some of the younger members of the company who felt they weren't cast well. That's always a problem at Ashland. Your first summer there you seldom get anything but walk-ons, and that causes a lot of grumbling from some of the young new people. I think I almost saw Nagle lose his temper when a kid who was chronically late came in late again. He didn't yell, but he was obviously mad and frustrated that the actor was not taking his work seriously. Nagle always wanted feedback from the actors. He was complimentary when he thought you were good and gently critical when he thought you weren't. Some of the younger people did not seem as committed to the work as he wanted, and they thought he was over-fussy.⁵⁶

Jackson finds that he works differently with different actors. "The main thing I've learned as a director is that you have to intuitively understand the needs of your actors."⁵⁷ During the rehearsal

⁵⁴ Jackson interview.

⁵⁵ Bausson interview.

⁵⁶ Carson interview.

⁵⁷ Jackson interview.

period for Richard II, Michael O'Sullivan, who had been known as a temperamental actor at A.C.T., behaved "like a lamb."⁵⁸ "I had never seen Michael so relaxed and unmannered in his work. I think he knew that Nagle absolutely adored him and that gave him a lot of confidence."⁵⁹ Kit Carson was surprised to find O'Sullivan so easy to work with, though he did not feel that Jackson and O'Sullivan were very close.

Michael had a lot of personal problems. He always complained of insomnia, and seemed to need a lot of attention, but he was absolutely no trouble at all to work with, and he was very nice off stage. He had some funny things, like he was very superstitious and would become incensed if anyone whistled in the dressing room.

Nagle and Michael worked alone together in the mornings. They were always polite but distant. I remember that Michael didn't do a lot in rehearsals at first. I mean, he didn't give a performance for a while. He was very internal and "laid back," but when he did let go, it was all there and very moving. Occasionally he would refuse to do certain things. I remember Nagle wanted him to do more with the mirror, to become very emotionally wrought up about it, but Michael refused and played the scene with great restraint.⁶⁰

Of O'Sullivan's performance, Jackson has stated: "It was the greatest performance an actor ever gave in a play I directed. I did the play later in Milwaukee with a very capable actor. I was not pleased with the result, and I realized that in that role, as well as in many of Shakespeare's most magnificent characters, you have to have more than just a capable actor. You have to have a great actor, and Michael was great."⁶¹

⁵⁸Jackson interview.

⁵⁹Fredi Olster interview, Los Angeles, California, December 10, 1976.

⁶⁰Carson interview.

⁶¹Jackson interview.

The Ashland Shakespeare Festival normally receives reviews from the local and Portland, Oregon, newspapers. In the case of Richard II there were reviews in the San Francisco and Los Angeles papers as well. Stanley Eichelbaum of the San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner found it to be the "most impressive production of the summer season. I was most impressed by Richard II--which O'Sullivan endows with a marvelously thought-out, sensitive, pitiable portrayal of the dishonored king, who is too rash, too sincere, and too languid to hold on to his crown."⁶² Bertrand Evans, also reporting for the San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner, gave a more specific description of O'Sullivan's performance:

Frankly, to anyone acquainted with both O'Sullivan and Richard, this would seem an unlikely match and indeed the O'Sullivan Richard is like none ever seen before, even in the Shakespearean scholar's nightmare. This Richard is still given to self-pity and self-dramatization, is vacillating and ultimately hopeless--the words of the text which cannot be gotten around assure that. But, in place of the gentler, sentimental, poetic king of tradition, O'Sullivan exhibits an often raging, fiery, sarcastic, violent, shrewd king. Richard's erstwhile poetic voice turns strident and biting.⁶³

The critic from the Los Angeles Times also seemed to appreciate O'Sullivan's unsentimental Richard:

O'Sullivan seems to have selected as the touchstone for his interpretation a late reference in the play to Richard's "sour cross." The feeling of sourness, of pursed lips and a nose wrinkled with distaste, invades even the overtly poetic soliloquies: unlike some this Richard does not simplify himself into a kind of saint in prison. "Monarchize" is another

⁶²Stanely Eichelbaum, "Mountain Air and the Bard," San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner, August 16, 1970.

⁶³Bertrand Evans, "Shakespeare at Ashland--A Veritable Theatrical Orgy," San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner, June 19, 1970.

clue: O'Sullivan's Richard wheels and deals with the confidence--misplaced as he finally sees--that "divine right" will see him through, no matter how inept the wheeling and dealing itself. And the third clue is in "fondly," as in foolishly--or, as we would say, neurotically. This Richard is not up to pressure, gets uptight and erratic at the very moment coolness is required and shatters, rather like his mirror, when he sees the game is up.⁶⁴

Several critics commented upon Diana Bellamy's performance as the Duchess of York. Neither Jackson nor any of the actors I spoke to told me that she had played the "usual clamorous, wailing role of the Duchess of York" as a "laugh getter."⁶⁵ "Top comedy relief is provided by Diana Bellamy as the Duchess of York. When her son confesses he has plotted to murder the newly crowned Henry, her gushy plea so confounds the new king that he pardons him."⁶⁶ In other words, Jackson's "show biz" instincts told him that the continual crying of the Duchess would work if turned into a comic scene. This kind of bending of Shakespeare is perhaps another attempt of Jackson's to make Shakespeare more "accessible." Apparently he made a difficult scene "work" which is often tedious in the theatre.

The directing took second place to O'Sullivan's performance in most criticism; however, all descriptions of the directing indicate that Jackson's work was full of action, Elizabethan color, and theatrical pageantry.

⁶⁴Dan Sullivan, "Shakespeare at Ashland," Los Angeles Times, July 10, 1970.

⁶⁵Jack Rudolph, "Shakespeare Fest Mighty in Little Ashland," Green-Bay Press Gazette, August 9, 1970.

⁶⁶Arnold Marks, "Entertainment," Oregon Journal, July 1, 1970.

Nagle Jackson maintains the best Ashland tradition, using banners, attendants, trumpets, and other appurtenances of regal display. The production had superb use of steps descending from the stage in the inner stage; sensitive and expressive introduction of music in appropriate passages; and throughout expressive and clear utterance.⁶⁷

Under Nagle Jackson's hand, the flow of the action rarely ebbs. Jackson keeps things happening even when Shakespeare doesn't. And the director's careful attention to detail, particularly in the scenes at court, is evident. Each of the multitude of characters has an obvious place and purpose on stage at all times.⁶⁸

From looking at Richard II we may compare Jackson's principles with his practice:

1. Jackson's concern for the story elements of the play was reflected in his insistence that Richard II not be played as a character study. The reviews confirm that this Richard II, often a static piece, emerged full of suspense and action.
2. Michael O'Sullivan's success with Richard II as a character was a departure for the actor. Part of his success may have come from not playing Richard as a "poet king," but letting the character evolve out of the actions. The fact that O'Sullivan's performance was original may have been the result of Jackson's insistence that the actor not play "qualities" in the character.

⁶⁷ Ted Mahar, "Excellent Performances Keynote Presentation at Ashland," The Oregonian, July 1, 1970.

⁶⁸ Jack Rudolph, "Shakespeare Fest Mighty in Little Ashland."

3. The actors consulted, while fond of Jackson, did not seem to find at the rehearsals for Richard II the "loving atmosphere" which Jackson believes he creates. He was respected and liked for his efficiency and his business-like manner.
4. Michael O'Sullivan, an A.C.T. actor adept in physical and vocal skills, had the kind of diverse training Jackson favors in actors. O'Sullivan had primarily been known at A.C.T. as a performer of far-out farce characters.
5. Jackson's signature as a director may be his interpolation of mime roles which do not appear in the scripts. The page in Richard II was an example of the director's inventiveness. It is important to note that the inventiveness here, as with the legless Fool in Lear, has symbolic significance. Interestingly, both the page and the Fool are helpless characters left alone and deserted by father figures in a hostile universe.

It is perhaps too soon to make judgments on Nagle Jackson's directorial achievements. What has emerged from this chapter is a description of a director who is the product of a tradition which is beginning to arise as the result of American Shakespeare festivals, American universities, and American show business.

Jackson has no revolutionary approach to directing Shakespeare. He accepts the tradition of the Ashland Shakespeare Festival. His originality lies in specific inventions of business for specific productions. He does not have a theatrical philosophy into which he forces Shakespeare's plays. In this way he is like most of the other directors herein described.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The preceding descriptions of the careers, backgrounds, theories, and techniques of eight American directors is a selective, rather than representative, survey of American directing of Shakespeare from 1960 to 1976. However the approaches described are various enough to allow some generalization and comparison.

One similarity is that all the directors, with the exception of Joseph Papp, are college graduates. Several have master's degrees: Allen Fletcher, Stuart Vaughan, and Bill Ball. Several were academically successful enough to win Fulbright Fellowships: Stuart Vaughan, Bill Ball and Nagle Jackson.

Nearly all the directors, including Joe Papp, encountered Shakespeare at an early age. Only Freedman, Call, and Kahn admitted coming to Shakespeare later in life. However, all of them were exposed to Shakespeare in college or earlier. Many of them were strongly influenced by certain teachers at colleges and universities.

In addition to having been exposed to Shakespeare early, they are also in general a group which has been exposed to, participated in, and are devotees of other arts. Many have interests in History, Psychology, and Political Science. Stuart Vaughan received his undergraduate degree in English and has described himself as

"avid reader of history."¹ He is a lover of classical music and his hobby is record collecting. Joe Papp, perhaps the least "aesthetic" of the directors, has over the years been an outspoken political activist. Gerry Freedman began his career as a painter and frequently uses painting as a source of inspiration for the feel and look of his productions. He has also directed musical comedies and operas. He was a lyricist for the musical A Time for Singing as well as its director, and he has used composers and pieces of music as "tonal inspiration" for his directing. Allen Fletcher is a theatre historian and a translator of the works of Henrik Ibsen. William Ball is a patron of opera and an aficionado of operatic singing. He studies meditation and is fascinated with the history of pyramids. Ed Call reads vociferously and is particularly well informed about modern poetry and jazz. Michael Kahn is a devotee of the ballet, and tries to make his directing "like dancing."² Nagle Jackson has a B.A. in French and English, speaks and reads French. He is a fan of epic poetry and folk tales.

Much of the group was exposed to European theatre early in life and has travelled abroad. Vaughan on his Fulbright observed European repertory theatres. Papp, while he did not travel in his youth, has recently begun to visit European theatres and did historical research for Henry V at the battlefield of Agincourt. Gerry Freedman assisted Jerome Robbins in London on the British

¹Stuart Vaughan interview, New York, New York, June 20, 1976.

²Michael Kahn interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

production of West Side Story and during that time saw a good deal of British Shakespeare. Allen Fletcher has been to Europe "many times" and "seen most of the great English actors of the past twenty years."³ William Ball, like Stuart Vaughan, used his Fulbright Fellowship to observe European repertory theatres in France and Germany as well as in England. Ed Call did not mention European travel to me. Michael Kahn has seen "a lot of English Shakespeare" and is an enthusiastic fan of the Royal Shakespeare Company, especially Peter Brook. "Brook's Midsummer Night's Dream is the best thing I've ever seen."⁴ (Several directors expressed praise for Brook's Midsummer, including Kahn, Vaughan, Freedman, and Call.) Nagle Jackson saw English and French theatre at the early age of ten, and studied mime with Etienne Decroux on his Fulbright Fellowship.

On the whole, these directors are educated, cultured and well-travelled. They tend to have cosmopolitan and international taste and experience. No one could accuse this group of being parochial or provincial. They are highly aware of international movements in theatre.

Certain British theatre figures have decidedly influenced several of the directors. B. Iden Payne, who taught in American universities and directed at the early Shakespeare festivals in both Ashland and San Diego, brought to American theatre the ideas of William Poel. Poel's insistence that productions of Shakespeare's

³Allen Fletcher interview, San Francisco, California, November 20, 1976.

⁴Kahn interview.

plays attempt to recreate the setting, costumes, and aesthetics of Elizabethan England may clearly be seen at both Ashland and San Diego. Through Angus Bowmer, who had studied with Payne at the University of Washington, Allen Fletcher was exposed to Payne's influence and has admitted adhering to Payne's principles of staging in his early productions at Ashland, and was directed by him at both Ashland and San Diego. Nagle Jackson, through his connections at Ashland, also was undoubtedly influenced by Payne's ideas which formed the basis of the Ashland philosophy.

Tyrone Guthrie directly influenced Ed Payson Call at Minneapolis. But his productions seem also to have inspired Michael Kahn, Stuart Vaughan, and William Ball. Kahn mentioned to me that when he was a young man, "My favorite director was Tyrone Guthrie and I wanted to do in the theatre the kind of thing he did."⁵ Stuart Vaughan went to the Phoenix after Guthrie had directed several productions there. "It was difficult for me to follow Guthrie. I tried to have the same kind of muscular theatricality in my productions that he did."⁶ William Ball remarked, "The only time I have seen productions of the classics transplanted into other times and locales which worked were Guthrie's Troilus and Cressida and his The Alchemist. They made me believe that transplants could work. Guthrie's courage was always an inspiration to me."⁷

⁵Kahn interview.

⁶Vaughan interview.

⁷William Ball interview, San Francisco, California, November 19, 1976.

Fletcher expressed admiration for Laurence Olivier:

"No one can touch his Othello."⁸ Ball admitted a devotion to John Gielgud: "Gielgud above all the others understands the music of Shakespeare."⁹ Gerald Freedman called the Royal Shakespeare production of Henry V which played at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the spring of 1976, "one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen in my life."¹⁰

The only director in this group who seems never to have expressed any admiration for the British theatre, and has almost defined himself in opposition to it, is Joseph Papp. Papp in his statements regards the British theatre as elitist and effete. One suspects that this may have been born out of his desire to create his own identity in opposition to the recognized authorities on Shakespearean production. "The English theatre may have lost touch with the true energy of Shakespeare. Their productions are too often tired, intellectual essays on the Bard."¹¹

The group can also be divided into east-coast directors and west-coast directors. In other words, four of the directors, Vaughan, Papp, Freedman and Kahn, have primarily directed Shakespeare on the east coast of the United States, mostly in and around New York, while three have worked largely on the west coast. While it is

⁸Fletcher interview.

⁹Ball interview.

¹⁰Gerald Freedman interview, New York, New York, June 23, 1976.

¹¹Joseph Papp, "On Directing, On Playwriting, On . . ." Prompt 14, 1969.

true that Stuart Vaughan directed in regional theatre in Seattle and New Orleans, his reputation was made in New York. Joe Papp, Gerry Freedman, and Michael Kahn have directed professional Shakespeare only in New York or at Stratford, Connecticut. All of these directors were associated with the New York Shakespeare Festival initially. Doubtless, Papp's taste and philosophy influenced all of their productions there. What is interesting, however, is that in their interviews, each of them showed quite different temperaments and in several ways disagreed with many of Papp's policies and ideas. For instance, Papp's dislike of decoration is in marked contrast to the importance Michael Kahn places up the scenic elements of his productions. Stuart Vaughan's careful pre-blocking and specific preparation is sharply different from Freedman's stated desire to let the blocking come from the actors.

The west-coast group, Ball, Fletcher, and Jackson, are different from the east-coast group in that they have all, with the exception of Nagle Jackson, directed in and around New York as well as the west coast. They received much of their training and experience in three Shakespeare festivals: the Ashland, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Old Globe or National Shakespeare Festival in San Diego, and Shakespeare Under the Stars at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Ed Call, who trained at the latter festival, really belongs to neither the east nor west coast group. He worked briefly for Papp, directing Little Black Sheep at the Vivian Beaumont, and was scheduled to do Julius Caesar in the Mitzi Newhouse, but was let go by Papp. Call has also directed for William Ball at A.C.T.:

The Seagull, Twelfth Night, and The Torchbearers. After one season there, however, Call did not return. His primary west-coast work with Shakespeare has been at San Diego.

The Papp group (Vaughan, Freedman, and Kahn) and the Ball group (Fletcher and Jackson) form two groups of "acquaintances" who have helped each other's careers. The two "leaders", Papp and Ball, have several things in common and much that is dissimilar. They are both directors and producers of theatres that have managed over a length of time to grow and prosper. They have their separate "territories"--San Francisco and New York. They are both energetic idealists who have at times displayed ruthlessness in dealing with their employees.

The geographic separateness of the theatres is also symbolic of the separateness of their personalities and interests. Ball tends to be an aesthete, seeing "beauty and art" as their own excuse for being. Papp is a committed, socially-involved producer-director. Ball's productions exemplify a "theatre of the director" while Papp's theatre claims to depend more on the writer and actor. Ball produces the classics almost to the exclusion of new plays; Papp produces more new plays than classics. Papp's roots are in Stanislavsky and the Group theatre; Ball defines his approach as going beyond the limits of Stanislavsky and is at times "anti-method."

It is tempting to see these groups of acquaintances as illustrating a Ball-west coast/Papp-east coast dichotomy, with Ball representing a theatricalist aesthetic while Papp represents a realist's aesthetic. Unfortunately such an easy polarity is too schematic to be true. In the Papp group, Freedman often employed highly

theatrical devices, as in his ritualistic Titus Andronicus and his dance-like Love's Labour's Lost. Kahn's productions contained Brechtian devices, as in Henry V, and distanced the emotions through dance and mime in The Winter's Tale. On the other side, Ball's teacher and co-director at the American Conservatory Theatre, Allen Fletcher, is a realist who extensively uses Stanislavsky techniques.

The Shakespeare festivals have made an invaluable contribution to the directors dealt with in this dissertation. Not one of them was untouched in his career by at least one of the festivals, and several directors have worked at more than one. Many of them directed their first Shakespeare at a festival: Kahn, Call, Fletcher, Papp, and Jackson. Since the decline of classical theatre in the commercial Broadway theatre and the death of the touring professional theatre, it is safe to say that if there had been no Shakespeare festivals, institutional or regional theatres, the careers of these men would have been radically different. It is certain that much less Shakespeare would have been produced. Essentially the directors described here would have had to choose between careers in the commercial theatre without Shakespeare, or academic, educational theatre careers with much less professional acting or design talent available to them. The festival theatres, as well as regional theatres proliferating from 1960 to 1976, permitted them to develop their directorial approaches to Shakespeare. In the case of Joseph Papp and William Ball, these theatres existed through their own energies. What is important in this period is not only that there were individuals who wanted to produce

classics in non-commercial situations--that had existed before in America--but also outlets began to become available for these desires.

There is little agreement among the directors in their understanding of how Shakespeare saw the world or on what was most important to him. Briefly categorizing the eight views of Shakespeare represented, one may say the following:

1. Stuart Vaughan sees Shakespeare as a tragic playwright.
2. Gerry Freedman feels that Shakespeare's most important trait is his humanism and "loving" treatment of character.
3. Joe Papp "knows" that Shakespeare was a "democrat."
4. Allen Fletcher finds Shakespeare's psychological understanding of eccentric characters to be his main trait.
5. Bill Ball sees Shakespeare as romantic, a portrayer of "champions."
6. Ed Call insists that Shakespeare was a commercial artisan with no philosophical point of view.
7. Michael Kahn sees Shakespeare as a fatalist.
8. Nagle Jackson sees no philosophic relevance in Shakespeare but finds his "story-telling" ability to be his strongest characteristic.

It is interesting that none of the points of view expressed above are original nor are they particularly discerning. The directors did not feel comfortable theorizing about Shakespeare. In no instance did they, through immediate answers, reveal that the philosophical content of Shakespeare was important to them. Fletcher, Jackson, and Call were reluctant to discuss Shakespeare's

vision of the world. Vaughan and Ball had to think a long time before volunteering their points of view. Freedman and Kahn did respond enthusiastically to the questioning with immediate responses, but their ideas reveal stronger emotional responses to Shakespeare than philosophic or intellectual reactions.

Despite their educations, one does not find among these American directors original thinking or revolutionary approaches to Shakespeare. There were no Grotowskis, Artauds, Brechts, Wagners, Appias, Craigs, or Peter Brooks. The new approaches to Shakespeare in the twentieth century, transplants and abstract productions, originated in Europe and have been borrowed and adapted by some of the directors discussed in this study.

The directors distrust dogmatic statements. Most of them are eclectic and pragmatic, changing their aesthetics to fit situations. All but Vaughan have directed transplanted productions, although several of them (Fletcher, Freedman, and Jackson) expressed the idea that the plays are probably best done on Elizabethan stages, with Elizabethan or historical costuming.

Several expressed anti-intellectual points of view, and many procedural descriptions of working habits revealed little room for discussion or intellection. Stuart Vaughan could not remember specifically what his "spine" for Hamlet had been. Hamlet, perhaps the most reflective of tragic protagonists, was interpreted as a man of action. Vaughan, like Papp, Freedman, Ball, Call, Fletcher, Kahn, and Jackson, did not normally spend more than one or two rehearsals sitting at a table reading the play. Nor did any

of them spend much time discussing the meaning and relevance of the plays. At the most, they would give some general comments about what they wanted to do with the productions.

One might say that intellectual discussion of the play's meaning is distrusted. Sometimes, for instance, concepts are not followed. Papp's Henry V, conceived as anti-romantic, became romantic in rehearsals. Freedman, according to actress Rae Allen, "does not discuss to any depth the spine of the play."¹² Ball, perhaps the most articulate of the group, did discuss his concept of the theme of Shrew with his cast, but considers what he calls "the general beauty" of the production to be equally important. Nor did he spend much time after the first rehearsals discussing the meaning of the play. Ed Call revealed a distrust of generalizations and "academic formulations."¹³ As far as I can tell, he barely discussed the meaning of A Midsummer Night's Dream with his cast at all. Fletcher revealed that while he had read several critics on King Lear, he and Morris Carnovsky "talked to each other in images rather than through intellectual analysis."¹⁴ Josef Sommer commented on Michael Kahn, "He does not discuss the play too much except to tell us what the period and locale are going to be."¹⁵ Jackson usually "lectures" his cast at the first rehearsals,

¹²Rae Allen interview, New York, New York, July 30, 1976.

¹³Ed Payson Call interview, San Diego, California, August 29, 1976.

¹⁴Fletcher interview.

¹⁵Josef Sommer interview, Stratford, Connecticut, July 9, 1976.

but he is "very wary of being too intellectual with most actors. They sometimes let ideas get in the way of their performances."¹⁶

On the whole, therefore, these directors are not theatrical theoreticians nor dogmatists. Indeed, compared to Brook in the British theatre and particularly Brecht in the German theatre, they avoid intellectual discussion about their productions, do not discuss underlying social implications of their work, and are distrustful of intellectual processes in dealing with actors.

All of the directors described are familiar with and use the ideas and practices of Constantin Stanislavsky. Vaughan's three-part division of the script into actions, attitude, and blocking, is an offshoot of Stanislavsky's System of Physical Actions, with its division of a script into "units of action" or "beats." Papp, a realist who insists on truth of emotion from "blood and guts actors," follows Stanislavsky in the desire to make the audience believe in real people doing real things and "talking like human beings." Freedman, in his search for spontaneity and his desire that the production have a life of its own, allows the actors freedom in order to achieve a Stanislavsky-like sense of things happening for the first time. Ball, who criticizes the New York method of Lee Strasberg and others, still says that "to act is to use Stanislavsky."¹⁷ Allen Fletcher specifically teaches the Stanislavsky system in his classes at A.C.T. and uses the techniques of personalization and the logic of emotions in his rehearsal process.

¹⁶Nagle Jackson interview, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 6, 1976.

¹⁷Ball interview.

Fletcher, in rehearsal, attempts to elicit truthful emotion "from beyond the threshold of the actor's subconscious."¹⁸ Ed Call's use of improvisation in addition to his insistence that actors "use themselves," comes from Stanislavsky. Kahn, who was "trained in the Stanislavsky system,"¹⁹ betrays that tradition through his interest in visual effects and by asking the actors for fast results. However, he also asks actors to motivate their lines for themselves, feeling that an actor's internal work is basically "homework." He believes that most American actors know how to do that. Jackson, through his concentration on "actions," is basically employing Stanislavsky's system of physical actions. Also, through his creation of a loving rehearsal atmosphere, he is attempting to foster in his company the kind of "relaxation" which Stanislavsky said in An Actor Prepares is the basic way to coax out true emotion.

It is safe to say that Constantin Stanislavsky, a realist and emotionalist, has been the major theoretical influence on the American theatre since the 1930s, and that this influence has continued in the sixties and seventies in American productions of Shakespeare.

At the same time that realism has influenced and been preserved in the work of these directors, there have also been attempts to transcend Stanislavsky's ideas and to enlarge the theatre to a "rediscovery of style" which goes beyond "the mud of naturalism." This search for an American Shakespearean "style" may be seen in the work of nearly all the directors. Stuart Vaughan has written that he was looking for a

¹⁸ Constantin Stanislavsky, An Actor Prepares (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1936), p. 266.

¹⁹ Kahn interview.

"fusion between the kind of acting I had seen in England and the method's way of breaking down a script with . . . the memory of emotion and the more personal truth which you could attach to a script."²⁰ He also wanted actors like Donald Madden who could speak Shakespeare both naturally and with a sense of the verse, "who understand how the form of the verse is related to acting."²¹ In other words, Vaughan was one of the first American directors in the fifties to feel that acting Shakespeare required more technical skills than disciples of the method admitted to be necessary. Period classics were to be approached with the understanding that the American actor had to enlarge his realistic approach to include verse speaking and heroics.

Joe Papp, alone of the directors herein described, seems never to have seen any limitations in a realistic approach to Shakespeare. His productions at times have been marked by poor speech and a mixture of regional accents which suggest a contempt for uniform diction. He is not at home with theatricalism, although his productions do employ burlesque at times. In recent years Papp has shown signs of becoming more open to theatricalism. ("Theatricalism" here is meant as an admission of the fact that what we are watching is a theatrical event. Realism has its own kind of "theatricality" which is something else.) Richard Foreman's Threepenny Opera and Andre Serban's Cherry Orchard show Papp's willingness to allow his theatre to experiment with styles other than realism. For Henry V he employed Lee Breuer and Wilford Leach, both non-realistic off-Broadway directors, as assistants. The original plans included a non-realistic depiction

²⁰Vaughan interview.

²¹Ibid.

of the battle of Agincourt as conceived by Lee Breuer. However, once in rehearsal, Papp reverted to a more familiar and romantic depiction of war. Phil Bosco, who played Pistol, feels that "Joe is now more open to actors with good speech and trained voices than he used to be. When I first auditioned for him he was reluctant to use me because he felt my speech was too refined and that I wasn't 'real' enough. I notice that he now is hiring more classically trained actors."²² While most at home with realism and realistic actors, Papp seems in recent seasons to be more open to other forms of theatre.

Gerald Freedman's success with Shakespearean comedy was due in part to his familiarity with American musical comedy, one American form of theatre which does not have realistic origins. Freedman has admitted that he used musical comedy performers in Shakespeare for the "presentational style" which he found necessary in Shakespeare. He rehearsed the plays as he would a musical, and underlined musical qualities in the verse. His blocking was often called choreography by critics. This wedding of American musical comedy to Shakespearean comedy was a natural fusion coming easily out of techniques familiar to American performers.

Allen Fletcher, while in no sense a theatrical stylist, evolved an Elizabethan aesthetic of staging through his experience at Ashland. The Shakespeare festivals have encouraged an acceptance in America of formal, non-realistic settings in Shakespeare. Any attempt to reproduce a historical Elizabethan setting moves a production away from strict realism, at least in stage setting. In Fletcher's case, the Elizabethan style of staging requires a central empty space, a central

²² Philip Bosco interview, New York, New York, July 22, 1976.

area which can quickly transform itself into any place. Fletcher's emphasis upon the actor's responsibilities seems to be another important aspect of his "Elizabethan" staging. Also, as a member of the American Conservatory Theatre, he stresses speech and movement training for the classical actor, and does not view his concern for the truth of emotion as being in opposition to an actor's technical ability to handle verse or to possess a free and plastic body.

William Ball has explored non-realistic theatrical approaches to Shakespeare more than any other director in this period. His insistence that the plays are music, that characters be larger than life, that actors have the skills of dancers, gymnasts, and mimes, expand his approach to Shakespeare and the classics. His Taming of the Shrew presents characters who are clowns acting on a stage.

Ed Payson Call's productions are often frankly theatrical, using real elements in unreal situations. Transplants such as his civil-war As You Like It are done for sheer fun, though they make no logical sense at times.²³ Call's interest in Brecht is reflected in his tendency to have actors take critical, caricatured attitudes toward the characters they are playing, as in Troilus and Cressida at San Diego and Twelfth Night at Purchase. Often Call will draw attention to the fact that what we are watching is artifice. He sees productions more as "celebrations" than as mirrors of life.

²³Transplants in general necessitate that the audience be willing to accept anachronisms out of the period to which the play has been changed. In this way the anachronisms constantly remind the audience that what they are watching is not real. Most transplants imply a lack of interest in pure realism by the directors employing them.

Michael Kahn has employed Brechtian theatrical devices in productions like Henry V, has transplanted plays illogically, as in his hippie Love's Labour's Lost, and added masque-like dance effects to The Winter's Tale, which was presented as a tale, attempting in no way to convince the audience that what they were watching was a reflection of objective reality. The designs of Kahn's productions resemble paintings, calling attention to themselves as artifice and dwarfing the human elements.

Nagle Jackson, familiar with both musicals and nightclub comedy, has used elements from these genres in his farcical productions of Shakespeare. He is also at home with the Elizabethan stage at Ashland, and presents transplanted, spare productions of Shakespeare at the Milwaukee Repertory.

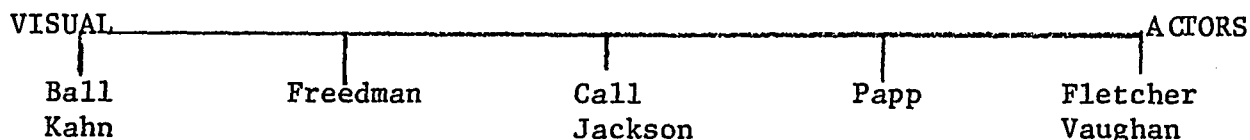
In general, one may say that there has been a fusion in American Shakespeare from 1960 to 1976 of Stanislavsky realism with cautiously explored and experimental non-realistic styles, including classical acting that stresses good speech and movement, ritualism, Brechtianism, and abstract set design.

On the whole, however, the explorations of new techniques have been conservative and have derived from new ideas first explored in European theatres. What may be "American" is that, whereas many non-realistic movements in Europe evolved in spite of or as a criticism of realism, in the American theatre realistic acting with a strong emotional base still exerts a strong influence, and has been subsumed by most explorations into non-realistic staging.

Certain polarities may be formulated between which most of the eight directors fall. Four such polarities may be called: visual

directors vs. actors' directors, pre-blockers vs. free-blockers, poetic speech vs. free speech, and traditional Elizabethan staging vs. innovative staging. These polarities recognize tendencies in the directors rather than absolutely defining their approaches.

The visual director vs. actors' director polarity describes the production elements with which the director seems most concerned, or the element which makes the greatest impression on an audience. The visual director makes "pictures" on stage. He sees the set as a poetic and symbolic representation of the script. He is more involved in aesthetics than in realism. The audience often sees "the director's hand at work." The actors' director seeks first the truth or excitement of an actor's performance. He feels that scenic decoration distracts the audience. He wants the audience to become involved with "real" things. He believes the best director is the least visible. While all directors must be concerned with both visual and human elements, it is believed that the preceding study shows certain directors more obviously involved with one or the other. Some directors fall somewhere in the middle, while others show a strong visual or actor orientation.



William Ball and Michael Kahn most clearly reveal a concern with the visual elements of their productions. One remembers how often critics commented upon Ball's pictorial ability, his calculated posing

of actors; how often he uses painters as inspiration for the "general beauty" of his productions. Kahn seems instinctively to translate his understanding of the play into color and line. The sets, as in The Winter's Tale, often become metaphors for the play. Often his sets overwhelm the actors. He uses painting and dance as inspiration for his productions. Often his sets are stark, yet they still dominate the action. The difference between Kahn and Ball might be described as the difference between a baroque painter such as Rembrandt (Ball), and a modern abstract painter such as Motherwell or Rothko (Kahn). Like baroque paintings, Ball's productions look rich and multi-detailed. The modern abstract look is particularly evident in Kahn's The Winter's Tale, Macbeth and Henry V. Other Kahn productions such as All's Well That Ends Well or Merry Wives of Windsor tend to have a "gingerbread," child's storybook look.

Stuart Vaughan and Allen Fletcher represent the opposite polarity, the actors' director. Vaughan's sets are usually functional and non-decorative. They serve as neutral backgrounds for the play's action. He has stated, "I hate anything in the theatre that is purely decorative; everything should be functional and not exist for its own sake." The audience should be involved in the "unimpeded flow of the play,"²⁴ and the director's hand should not be in evidence. His analysis of the script is almost solely dedicated to understanding the characters' actions, motivations and subtext. Fletcher's sets also tend to be spare. He has admitted that it was not until he worked with Will Steven Armstrong that he had a good relationship with a

²⁴Vaughan interview.

designer. (Interestingly, Armstrong designed Henry IV, Parts I and II at the Phoenix for Vaughan. Vaughan has called him "the best designer I ever had."²⁵) Armstrong's settings for Fletcher were simple with a few mobile pieces of abstract scenery which could be converted into different environments. His set for Vaughan was a modified version of the Elizabethan above and below, with wooden platforms and a few draped banners.

It is more difficult to classify the four remaining directors. Freedman, while concerned with actors' freedom, usually does Shakespeare that looks choreographed with a lot of visual flair. He had admitted using paintings as inspiration for productions and was himself a painter. I have not put him as far toward the "visual polarity" as Ball or Kahn because his productions are warm and personal. Interestingly, three of the painters he mentioned to me as inspirations for certain productions (Watteau, Fragonard, Breughel) normally use human subjects for their paintings and have "warm" qualities.

Ed Call seems to be equally interested in visual effects and the actors in his productions. More often than not his theatricality manifests itself in bold characterizations and costumes rather than stage settings or picturesque blocking. I do not recall during Troilus and Cressida or Twelfth Night having been struck by a strong pictorial gift that called attention to itself, although I do remember having been struck by costume ideas which seemed to comment upon the characters.

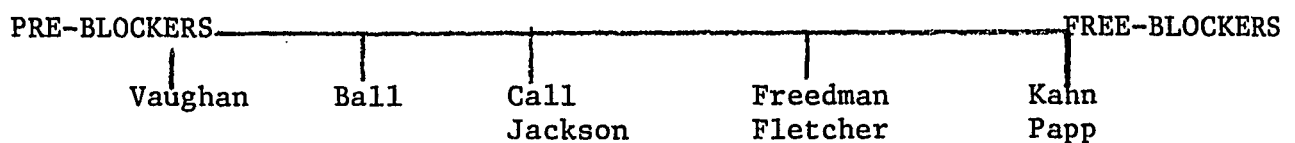
While Nagle Jackson's favorite production was his Richard II, a relatively conservative version in its visual element, The Comedy

²⁵Vaughan interview.

of Errors and Pericles at Ashland reveal that he is able to make strong visual statements. His ability to pinpoint important moments, such as the final moments of both Lear and Richard II, reveal a director who emphasizes thematic ideas and dramatic moments visually. Their emotional impact enforces the content of the scenes rather than calling attention to themselves.

Joseph Papp does not control the visual style in his productions in any conscious way. He dislikes "arty" design but has an attraction to spectacle and historical panoply. He places the actor above the visual elements in his productions, but his taste for spectacle places him a little closer to the "visual polarity" than Vaughan or Fletcher.

The pre-blockers vs. the free-blockers are two opposing approaches to the technique of staging a play. The extreme pre-blocker sits down at home and diagrams on paper where he wants the actors to move. The free-blocker allows the staging to come from the actors in the rehearsal room during the rehearsal process. Pre-blockers maintain a good deal of control over the actors, while free-blockers at their most extreme are not interested in where actors are on stage at any given moment.



Stuart Vaughan, the most extreme pre-blocker, marks down every move in his prompt book before coming to rehearsal. "I like to know

as much as I possibly can before I ever meet any actors in rehearsal."²⁶ At the opposite end of the spectrum is Michael Kahn, who lets his actors move where they want. "I need actors who will go ahead and do things for themselves." He tries "not to make too many prior decisions before coming into rehearsal."²⁷ He and the actors find things together.

Joseph Papp generally tells actors where they come in and go out. According to Phil Bosco, in Henry V he was most interested in ends and beginnings of scenes, and spent little time on problems within the scenes. Paul Rudd maintains that he and Meryl Streep worked out the fifth-act wooing scene "by ourselves." Papp's notes reveal that he gives specific staging notes in the final rehearsals, but they tend to be details working from the major outlines the actors have given him.

William Ball is by nature a pre-blocker who takes a good deal from actors, but guides them along very specific paths. Ball says that he pre-blocks less today than he used to. The Shrew rehearsals revealed a director who allows actors to invent; however, the framing of the play, the pictures at important moments, are very much controlled by Ball, and Shrew evolved as a highly controlled dance, strongly manipulated by the director. Ball acts as an editor and finalizes the form of his work tightly.

Call and Jackson both pre-block but do not always give the actors what they have in their heads or on paper. Call has stated, "Unless you control the disciplined form, if you work off the top of

²⁶Vaughan interview.

²⁷Kahn interview.

your head too much, you don't have as much latitude."²⁸ Presumably Call meant that at home he can reflect more and make better directorial choices. His practice reveals, however, that he takes much business from the actors, and changes his blocking and business according to what they bring in. He is not afraid to tell actors where to move, however, and in general feels directors need more control over actors in Shakespeare.

Nagle Jackson has "at least minimal blocking specifically prepared."²⁹ He particularly likes to have big scenes with many people in them pre-blocked, but leaves two-character scenes fairly open. "It's more comfortable for me to pre-block, particularly in Shakespeare where there are so many characters."³⁰

Gerald Freedman is known for the fact that he gives actors enormous freedom during his first two weeks of rehearsal. He then acts as an editor who selects what he likes out of what the actors have done. He does not pre-block, but has a general idea of how he wants the play to look and feel. His shows have a controlled feeling but this comes out of the editing process rather than through pre-blocking. (It is worth noting that it is often difficult to tell from the results of a production whether the director has had a strong hand in blocking.)

Allen Fletcher likes "to tell the actors where they come in and go out."³¹ He seems to feel that movement must come out of the character's truth and feels that this must come from the actor. "Occasionally I will ask an actor to move somewhere."³² Also, he

²⁸ Call interview.

²⁹ Jackson interview.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Fletcher interview.

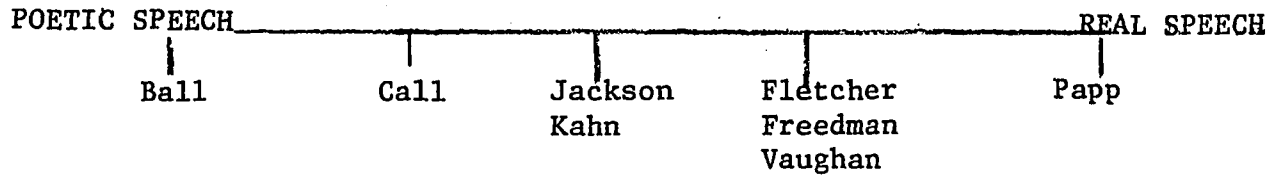
³² Ibid.

admits, "I do pre-block certain things, but I don't give them to the actor right away."³³ The rehearsal process of King Lear revealed how Fletcher allowed Carnovsky to invent his own business.

What is interesting about this polarity is that the weight of the directors falls toward the free-blockers more than one might have expected. There is a tendency in the American theatre to give freedom to the actor and not to impose blocking, business or line-readings on him. Directors in America seldom fit the image of an autocrat manipulating puppet actors to fit a grand design. More often than not a given piece of blocking comes from the actor. The director who does his blocking from a book and gives it to actors is not too common in the American theatre. Ed Payson Call, for one, seems to feel that in Shakespeare there is too much freedom, and the director needs to exercise more control. At present, however, one recognizes that actors have, and are used to, freedom in developing their roles and developing their own business and blocking.

The third polarity I will discuss is the poetic speech vs. "real" speech division. Bertram Joseph has stated that it is the actor's job to reveal the poetry of the text as well as to speak naturally so that the audience may "believe" in the character. Actors and directors seldom find this perfect balance and tend to emphasize either the poetry, iambic pentameter filled with imagery and literary devices, or they try to make the poetry sound like "real people talking to each other."

³³Fletcher interview.



In poetic speech there are several factors to consider. Is the director involved with the mechanics of the verse, such as scansion, rhetoric, and figures of speech? Does he desire a uniform diction free of regional accent? William Ball wants both. His devotion to scansion and feeling for the music of the verse has been discussed at length. Phonetics is taught at A.C.T., a course in which actors are given a uniform, mid-Atlantic speech. Ball does not spend much time on figures of speech or word imagery as Joseph recommends.

Joe Papp pays no attention to Shakespeare's poetry in his directing. The highest compliment he can pay an actor is that his speech sounds "real." Papp has felt in the past that a well-placed, resonant voice with a clear and unaccented diction is in some way "phony." His productions have featured actors with many accents or speaking consciously in monotones, willfully neglecting poetic figures of speech, iambic pentameter, assonances, and rhyme.

Ed Call is most interested in the mechanics of verse and the clear communication of the poetry's use and meaning. He feels that few Americans understand Shakespearean verse, and that this is the essential area to be investigated by Americans in their acting of Shakespeare. Interestingly, Call does not consider a uniform diction

to be desirable. Apparently he thinks that emotional organic connections are lost by the actor when he changes his accent.

Nagle Jackson learned scansion from Bill Ball and uses it in his productions. However, Jackson's emphasis upon action shows that he is not overly involved with language, although he is sensitive to the language, which he says "knocks him out."³⁴

Michael Kahn's rehearsal procedure reveals no attention to the poetry. However, he has hired actors in the past who are concerned with these elements, such as Donald Madden and Philip Kerr. His taste is for classically trained actors with a uniform diction, although at times he will hire people who are deficient in this area.

Allen Fletcher uses the vocally trained actors of A.C.T., but at this point in his career, he wants them to talk to each other. He feels that too much Shakespearean "style" in verse speaking leads actors away from communication with their fellow actors, or that too much attention to the way the verse is spoken can compromise the truth an actor brings to a role. Fletcher did not discuss Shakespeare's poetry in the rehearsal process of King Lear as far as I could tell.

Since becoming head of the Actors' Company, Freedman is more interested in speech and verse speaking. While he worked for Papp, however, he seldom spent much time on poetry. He does insist that he and Papp did want technically trained actors. "At the Shakespeare Festival we always chose the honest actor over the technically proficient one, always hoping for both."³⁵

³⁴Jackson interview.

³⁵Freedman interview.

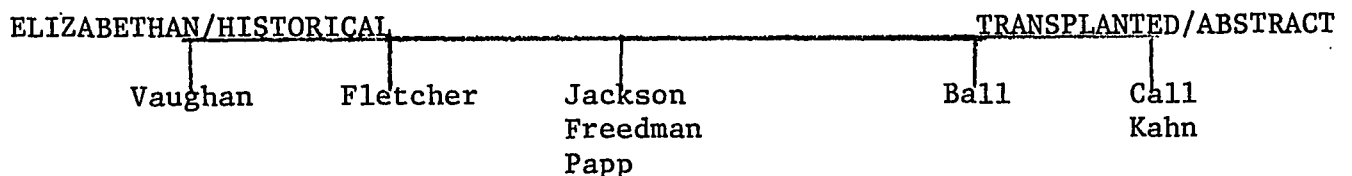
Stuart Vaughan desires a mid-Atlantic diction but feels that his main contribution to Shakespearean acting in America was the creation of "human, connected" Shakespearean speech. "Most actors . . . don't know how to say these words properly and to talk like a real person at the same time."³⁶ Joseph Papp was particularly proud of the way Vaughan directed actors in Shakespeare so that they sounded like "real people." Critics at the time often commented on the almost conversational tone of Vaughan's actors.

One notices that there is a stronger pull toward real speech than toward poetic speech. Most directors acknowledge the desirability of having both but if they can have only one, their tendency is toward "real speech."

The last polarity is that of Elizabethan/historical vs. transplanted/abstract productions. Elizabethan and historical productions represented Shakespearean staging prior to the twentieth century. Elizabethan productions place the plays in Elizabethan period costume and set, regardless of the historical setting of the play. Historical stagings attempt to recreate in some detail the era Shakespeare was writing about in any particular play, e.g., Julius Caesar would be done in Roman dress. Elizabethan costuming could be done with realistic scenery; similarly, historical costuming has often been employed on an Elizabethan-type stage. These variations all represent a "traditional" approach to Shakespearean staging. Transplants change time or locale away from either Elizabethan England or the play's historical period. They are an innovation of the

³⁶Vaughan interview.

twentieth century, probably first done by Barry Jackson at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in modern dress versions of Cymbeline (1923), Hamlet (1925), and Macbeth (1928).³⁷ Abstract productions seek to represent no particular time or locale, and may evoke combinations of periods and locales or try to invent new ones. Gordon Craig employed abstract elements in his Hamlet at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1912. They were also used extensively by the Royal Shakespeare Company during the 1960s. To some extent, then, the Elizabethan/historical vs. transplant/abstract dichotomy represents a tradition vs. innovation polarity.



Stuart Vaughan has never changed the period of a Shakespearean play. Of his Elizabethan or historical preference he has stated, "Violate that time and you destroy the frame of reference in which the play has meaning."³⁸

Ed Call and Michael Kahn represent the opposite pole. Call's As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, King Lear, and A Midsummer Night's Dream were all transplanted productions. Midsummer contained

³⁷ Actually the earliest record of a "modern dress" production of Shakespeare I can find is Max Reinhardt's 1919 semi-modern dress production of Hamlet with Alexander Moissi at the Kunstler Theater in Munich. It does not seem to have been a usual practice of Reinhardt's.

³⁸ Vaughan interview.

fantastic elements and abstract touches; Troilus and Cressida mixed ancient Greek dress with modern dress and modern properties, giving an abstract quality to the production. Michael Kahn transplanted Love's Labour's Lost, Henry V, Romeo and Juliet, and As You Like It. Henry V contained abstract elements using athletic uniforms instead of military ones. The Winter's Tale coordinated "no-period" clothes through use of color. In the first three acts everyone was in white; in the last two they were in varying shades of green.

The majority of Allen Fletcher's productions have been traditional. His Lear had an abstract, timeless quality, and his Othello was transplanted to the nineteenth century, but on the whole he sets the plays either in Elizabethan or their own historical period. Jackson, Freedman, and Papp all insist that they prefer traditional settings for Shakespeare, yet all have dabbled in innovative techniques. Jackson set his second Richard II in early twentieth-century Europe; Freedman did his second As You Like It in the eighteenth century and his Titus Andronicus was produced as an abstract ritual.

Joseph Papp has set several comedies in the nineteenth century: Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing; and As You Like It, and directed an abstract Hamlet with elements of modern dress and diction and movement. However, the majority of his productions have used Elizabethan, or, more often, historical dress.

Bill Ball, in his article in Directors on Directing, criticizes transplants; however, he himself has used transplanted elements for theatrical effect. His Richard III was done as an oriental fairy tale; The Tempest resembled a masque with Cavalier costumes; and the commedia

production of The Taming of the Shrew had an out-of-this-world aura which did not try to reconstruct a historical commedia. Each of Ball's productions contains innovative elements which might be called "Ballisms." Often his effects are theatrical, romantic, and abstract. However, he does not see himself as innovative in this way. His productions evolve out of his personality and do not seem strange to him. He sees himself as a traditionalist. As far as he was concerned, his Shrew was going back to the original sources of Shakespeare's play.

Comparing the four polarities shows no obvious pattern among the directors. Vaughan and Fletcher are close, differing chiefly in the amount of freedom they give the actor. They are the least visual, tending toward real speech and not inclining to innovation. They are also the oldest directors in the group.

Papp and Ball are most consistently in opposition to each other. Kahn is three times at extreme polarities. Nagle Jackson is consistently a "middle-of-the-roader." Freedman and Call seem to balance out, amalgamating polarities, with Freedman tending toward freedom for the actor and "real speech." On the whole, the directors are not hard-liners; most combine elements of realism and theatricalism eclectically, are inconsistent in their approaches, often changing techniques for different productions.

Accepting the probability that the productions the directors chose as exemplary of their best work were "successful" productions, can we learn anything about what makes for a successful Shakespearean production? Was there anything common to the productions described?

I think we can say that among the directors who chose tragedies or histories--Vaughan, Fletcher, Jackson, and Papp (his Henry V actually chosen by me)--all four directors had unique relationships with their leading actors. (Papp's unsuccessful relationship with Paul Rudd, his inability to get out of Rudd what he wanted, shows the importance of the actor-director relationship in a negative way.) Vaughan and Donald Madden were seen as temperamentally similar, and Vaughan gave Madden far more freedom than he normally gives actors. The Fletcher-Carnovsky relationship had an unspoken emotional base of respect and trust. It was a careful relationship but one which worked, again with the director giving leeway and scope to the actor. The Jackson-O'Sullivan relationship also was one in which the director was to some extent in awe of the leading actor. They seemed to agree on most aspects of the interpretation. There was a mutual respect, but O'Sullivan reserved the right to follow or not follow Jackson's direction. Jackson allowed the actor time to develop his performance and did not demand results too early in rehearsal.

Papp chose to do Henry V because of Paul Rudd. Rudd's charm and his portrayal of the opportunistic chauffeur of "Beacon Hill" must have made Papp think Rudd was right for an unsentimental Harry. However, when Papp found Rudd inadequate in rehearsals, the relationship became strained and seemed to inhibit Rudd from achieving the power and leadership qualities Papp wanted in the performance. Papp's remarks about Rudd, as well as Rudd's feelings, show that an attempted rapport between actor and director failed, perhaps because of Papp's identification with the character of Henry V. He never gave Rudd the freedom or confidence to allow the actor to make the performance his own.

More than anything else, successful production of the tragedies or histories require directors capable of giving freedom, confidence, and stimulation to excellent leading actors whom they respect and love. In the power balance between director and actor, it may be that the actor needs to carry greater weight. This seems to have been the case with the productions of tragedies and histories analyzed in the preceding chapters. Logically, it was the "actors' directors," rather than the "visual directors," who chose tragedies or histories as their favorites.

Looking at the rehearsal periods of the comedies chosen by the other directors (Freedman's Love's Labour's Lost, Ball's Taming of the Shrew, and Call's Midsummer Night's Dream), one is struck by one thing--the fact that the directors created great ensemble spirit and fun during the rehearsals. Rae Allen suggests that the ensemble spirit on Love's Labour's Lost came out of a lack of competition among the actors. She remembers the rehearsal period fondly: "It was one of my pleasantest memories always."³⁹ Taming of the Shrew under Ball was "a time when we worked better as a company," according to Ron Bausson. The rehearsals were "among the most exhilarating experiences of my life," and "great fun."⁴⁰ During the rehearsals, Ball himself was "more relaxed than I remember him having been."⁴¹ Call's Midsummer Night's Dream was "like a party."⁴² Not having to deal with the problems of professional actors, Call was able to take the group of young students

³⁹ Allen interview.

⁴⁰ Ron Bausson interview, Costa Mesa, California, December 9, 1976.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Karen Werner interview, Purchase, New York, December 10, 1976.

who had already worked together as an ensemble and to exploit their "sense of fun."⁴³ All three comic productions, then, had happy ensemble casts with no or few ego clashes. The actors in some way formed a family, and were able to have fun together. The directors seem to have acted like masters of ceremonies and enthusiastic cheer leaders, benevolent fathers rather than as authority figures. It seems safe to argue that these elements are conducive to a successful production of a Shakespearean comedy.

Michael Kahn enjoyed no special relationship with his leading actors in The Winter's Tale, nor did he inspire any festive atmosphere during its rehearsals. Its success seems to have been the result of his manipulation of the masquelike elements in a play which is neither tragedy nor comedy. Kahn's visual concept evidently unified the production and made it special and unique. Shakespeare's hybrid plays, "tragical-comical-historical-pastoral," may require strong concepts to hold the disparate pieces together. This would need to be tested, though, on more productions. It is interesting that only one director chose as his most successful production a play of mixed genre.

Is there anything that can be called American common to all eight directors? Their principles and techniques evince similarities and contrasts, but no distinctive principle or technique is uniquely common to them. Rereading the pages, however, I have been struck with one quality in the accounts of seven of the eight directors. This

⁴³Kay Carney personal letter, December 7, 1976.

quality may be called theatrical energy and vitality. Look at the following excerpts from review of seven of the directors:

- Stuart Vaughan -- "The attack abounds in vitality and virility. The only important faculty in which Vaughan was occasionally deficient was restraint."⁴⁴
- Gerald Freedman -- "Freedman plays it that way (for fun) without reservation filling the stage with color and incident, decorative, robust, vigorous, setting a bravura pace and sustaining it throughout."⁴⁵
- Joseph Papp -- "In the tradition of Papp's group, the stage bristles with a hearty virility . . . played broadly and boldly."⁴⁶
- Allen Fletcher -- "[Richard III] is committed to a kind of frenetic intensity."⁴⁷
- William Ball -- "It is as if no one in the cast has ever learned to walk. Instead they fly, climb, tumble, fall, wrestle, wallop, and collide. The production is endlessly breathtaking due to the talent, energy, and audacity of the American Conservatory Theatre."⁴⁸
- Ed Payson Call -- "It took them from where they were to a far more sophisticated level of expressiveness-- and joy. It was in no way "academic" theatre, utilizing the youth, wildness, and individuality of the people involved."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 337.

⁴⁵ Michael Smith, "Theatre Journal," Village Voice, June 22, 1967.

⁴⁶ Michael Smith, "Cleopatra in the Park," Village Voice, June 27, 1973.

⁴⁷ Howard Taubman, "Theatre: 'Richard III,'" New York Times, June 12, 1964.

⁴⁸ Paine Knickerbocker, "A Dynamic and Appealing Production of 'Shrew,'" San Francisco Examiner, October 22, 1973.

⁴⁹ Kay Carney letter.

Nagle Jackson -- "The flow of action rarely ebbs. Jackson keeps things happening even when Shakespeare doesn't."⁵⁰

The one director whose work does not seem to be marked by this kind of energy, physical movement, and emotional vitality is Michael Kahn. Of all the directors, Kahn is perhaps most attracted to the British theatre and to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in particular.

The quotations above are similar enough to allow some general statement about this as a quality common to seven of the eight directors investigated.

I am convinced that the most successful American Shakespearean productions have demonstrated American energy, physical vitality, and emotional intensity rather than an intellectual point of view, a theoretical approach, or a theatrical philosophy. Time and again, directors have stressed action in their productions. Vaughan's Hamlet was extremely active physically, as were Freedman's Love's Labour's Lost, Papp's Henry V, Ball's Taming of the Shrew, Call's Midsummer Night's Dream, and Jackson's Richard II. What Fletcher's King Lear lacked in physical movement it seems to have made up for in emotional intensity. This same emotional intensity seems to have exhibited itself in "joy" in the comic productions named above, as well as in Madden's performance of Hamlet and O'Sullivan's Richard II.

This is not the first time that energy, physicality, and emotional warmth have been recognized or called "American" qualities

⁵⁰ Jack Rudolph, "Shakespeare Fest Mighty in Little Ashland," Green Bay Press Gazette, August 9, 1970.

of its personality or its art. One hesitates in pointing out these qualities for fear that such observations might be called unoriginal or cliché. Nonetheless, I see these qualities in the directors examined in this dissertation. The directors who seem least compatible in their philosophical ideas on theatre, Joseph Papp and William Ball, are most similar in this quality. Michael Kahn's early productions of Measure for Measure, Henry V, and MacBeth contained this kind of excitement, while his latest efforts, including The Winter's Tale and As You Like It, seem more effete and rarefied. It is perhaps not accidental that the American Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut, will not open in the summer of 1977 owing to lack of popular support. It has seldom been a vital or exciting theatre, except perhaps briefly with Ball's The Tempest in 1960, Fletcher's King Lear, and Michael Kahn's Henry V and Macbeth. Kahn's recent work there has sparked no great excitement, and it is this writer's opinion that, in his turn toward scenic-oriented aestheticism, Kahn has turned away from those qualities which have made American Shakespeare popular, namely physical vitality and human emotion.

Two of the directors have been involved with musical comedy: Gerald Freedman and Nagle Jackson. The spirit of American Shakespeare is close to American musical comedy, a form of non-realistic theatre which has always been at home in the United States. The musical, like the successful Shakespeare described in this dissertation, is a theatrical event of overwhelming physicality, energy, and quite often of emotional warmth or "heart." Musicals seldom have interesting

ideas or philosophic content as their main ingredient. (Naturally, I am speaking of popular American musical comedies and do not include such Brecht successes as Richard Foreman's Three Penny Opera or Ed Payson Call's The Caucasian Chalk Circle which were popular and contained philosophical ideas.)

Finally, the very existence of Shakespeare "festivals," so popular during this era, communicates energy, fun, excitement, and occasion. Interestingly, the British do not use the word "festival" in connection with Shakespeare. Their theatre at Stratford on Avon is called the Royal Shakespeare Theatre or Royal Shakespeare Company. In 1975 Michael Kahn, our least typical director, took the word "festival" out of the name of the theatre at Stratford, which then became known as the American Shakespeare Theatre. Kahn may have felt the word "festival" implied a trivial or non-serious attitude toward Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's own Elizabethan Globe was probably a vital, physical kind of theatre, appealing to a wide audience. Shakespeare's inconsistencies of style, his commercialism, and romantic emotionalism, make him an "American" in the sense that we have described the American directors above. Frank Dunlop, a British director now working in America at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, feels that American actors may be closer to the spirit of Shakespeare than the modern British: "Americans are wonderful at Shakespeare, much closer to the rhythms and attacks of the Elizabethans than we modern English with all our syrup."⁵¹

⁵¹ Frank Dunlop, quoted in Robert Berkvist, "A Theatre Company Grows in Brooklyn," New York Times, March 13, 1977.

The writer dares not endorse such a chauvinistic attitude. He himself has witnessed vital British productions of Shakespeare, such as Trevor Nunn's Taming of the Shrew, Brook's A Midsummer Night's Dream, and John Barton's King John. Nor do I mean to say that qualities of energy and physicality alone account for success with a Shakespearean production. There have been energetic flops. It must be stated that audience acceptance and "success" are not necessary indications of theatrical quality. However, on the whole, energy and physicality were common to the productions selected by the directors as successful in this dissertation. Therefore, it may be said that successful American productions of Shakespeare (both in terms of audience acceptance and director satisfaction) generally exhibit great physicality and emotional warmth.

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