

JOURNAL

SDC

FALL 2016



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ALWAYS READY
TO GO OUT
+ PLAY

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
ROBERT FALLS
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MABEL ROBINSON

+ MORE

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ANNE FLIOTSOS + **ANN M. SHANAHAN**

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Reginald H. F. Denham

One of the main goals of the peer-reviewed section of the *Journal* is to bridge perceived gaps between the crafts of directing and choreography with training and scholarship in the fields. The following piece came out of a new plenary session at the Comparative Drama Conference in Baltimore, MD, in March 2016, organized by Dr. Laura Snyder of Stevenson University. The format for the plenary, helmed by Dr. Verna Foster and our author, Dr. Janna Segal, aims to do just that—gather teachers and artists together to apply scholarly work to practice and exchange ideas, actively demonstrated. We are very pleased to print this peer-reviewed essay by the plenary contributors here in the Fall 2016 issue, in the year marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and as inspiration and example for future submissions to this section.

INTRODUCED + EDITED BY ANNE FLIOTSOS + ANN M. SHANAHAN

EARLY MODERN TO POSTMODERN SHAKESPEARES: THREE APPROACHES TO STAGING ROMEO AND JULIET

WRITTEN + EDITED BY JANNA SEGAL

WITH JAMES KEEGAN, BARON KELLY + DOREEN BECHTOL

“WHERE WE LAY OUR SCENE” (1.P.2)

Fulfilling Prince Escalus's concluding command, “Go hence to have more talk of these sad things” (5.3.306), *Romeo and Juliet* has been produced in myriad ways since its appearance in the 1590s. Although it is an adaptation of Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), which was likewise an adaptation, it is Shakespeare's “talk of these sad things” that has been canonized as the quintessential love “story of more woe” (5.3.308). Shakespeare's dramatization of Verona's young lovers was informed by the conventions of the early modern English stage, which included male performers in female roles, the use of cue-scripts, and lighting that united actors and spectators. Similarly, contemporary productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, and all other Shakespeare plays, are informed by the staging conventions of their target culture. As such, *Romeo and Juliet* presents today's directors with the challenge of retelling a famous story, often imagined as essentially Shakespearean, to a contemporary audience in an exciting way that would be unfamiliar to Shakespeare, who wrote within theatrical conditions different from those now practiced, even at theatres that strive to recreate early modern English staging practices.

The following is a description of different directorial responses to the question of how to stage Shakespeare's well-known love tragedy for a contemporary audience in a way that is immediate, relevant, innovative, and attentive to a target audience's expectations. This exploration was presented at the 2016 Comparative Drama Conference (CDC) at a plenary session organized by Dr. Verna Foster and myself. Three directors, Dr. James Keegan, Dr. Baron Kelly, and Professor Doreen Bechtol, worked with two performers, Tyler Dale and Sarah Wykowski, to illustrate to the target audience of professors and practitioners three approaches to staging one of the most recognizable scenes in the play: Romeo and Juliet's first meeting at the Capulet party (1.5.92-109). The trio of approaches, presented chronologically from the early modern to the postmodern, were: Cue-Scripts (Keegan); Meisner (Kelly); and Viewpoints (Bechtol). After each director demonstrated her or his respective method in a 20-minute mock rehearsal session with the performers, Dr. Foster and I ran a Q&A with the directors, actors, and conference attendees.

The three directors, all of whom are also accomplished Shakespearean actors, were chosen because they represent a broad range of theatrical perspectives on Shakespeare. An Associate Professor of English at the University of Delaware, Dr. Keegan is also a member of the resident acting troupe at the American Shakespeare Center (ASC), a theatre dedicated to the performance of “Shakespeare's works under their original staging conditions” (“What We Do”). In his more than 10 years with the ASC, Keegan has performed such roles as Lear, Macbeth, Iago, Shylock, and Titus Andronicus in the ASC's reconstruction of the private Blackfriars Theatre used by The King's Men troupe, of which Shakespeare was a member. Four-time Fulbright scholar, director, and actor, Dr. Kelly is an Associate Professor of Theatre Arts and the Director

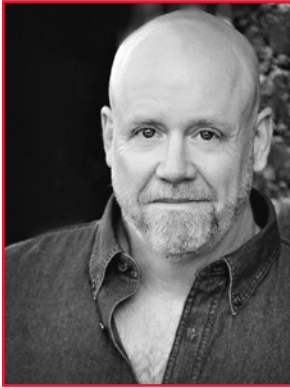
of the African American Theatre Program at the University of Louisville. A film, television, and stage actor, he has played various Shakespearean roles, including: Othello (Utah Shakespeare Festival); King Duncan in *Macbeth* (The Bargello in Florence, Italy); and Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* (Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Canada). Kelly recently published *An Actor's Task: Engaging the Senses* (2015), a practical guide to developing an actor's physical, emotional, and sensory skills. An Assistant Professor in the MLitt/MFA Shakespeare and Performance program at Mary Baldwin College (MBC), Bechtol was an actor and choreographer for the ASC's resident troupe and is a co-founding member of the Performers Exchange Project (PEP). Having trained with the SITI Company and with **Joseph Chaikin**, Bechtol uses ensemble-based theatre-making methods to annually direct a devised piece that is based on the five early modern plays that the MBC MFA students select and produce each season.

We selected actors from the MBC MLitt/MFA Shakespeare and Performance program to ensure that our performers were well-versed in Shakespeare. Our Romeo, Tyler Dale, had recently played Lucentio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and our Juliet, Sarah Wykowski, had played Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. As graduate students in a program partnered with the ASC, Dale and Wykowski had also worked with Bechtol and Keegan on and off the ASC's recreation of the Blackfriars stage. Additionally, Wykowski participated in a series of workshops Kelly had conducted during his visit to the MLitt/MFA program in Fall 2015.

We chose to present Romeo and Juliet's first meeting (1.5.92-109) for its complexity, familiarity, and brevity. While the Act Two Prologue insists that upon meeting the lovers were “Alike bewitched by the charm of looks” (2.P.6), their first encounter suggests that it was their “looks” as much as the “charm of” spontaneously co-authoring a sonnet that left them mutually “bewitched.” In only eighteen lines, the audience watches Romeo and Juliet meet, co-create a sonnet, and fall in love. This fast-paced courtship occurs under the surveillance of the attendants at the Capulet party, as the audience is reminded when, after they “kiss by th'book” (1.5.109), the Nurse tells Juliet, “your mother craves a word” (1.5.110). Because this action-packed, brief sonnet-building sequence is well-known, we were able to proceed unburdened by the exposition we might otherwise need to orient an audience. The scene's conciseness guaranteed each director the opportunity to work with the actors on the exchange at least three times, which allowed for a better illustration of how the technique might be applied in a rehearsal room.

Below, each director describes the exercises he or she employed at the CDC to offer three retellings of the titular characters' first shared, onstage moment. Following the directors' contributions is a summary of our actors' reflections on the process of working the scene multiple times from three different approaches. In conclusion, I touch upon the discoveries made at the plenary session about the challenge presented by staging Shakespeare's "story of more woe" (5.3.308) for audiences today.

JAMES KEEGAN
"YOU KISS BY TH' BOOK" (1.5.109),
OR BY THE CUE-SCRIPT



In any present-day play rehearsal process, the director and actors have access to the entire script prior to and during rehearsals; such was not the case in the theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. As Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey tell us in *Shakespeare in Parts*, each actor in an Early Modern English production received his part—a scroll which a scribe had copied out from the company's play-text. Each scroll would have only that part's lines and a one-to-three-word cue for each set of lines in that part (91-95).

Such practice is understandable since the expense and time required to provide each actor a full copy of the playing text would have been prohibitive. Furthermore, the advent of the director, in our modern sense, was yet to come. If the playwright were a member of the company, as in Shakespeare's case, he may have taken on some elements of this role, as is suggested in the character of Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; otherwise, we may conjecture that the staging was a group effort. Evidence also suggests that a company like Shakespeare's likely had only one full-group rehearsal prior to performance (Stern and Palfrey 70-71). Therefore, as his cue-script did not indicate which character was speaking the particular cue for which the actor was listening, the single full group rehearsal—or perhaps even the initial performance—might have been the first time that an actor discovered a great deal about the scene that he was playing.

Although to a modern actor such a practice may sound nerve-wracking, there are advantages to using cue-scripts as an acting exercise. Working from such a "role," the actor is removed from the comfort zone of pre-knowledge: not only does he not know who is speaking the cue for which he is listening; he also cannot know how much text intervenes between each of the passages he is to speak. Everyone in theatre knows the joke about the present-day actor memorizing text: "Blah, blah, blah, my line, blah, blah, blah, my line." The joke suggests how accustomed we have become to having the full script before us; we can take for granted the lines of other actors in the scene precisely because they have been granted. If we remove this security, we may access once again a freshness, an immediacy, an engagement with the text that arises out of what we have not been granted. With a cue-script in hand, the actor must listen carefully to everyone in the scene because any of those speakers may suddenly utter his cue. Another

theatre chestnut is that good acting is mostly about listening; cue-scripts enforce this idea.

Our Romeo and Juliet at the CDC studied the cue-scripts provided below of the star-crossed lovers' first meeting. *See cue-scripts below.*

In the case of the scene-portion chosen for our exercise, the anxiety that may attend many cue-script rehearsals was likely lessened by two factors: (1) the chosen snippet from *Romeo and Juliet* is a famous one, known to most actors familiar with Shakespeare; (2) if the actors know anything about this moment in the scene—even if they don't know the exact text—they will know the characters are in a mini-scene inside a considerably larger group scene, so the "listening anxiety" present in fuller cue-script rehearsals will be reduced since Juliet knows her cues are all coming from Romeo, and vice versa. If, however, the actors were unfamiliar with the scene—as we assume the first actors playing these roles were—they might, with so many other characters milling about, expect another character to break in on their tête-à-tête, as the Nurse indeed would upon hearing Juliet's "by th' book" cue (1.5.109).

Though editors of modern editions of Shakespeare have long added stage directions for two kisses in this scene, the Folio text has no such directions and therefore neither would the cue-scripts. That at least one kiss occurs in the scene is suggested in both cue-scripts simply because of the frequency of the words "lips" and "kiss." However, only Romeo's cue-script seems to contain an embedded stage direction for the first kiss ("Then move not, while my prayer's affect I take. / Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purg'd" [1.5.105-06]), and for the second kiss ("Give me my sin again" [1.5.109]). Therefore, in the initial rehearsal/performance of this scene, the two kisses initiated by the actor playing Romeo may take the actor playing Juliet by surprise.

ROMEO CUE-SCRIPT

If I profane with my unworthing hand
 This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

.....palmer's kiss.

Have not saints lips, and holy palmer's too?

.....in prayer.

O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:
 They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

.....prayer's sake.

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.
 Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purg'd.

.....they have took.

Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urg'd.
 Give me my sin again.

JULIET CUE-SCRIPT

.....tender kiss.

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
 Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
 For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
 And palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.

.....holy palmer's too?

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer

.....to despair.

Saints do not move, though grant for prayer's sake.

.....sin is purg'd.

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

.....my sin again.

You kiss by th' book.

The genuineness of that surprise may be embedded in the cue-script, and perhaps that genuineness might be performed to greater effect in later performances precisely because it was actually experienced in the initial one.

Along with this potential for surprise regarding the stage kisses, the cue-script approach to this passage may offer some heightened awareness of the language-play these beautifully matched young characters are enjoying with one another. In a kind of mating display, they show off for each other by building together what turns out to be an English sonnet, followed by two more shared couplets. This poetically and theatrically reinforces the coupling that has just occurred and the marital one to come.

Romeo's initial quatrain clearly states his character's immediate objective in its final reference to "a tender kiss" (1.5.95), and offers the embedded stage direction for the actors to be holding hands. His quatrain also shows his wit in its devotional images of "shrine" and "pilgrims" (1.5.93-94). As the cue-script performer playing Juliet hears this quatrain for the first time, waiting for the "kiss" that cues Juliet's responding quatrain, both actors experience the thrill of her matching cleverness. Picking up his devotional metaphors, she manipulates them to her advantage and to her objective, which seems to be to stave off a too-easily-won kiss. How wonderful that she turns the language to turn her objective into Romeo's obstacle!

After this point the poetic jousting proceeds and heightens in urgency. The two trade shorter exchanges, a fact that they might already have noted in the cue-script, especially if they assume their dual back-and-forth to be continuing, which the rhymes in the cue-script tend to confirm. Indeed, the actor playing Romeo has sufficient poetic hints in his cue-script to assume that they build another quatrain together when he sees his "too?" and his cue phrase's "prayer" rhyme with the "do" and "despair" that end his next two lines (1.5.100-03).

The cue-script exercise is by its nature something of a "one-off" in the rehearsal room. The actors will never be able to match the innocence and anxiety of this first exchange in which they cannot be sure what is coming, or from whence. But this feature is the key reason for offering actors cue-scripts as an initial acting exercise. The cue-script keeps them on edge, listening attentively for what is coming from their partner, delighting in discoveries in the moment of the scene. In a sense, the two actors will never be closer to the moment and the feel of Romeo and Juliet's first meeting than they are in their first cue-script rehearsal. That discovery and its feeling can become at

the outset a valued element of the complex physiognomy of the scene in performance.

BARON KELLY
A "TRESPASS SWEETLY URGED"
(1.5.108) IN MEISNER



Shakespeare's iambic verse is clearly not seeking to reproduce colloquial speech since it is built on a regular verse form. What can be said is that the underlying rhythm of the iambs alternate short and long stresses is like a heartbeat, and thus naturally evokes emotion. Shakespeare's language shapes and directs the quality not just of what is expressed, but what is felt and experienced by the actor who speaks the words. The beauty of the iambic form is that once you have set it up as the basic, underlying rhythm or "heartbeat" of the text, the state of mind of each character can then be revealed by the nature and extent of their divergence from the regularity of that form. The language guides or *instructs* the actor when to adhere to the regular beat and when to disrupt or reverse it; when to speed up or slow down; when to speak loudly and when softly; when to sound staccato and when legato; when to pitch high and when low; and when to breathe. In many ways it is like a musical score, and any actor attempting this text needs to understand its notation and instructions.

While contemporary acting techniques such as that of Sanford Meisner stimulate a range of emotional choices for an actor relative to a play text, they offer little to grapple with the technical, or what we might even dub *physical* requirements demanded by the rhetorical structures in Elizabethan drama. Meisner felt that an actor should find an emotion appropriate to the character's state of mind and need at the beginning of a scene, and then allow the text to emerge naturally on the "river" of the emotional interaction. Meisner developed a series of exercises aimed at fostering increased powers of observation, spontaneity, responsiveness, and communication with fellow actors, as a result of a series of external impulses. He focused on the need to explore the dynamics of scenic

action, the reality of behavior, in the exchange between characters. It is these discoveries of behavior, which happen in the moment in which they are being executed, which ultimately defined the Meisner technique.

The presence of technical instructions in Shakespeare's language may at first seem incompatible with the application of Meisner's theories. If the text is a canoe floating on the river of the emotion (Meisner and Longwell 115), then arguably you should not study its structure too closely beforehand, but rather allow it to emerge in the context of the scene. As a starting exercise, Meisner often required actors to speak the text without expression or meaning to avoid a fixed interpretation. He famously asserted, "an ounce of behavior is worth a pound of words" (4). However, with Shakespeare's iambic text it is both possible and necessary to operate a more analytical approach.

Through exercises such as those presented here actors can explore the "instructions" contained in Shakespeare's language without going against the basic principles of Meisner's technique. What might appear contradictory—the technical versus the intuitive, the analytic versus the emotional—is not necessarily. In fact, in all aspects of their craft, actors work with a combination of the fixed, such as the text, and the variable, such as the audience. Furthermore, technical features of Shakespeare's text offer actors a great deal emotionally: the language can help shape the emotion, while the breath required to deliver complex thoughts can help the actor to keep the voice resonant and the body open and responsive. These benefits cannot be accessed, however, if the body starts from a closed, purely analytic place—if there is no preparation to "particularize" the character within the actor's emotional imagination and create a living human, who acts and reacts honestly in front of an audience. Likewise, when performing Shakespeare, both thought and word live in the moment of utterance. However closely you have followed the "instructions" in the text and however beautifully you speak the language, there will be no truth, humanity, and clarity in an actor's performance unless he or she works from truthful emotion, with genuine vulnerability.

At the CDC, I led our actors through my "trespass" in Meisner technique, that aims to facilitate the open, spontaneous emotional communication while accessing the technical benefits of Shakespeare's languages, both physically and emotionally. While this would naturally influence their choices, the actors were asked to temporally set it aside for the first variation, and *play*—always reacting to one another, within the confines of the exercise. Simply put, this exercise is designed to get

actors “out of their heads” so that they can expand the range of natural behavioral options available, expressed ultimately with the text and its physical structures in the moments of performance.

DYNAMIC INTERCHANGE BETWEEN BEATS

VARIATION 1

1. Actors begin the scene, and are then signaled by the coach to “change” at random moments throughout—to make a shift in action or energy, without thought or self-censoring.
2. Actors stop and take a moment to regroup.
3. Actors attack the text again with a fresh impulse—a new tactic, action, or thought, as above.

As a result of the first variation, actors get their muscles used to playing changes and explore shifts in posture, vocal pitch, eye focus, and tempo, etc. Most importantly, by responding to random external suggestions, the actors “get out of their heads” and feel freer to trust impulses.

VARIATION 2

1. Actors begin the scene. Actors are coached to produce and express “changes” on their own accord, throughout the scene. They may rely on instincts and intuitive inspirations, coming from themselves, reacting to each other, and from prior verse analysis.
2. Actors stop and take a moment to regroup.
3. Actors attack the text again with a new impulse—a change in action, tactic, or thought. They are encouraged to play the change fully, exploring the size of the space and how big the character and moment can be. The space between the actors can also be explored to its full extent.

Having explored their characters, the space, and relational moment in broad terms, our actors were led through the third exercise.

VARIATION 3

1. Actors begin the scene. Actors are coached to continue to produce the changes on their own accord and to explore broad choices. Additionally, they are encouraged to internalize the changes, to connect them to realistic actions based in verse analysis and in reaction to each other, informed by freedoms gained in the previous two variations.

2. Actors stop and take a moment to regroup.
3. Actors are asked to attack the text again with a new impulse—a change in action, tactic, or thought. They are prompted to speed up their changes in order to create more nuance and naturalness in their performance. Playing subtly allows the actors to particularize the internalization of changes and more truthful use of space.

As Meisner insisted and the exercises presented at the CDC demonstrated, the text alone will not get the actor to the fullest, most expressive and genuine performance possible. As a result of these exercises, our actors connected with each other, explored the space dynamically, and conveyed the structure of the moment in which Romeo and Juliet first meet to the audience with more physical openness, emotional fullness, and honesty. Inspired by Meisner’s emphasis on truth in doing, the exercises provided here help actors get “out of their heads” and expand the range of behavioral options available to their character, as well as the emotions influencing how he/she speaks the text. These techniques help an actor *live* in the heartbeat of the text by training them to react instinctually and trust impulses while performing as the character, Shakespearean or otherwise.

DOREEN BECHTOL VIEWPOINTS AND THE “HOLY PALMERS’ KISS” (1.5.99)



In her 2013 blog post entitled “Heat,” **Anne Bogart** contemplates the foundational elements that make for promising theatre: “Successful theater requires a combination of technique, content and passion. Like a three legged milking stool, if one of the legs is missing, the entire enterprise collapses.” As a movement practitioner, I am drawn to this quotation because it positions the importance of *technique* alongside *content*. Often traditional rehearsal processes begin with

an examination of the language and content before the director and actors stage the play. Where Shakespeare is concerned, it’s not unusual for actors to spend a week hammering out scansion, rhetoric, and paraphrasing before getting up on their feet. Though there is merit and logic to beginning with tablework, doing so suggests that the content, or Shakespeare’s language, contains all the meaning that will eventually be transmitted to an audience. In other words, in traditional rehearsals of Shakespeare, content is privileged over technique and passion. Or, to return to Bogart’s milking stool metaphor, we might imagine the content leg twice as long as the others. An even-legged stool is useful; however, even at its most effective, this metaphor, which suggests content, technique, and passion build a sound structure, is problematic. These legs, though non-hierarchical, exist apart from one another, but they work together. Might we dissolve these boundaries and imagine that technique is content, too?

Although technique could signal any sort of rigorous training, whether vocal, physical, or rhetorical, I refer to “technique” as a physical vocabulary used to create meaning on stage. A physical technique, or a movement vocabulary such as Viewpoints, encourages actors to craft action with as much precision as they might dedicate to scanning every verse line they speak. After all, even a well-spoken and emotionally connected performance suffers from a fairly static body engaged in rote movement, which is the equivalent of a vocal monotone. If we regard action as a conveyor of content equal to spoken text, then even if we momentarily turned down the sound on a performance, an audience should still be riveted by the story.

A physical point of entry diminishes the assumption that Shakespeare’s plays are predetermined. Furthermore, it allows actors to reconnect to their imagination, and subsequently informs staging. For instance, I often begin with an evocative image from the play. I build exercises to encourage actors to articulate their ideas, actions, and gestures before they utter a word. By doing so, actors take ownership of their choices, which can lead to greater physical and emotional specificity along with more imaginative staging possibilities when they eventually marry their actions to text. This sense of agency often gives rise to the occasionally forgotten third ingredient that Bogart mentioned: *passion*, or the necessary heat that actors bring to their work when they are fully committed to the fiction they create. When actors are asked to set the play aside and work abstractly on embodying images and ideas derived from the text, they return with a renewed sense of investment in their language and a more acute awareness of how form heightens

emotion and communicates story. The physical exploration urges actors to focus on *what* they are doing in time and space, in addition to *how* they are doing it. Playing at the edges of *how* is exciting, especially when given tight parameters within which to work.

With this in mind, I began my movement-based approach to the sonnet scene in *Romeo and Juliet* by generating a body of physical material with our actors. Over the course of three rehearsals prior to the CDC session, the actors and I edited their material into a silent gestural score that traced the narrative of the sonnet. I also applied individual Viewpoints to the physical score to demonstrate the tools that actors and directors can use to create nuanced performances that are as articulate and specific on stage as the text is on the page. Our intention was to show our material and discuss the process, rather than present a finished scene; therefore, what follows is a glimpse of what we originally created and what we shared at the session, along with discoveries we made about the scene along the way.

Our physical exploration of the scene started with the evocative, iconic image: “And palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss” (1.5.99). For the first physical representation of this line of text, Tyler Dale and Sarah Wykowski initially faced one another roughly three feet apart and pressed their upstage hands together while keeping their fingers upright in a prayer-like position. Their bodies were mirror images, balanced and symmetrical. The image was serene and beautiful, yet the actors felt it lacked the dynamism and uncertainty that might better reflect two people falling in love. From there I asked them to apply the Viewpoint of *spatial relationship* (the distance between bodies in space) while keeping their palms together. They experimented with moving in very close, nose to nose, as if about to kiss. Then, one person maintained distance while the other moved in very slowly. As they repeated this action, I asked them to change tempos, as if invading the other person’s space. Finally, both slowly moved as far apart as possible with finger-tips barely touching until they released entirely, only to then rush to find each other’s hands again, this time with fingers clasped and tightly interlaced. After an hour, the actors generated a bank of physical material from one line of text.

From this exploration, we discovered that since the sonnet ends with a close-proximity kiss, the actors preferred to start at a distance so they had room to meet one another, so to speak. This distance allowed them to advance and retreat as needed, which kept the negative space between their bodies awake until their lips finally met and the negative space

dissolved entirely. We also discovered that instead of the mirror image they first created for “palm to palm,” they preferred to reach across their bodies with the same right arm so that their palms met in the middle, which also provided a physical obstacle when they tried to close distance. The actors capitalized on this physical obstacle by slowly lowering their hands while keeping their palms pressed together until their fingertips released. Once their hands separated, their lips immediately found one another and they repeated the “palm to palm” gesture, this time with tightly interlaced fingers to seal their union—an action that felt more intimate. When we highlighted this particular gesture sequence, an audience member commented on the seductive quality their hands took while moving slowly downward below their waists as they inched closer to one another’s lips. Without any words spoken, the audience appeared to be affected by the action and commented not only on *what* the actors did, but *how* they did it.

In addition to this demonstration, we also showed material that we created during our second rehearsal based on the text’s pilgrim and saint imagery. We looked at several paintings and statues, and then the actors built three tableaux based on the research. With the first tableau as our opening image, Wykowski represented Juliet as the “saint” in the sonnet—she liked the idea of playing with a longer duration of stillness throughout the score. Similarly, Dale imagined that as the “pilgrim” he would be the one to travel the most distance to get to his “saint” (1.5.101-102). Again, the actors took ownership of the story and made sense of the significance of each individual movement.

Now that we had a body of physical material, we spent the remaining rehearsal marrying movement sequences to the text. We examined every piece of punctuation and tried to link movements to semi-colons, colons, and periods. We discovered that the speaker changed at the start of each stanza and subsequently decided to let that character initiate the action. We demonstrated the physical score first without text, and then with the actions and text married. The actors worked with precision and maintained their physical specificity, which allowed for dynamic shifts that translated into an emotionally expressive performance.

Just as scansion wakes up rhythm within verse and rhetorical devices reveal exquisite speech patterns, a physical vocabulary informed by Viewpoints unearths valuable content for the audience. Moreover, it allows actors access into the interior world of their characters while cultivating their agency and trust. Ironically, the physical approach requires the presence

of the actor’s voice inside the process: their movement, voice, mind, heart, and their heat.

OUR “TWO BLUSHING PILGRIMS” (1.5.94)



For this article, our actors generously shared the insights they gained from working with our three directors. Their feedback emphasizes the value of each approach and of utilizing different directorial strategies in a rehearsal process. This is perhaps especially true when playing such canonized characters as Romeo and Juliet, whose “death-mark’d” arc is announced at the outset of the action (1.P.9). The following discoveries made by our performers reveal some of the challenges to performing Shakespeare’s iconic “star-cross’d lovers” (1.P.6), and the benefits to using cue-scripts, Kelly’s Meisner exercises, and Viewpoints to revive their “death-mark’d” story. Our Romeo and Juliet noted that the alertness potentially provoked by using cue-scripts was mitigated by their prior knowledge of the scenic unit; nonetheless, each felt the cue-script work heightened their attentiveness to their scene partner, the language, and the action. Tyler Dale found that the need to listen intently for his cue led “to honest, in-the-moment discoveries” in a familiar scene. For Sarah Wykowski, the process “shed new light on the linguistic game” played by the characters, and uncovered the following fiery moment in the dialogue: “After listening intently to his words, Juliet decides not to kiss Romeo, but to answer him with an additional quatrain, which surprises Romeo. A spark ignites, and the characters discover their improved poetic exchange as each cue is spoken.”

Dale and Wykowski remarked that while less text-centric than the cue-script approach, Kelly’s Meisner exercises likewise produced “organic...in-the-moment reactions.” Dale felt that rather than “studying the script for performance cues,” the actors explored the characters’ emotional journeys in performance. For Dale, being “forced out of [his] head and into the scene” by the abrupt changes in action, tactic, and thought “prohibited prescribed action and created opportunities for truthful reactions.” Similarly, foregoing “the formality of Shakespeare’s scene” allowed

Wykowski to make "a new discovery in the same textual moment that [she] had using cue-scripts." She observed, "This time, I uncovered an assertive Juliet who denies Romeo's kiss, as well as a bright, playful Juliet who uses the sonnet to correct him with, 'And palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss' (1.5.99)."

Our Juliet and Romeo described their work with Bechtol before and during the conference as an affirmation of the union between Viewpoints and Shakespearean drama. For Wykowski, the gestural scoring led to a physical and emotional, rather than textual, discovery: "Juliet has the agency to both create and close space between the characters. Her movement choices stem from insightful assessment and acceptance of Romeo's actions." Dale, on the other hand, was impressed that "each movement, no matter how minuscule, was derived from and choreographed to every detail on the page, including punctuation." For him, this created an ideal marriage of movement-based and text-based approaches: "Since the text inspired our movement, the acting choices organically sprang from and perfectly complemented both our dynamic physical score and Shakespeare's script."

The "pilgrims" of our staging experiment concurred that applying three directorial styles to this iconic moment from one of Shakespeare's most produced tragedies revived what could seem like a staid text. Dale described the process as "revelatory," and remarked, "Each approach offered a fresh, distinct take on a well-known scene" from a familiar tragedy. Wykowski came to the process believing that due to the play's performance history, Juliet "no longer had fire and mystery, and no choice an actor made could resurrect the excitement [that] the character may have inspired on the Early Modern English stage." Reworking the scene using cue-scripts, Kelly's Meisner techniques, and Viewpoints "revealed an enigmatic, fiery Juliet" she "want[ed] to play again," and proved that there are "several ways to rejuvenate the beloved initial exchange between Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers."

CONCLUSION TO THE "TRAFFIC OF OUR STAGE" (1.P.12)

The directors' demonstrations at the CDC provided invaluable insight from all participants. The directors, actors, and audiences discovered something new in Shakespeare's theatrical adaptation of Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet*. For example, one respondent noted that while they had always felt that the scene's value lay in its poetic language, the Viewpoints work revealed that the dramatic interest rested equally in the lovers' physical vocabulary. For me, the CDC stagings emphasized the play's layers of spectatorship. The scene is often staged as a private moment, unseen and unheard by the revelers and servants at the masque. Watching the conference attendees watch different approaches to the scene highlighted its levels of viewership and the ways in which the danger of discovery might be utilized to increase the dramatic tension.

The three different approaches to the lovers' iconic scene provided diverse answers to the question of how to stage Shakespeare's canonized love tragedy with immediacy for contemporary audiences more accustomed to the "traffic of our stage" than to that of Elizabethan England, even at theatres that seek to school spectators in Early Modern English staging practices. The demonstrations also provoked questions regarding why practitioners continue to confront the challenge presented by *Romeo and Juliet*. Just as the popularity of Arthur Brooke's prose poem may have provoked the initial penning of the play, the popularity of the play and playwright may be a driving force for the plethora of productions of this "story of more woe" (5.3.308) that have been and will continue to be staged while Shakespeare "by that name is known" (5.3.299). While one might prefer one theatrical approach presented here over the others, all three strive to bring Shakespeare's version of the "star-cross'd lovers" back to life in the present (1.P.6), and are thus all "alike in dignity" to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1.P.1). **SDC**



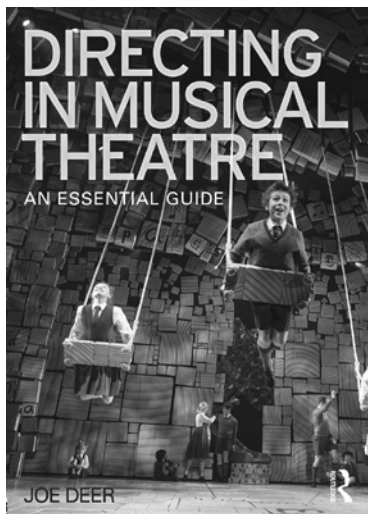
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DIRECTING IN MUSICAL THEATRE: AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE BY JOE DEER

REVIEW BY **TOM SMITH** Pacific Lutheran University
ROUTLEDGE, 2014; PP. XIII + 264. \$38.95 PAPERBACK.

Joe Deer's thoughtful and detailed book, *Directing in Musical Theatre: An Essential Guide*, is a welcome addition to texts on directing aimed primarily at emerging and student directors. The author successfully lays out the complex process of directing musicals by aligning nine chapters into five production phases: conception, collaboration, rehearsal, production and performance. Deer's book also provides supplementary material through publisher Routledge's website. While some chapters are considerably stronger and more complete than others, Deer's methodical approach and the breadth of information is impressive and would prove useful to early career musical theatre directors.

"Phase 1 - Conception" features two chapters. The first, "Preparing for Collaboration," suggests that directing requires "informed intuition." Much of the chapter, therefore, is spent offering insights into how to best break down and analyze a musical's libretto and score. The chapter offers methods for analyzing units, character, given circumstances, and style. It is a remarkably thorough examination that provides concrete tools for exploration, primarily through extensive questionnaires. The second chapter, "Imagining the Chorus," offers directors both an opportunity to understand the role of the musical theatre chorus and the importance of actively engaging them. Deer provides examples of techniques used by **Jerome Robbins**, **Trevor Nunn**, and others to illustrate the difference between directors sharing their passion with the chorus and, by contrast, eliciting the chorus's own passion. Ultimately, the role of the chorus is framed as an important aspect of the production that should be examined and defined very early in the process.

Deer's "Phase 2 - Collaboration" is comprised of "Collaborative Partners" and "Directing the Design." These chapters explore the varied ways to work with a design team, music director, and the choreographer. This discussion is less developed due to the exclusion of key collaborators and Deer's need to justify the role of a director. In fact, Deer spends much of the chapter positioning the director's role as more a spiritual leader rather than an interpreter or creative artist with agency. Further discussion focuses primarily on what the music director and choreographer do rather than ways a director might effectively collaborate with them. The designer discussion is more detailed, but Deer only addresses scenic, costume, and lighting designers. Sound design is not mentioned at all, which is odd considering how important it is not only for environmental effects but also for vocal and musical amplification and mixing. Instead, it is relegated to a later chapter, "Moving into the Theatre," positioning it as a task performed by technicians rather than an artistic contribution. Also absent is any mention of collaborating with a conductor, a props designer, the stage management team, or a video/multimedia specialist.

"Phase 3 - Rehearsal" begins with an excellent example of a timetable of events from auditions, to the first company meeting, to staging, to the *sitzprobe* and the final run-through in the rehearsal room. "Auditions" illuminates not only the traditional process for actors to be auditioned by the music director, choreographer, and director, but also discusses the complexity of casting the chorus, who often play multiple roles and understudy. There is valuable discussion of non-traditional casting, creative casting breakdowns, and negotiations with actors. "Staging and Coaching," is the most comprehensive chapter in the book and, perhaps, the most valuable. Here Deer spends significant time addressing staging theory, tools, blocking notation, and coaching. Practical and hands-on questionnaires, tables, photos, and charts provide excellent and compelling insights—so much so that one wishes there were more of these used throughout. Of particular note is the blocking notation provided by **Susan Stroman** from the musical number "I Wanna Be a Producer" from *The Producers*, which offers a concrete example of musical staging notation that is clear and understandable. This chapter, more than any other, provides a strong balance of theory and practical application.

"Phase 4 - Production" covers the production process from technical rehearsals to final dress. This Phase, like others before it, offers a helpful timetable to clarify the traditional order of events. It isn't until "Chapter 7 - Moving into the Theatre" that the stage management team is addressed for the first time, which is unfortunate considering their participation begins long before technical rehearsals. Most of the discussion focuses on the job responsibilities of the stage manager rather

than advice for effective collaboration between the director and the stage management team, which seems like a missed opportunity. However, Deer also provides discussion on professional courtesies, which is a welcomed inclusion.

"Phase 5 - Performance" includes "Shaping the Production" and "Etcetera—and all the rest." These chapters address preview performances through post-mortem. Deer's considerations regarding staging curtain calls and how to invite honest dialogue in a post-mortem are solid, offering keen insights that should prove helpful to emerging directors. By contrast, the discussion on new works merely provides identification of the stages of development, but doesn't contribute anything meaningful about a director's involvement in that process. Likewise, it ignores collaborators who are specific to new musical development, such as arrangers and dramaturgs. A section on directing revues is helpful, as is the list of habits of successful directors, which includes sound advice such as saying, "Yes, try it," and learning to love what your collaborators do. Deer provides supplementary material in his appendices, including examples of weekly and daily rehearsal schedules, unit breakdowns, concept statements, scene and song analysis, character analysis, and a scene "road map." His sample "concept statement" discerns important themes, the journey of the characters, scenic ideas and challenges, and notes on costumes, props, and special effects. It is detailed and presents a solid overall analysis. His "Staging Road Map" analyzes the beats of a unit of action and breaks it down into both what the audience sees ("Wistful Separation") and what the characters are feeling ("Though couples are together, they are not satisfied") (225). These documents would prove infinitely helpful for emerging directors and stage managers alike.

Deer's text, *Directing in Musical Theatre: An Essential Guide* offers aspiring directors a solid foundation and overview of the varied components of directing musicals. The chapters that deal primarily with analysis and staging are the strongest, providing thorough discussion, examples, and processes. The supplemental online materials provide a wide variety of visual examples through YouTube video clips concentrating on major directors, choreographers, collaborators, authors and the like. Deer also provides exercises for four of the five phases as well as additional exercises through the online supplement. While the videos offer substantial first person accounts and insights, the accompanying exercises do little to enlighten, entertain, or engage. Overall, for emerging directors and instructors of introductory courses in musical theatre, Joe Deer's *Directing in Musical Theatre: An Essential Guide* proves to be a valuable new resource with many good chapters and a few exceptional ones. **SDC**

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