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Donaldson, Peter S., dir. and editor-in-chief, and Alexa Alice Joubin, co-dir. MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive

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Donaldson, Peter S., dir. and editor-in-chief, and Alexa Alice Joubin, co-dir. MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive.
Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010. Accessed 31 January 2021.
globalshakespeares.mit.edu.

As a graduate student in the 1990s, I strove—but found it exceedingly difficult—to create bridges and a dialogue between my two beloved fields: "post-disciplinary" performance studies and the study of Shakespeare. The sheer existence of performance studies (as practised by Richard Schechner, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, José Esteban Muñoz, Peggy Phelan, Diana Taylor, and others) was a negation of most of those traditions, trends, and acclaimed values that Shakespeare studies represented. Performance studies, for instance, refuted the hegemony of text-centred interpretations: since it focused on the study of "performance" in the widest sense of the word, it rejected a literature-centred approach. Performance studies, furthermore, denied the authority of the author and questioned the exclusive significance of their written text. It was biased against theatre, and it was doubly biased against theatre history, especially because "theatre" often evoked a Europe-centred concept vis-à-vis "the West vs. the Rest." Performance studies reached out towards ethnography and anthropology while traditional Shakespeare studies was usually based on historical textology and semiotics. Performance studies focused on cultural and political issues evoked by a performance; Shakespeare studies discussed the authenticity and loyalty of a performance in relation to its textual reference points.

We could continue the list of these seemingly irreconcilable differences from a quarter century ago, but it is more essential here to acknowledge how much global (and postcolonial) Shakespeare studies has helped us resolve these clashing conflicts. The MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive is both a result and an instrument of this process. In a YouTube interview shared on the website, Peter S. Donaldson, director and editor-in-chief of the Archive, adds a crucial technological development: in addition to the epistemological shift that asserts that Shakespeare's text exists not in an idealized, single format but in diverse versions (he calls his approach "an expanded text view"), Donaldson also points to the advance of computer technology that has enabled simultaneous connections between these versions. The MIT Global Shakespeare Project (shakespeareproject.mit.edu), Donaldson

argues, has been brought about by the approach that sees a Shakespearean play in versions of a "matrix of the text" as well as by "the ability to navigate across them for browsing and learning," along with "the ability to clip in any medium and include that in the multimedia" (globalshakespeares.mit.edu/extra/peter-donaldson-talks-about-the-mit-global-shakespeares-digital-archive). The MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive (which exists in parallel with, and under the aegis of, the MIT Global Shakespeare Project) was created by these considerations and developments as well as by the tireless work and personal collection of the Archive's co-founder and co-director, Alexa Alice Joubin. Donaldson's and Joubin's impressive work has been assisted by Belinda Yung, the manager and technical director of the MIT Global Shakespeare Project, as well as by eight regional editors (Joubin, as the regional editor of Asia, is the ninth), and an eleven-member advisory board.

The MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive is an amazing resource for both research and teaching, and a lot of fun for anyone interested in global Shakespeare productions. It is a collaborative project that presents information about more than three hundred productions, shorter or longer videos (e.g., trailers) of over two hundred productions, and full-length videos of more than one hundred productions. It is a work in progress. A "Call for Participation and Materials" invites further submissions from all around the world; new materials are added regularly in all sections. The available productions can be filtered by the name of the play, or by the language of the performance, or by region. The homepage of the Archive offers a link to "View All the Productions," but we can also click on the link to "Featured Productions" and "Recently Added" productions. Once we have selected the production we would like to view, we often find additional videos under our selected video as well as details about the production ("Description") or the additional videos ("Selected Clips"), and we can create our own shareable clip, a unique URL with time code ("Create a Clip"). In addition, we can also find the most important data for each production (title, year, director, play, language, type of production, venue, and source) along with a list of "Related Productions," as well as detailed "Credits" and relevant further information.

But how global is the MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive, or how is it global? If we take a closer look at the regional distribution of the available productions, we can see that most of them (especially the full-length ones) originate from Asia and Latin America (there are quite a few

exciting full-length productions from Arab countries as well), whereas there are relatively few productions from the United Kingdom and the USA. I suppose this ratio has as much to do with stringent copyright laws that make inclusion of full-length productions from Western countries virtually impossible as with the efforts and personal connections of the regional editors (three of the nine editors are from Brazil). Whatever the reasons might be, I, for one, welcome the dominance of non-Western and non-English-language productions! I appreciate that the Archive offers access to innovative—and frequently brilliant—productions that we would not be able to experience otherwise. At the same time, I wonder how colleagues in non-Western countries see this Archive. How global do they find it? How can they benefit from it? On the one hand, I am sure, they enjoy being able to see so many non-Western and non-English-language productions. On the other, I believe they would also be interested in Western English-speaking (or non-English-speaking: e.g., German or French) productions as well, which—unfortunately—the Archive cannot provide.

The directors and the editors of the Archive are evidently aware of these complications: by making a virtue out of necessity, they have turned the Archive into a tribute to, and celebration of, non-Western Shakespeare productions. Moreover, the Archive also offers helpful additional resources: if we click on the dropdown menu "Education," we can find numerous excerpts from "Essays" on the topic of global Shakespeares (several of them by Joubin, but also by Graham Holderness, Randall Martin, and others); a few exciting "Interviews" with Ing K., James Shapiro, Zhou Ye Mang, David Yip, Tina Packer, and others (this section needs updating; the most recent interview is with Peter Donaldson from 2015); a few production "Scripts" (many of them in non-English languages); a useful "Glossary" with entries from "Alexander technique" through "Yueju"; a "Bibliography" accompanied by "Key Online Resources" and relevant "Journals"; and "Study Modules" developed by faculty in the MIT Literature Section. Next to the menu "Education," there is a link to "News" that offers information about current events and recent publications.

In the "Essays" section, we can find a brief excerpt from Alexa Joubin's chapter "Global Shakespeare Criticism beyond the Nation State" in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*. Here, Joubin proposes five different critical concepts towards developing a methodology to help us "move global Shakespeare Studies beyond the more limiting scope of nation state and cultural

profiling."[1] These concepts clearly resonate with the goals and achievements of the MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive, as they

> critique the limitations of cartographic imagination, and connect the performance site and locality to myth and to spaces of knowledge production: (1) the site of performance and the myth of global Shakespeare; (2) diaspora and racial tensions; (3) art in postnational space; (4) the ethics of quoting Shakespeare and world cultures; and (5) the production and dissemination of knowledge through archives.[2]

In the introduction of this review, I have argued that the MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive is both a product and an instrument of cross-pollination between performance studies and the study of Shakespeare. As these few lines by Joubin in particular, and other works inspired and facilitated by this Archive in general, demonstrate, the study of global Shakespeares can stimulate and inform radical performance studies today in the same way in which performance studies stimulated and informed the study of Shakespeare a couple of decades ago.

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Yong, Li Lan, dir.
Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A).
Singapore, 2008. Accessed 14 December 2020.
a-s-i-a-web.org.

Launched in 2008 by scholars from Singapore, Japan, the USA, China, and South Korea, and available at a-s-i-a-web.org, the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (or A|S|I|A) is a quite wonderful creative and critical resource. Although helmed by Yong Li Lan (National University of Singapore)

1. Alexa Alice Joubin, "Global Shakespeare Criticism beyond the Nation State," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 425.

2. Joubin, 425.