



“Well Are You Welcome in the Open Air”: Shakespeare Staged Outdoors

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Paraphrasing Ben Jonson’s famous quotation, Shakespeare’s not of a stage, but for all place. The celebrated tragedies, comedies and histories could be successfully performed under the stars in an inn yard, within ‘the woden O’ of the Globe theatre, and in the candlelit luxury of the Blackfriars. In recent decades, the convention of watching Shakespeare indoors, enjoying the comfort of velvet upholstery, wondering at the capabilities of stage technical appliances, and overwhelmed by the atmosphere of the venue itself, has given way to the simple (or, on the contrary, sophisticated) pleasures of watching performances in the open air. This may vary from family events like *Shakespeare in the Park* project to daring experiments with immersive performances and playback theatre. Since some of Shakespeare’s scenes are set in the woods, on the seashore, or among the waves, bringing them back to their «natural habitat» is sure to inspire new interpretations. The same is true for site-specific productions, e.g. *The Merchant of Venice* in the heart of the Venetian Ghetto (2016).

The aim of this seminar is to investigate the ways in which the natural settings and surroundings of an outdoor production influence, on the one hand, the production design, and, on the other hand, its reception. We would welcome papers touching upon one or some of the following questions:

- What inspires and nourishes the tendency to stage Shakespeare outdoors? Is it a characteristic of a specific national theatrical tradition?
- What limits and barriers of conventional staging are removed while creating an outdoor production? What new limits and barriers occur at the same time?
- What influences the choice of location? Does it always correspond to Shakespeare’s original setting?
- How does the location introduce (or even emphasize) identities – gender, national, racial, etc.?
- In which way does the perception of an outdoor production differ from an indoor one? What are the most influential factors – visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile or other?
- Do outdoor performances reflect and comment on the political and sociocultural agenda?

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