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Milla Cozard Riggio, ed. *Teaching Shakespeare through Performance*. NY: MLA, 1999. 503p.

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This volume, the fourteenth in the MLA Options for Teaching Series, offers instructors committed to active learning an abundance of practical suggestions and models for engaging students in the theatrical contexts of Shakespeare's plays. While the title highlights the acting, directing, and production work that most immediately suggests classroom performance strategies, explorations of theatrical approaches emerge from explicit theoretical contexts and include extended textual and literary analysis of specific scenes. Riggio includes not only essays by nearly forty contributors—many well-known Renaissance literary scholars—but also extensively annotated lists of resource materials. The book is divided into five nearly equally long sections. It begins with essays on the history of classroom performance and the theory that supports it, moves on to teaching strategies and exemplary courses, then explores the use of films and electronic programs, and concludes with annotated guides to resources. The collection is exhaustive, and the essays offer practical classroom exercises grounded in current theoretical approaches to the plays from literary as well as theatrical perspectives. There are discussions, for example, of the unknown conditions of historical staging of the plays, the changing dynamics of audience in relation to theater design and lighting, and helpful suggestions about resources teachers trained in literature can utilize to work more interdisciplinarily.

The sophistication which weaves together theory and literary analysis with discussions of models for teaching belies the volume's pedagogical emphasis. Most essays explore scenes from individual plays in extended discussions that read as if they were excerpts from even longer journal articles. By design, this is a book aimed to strengthen the pedagogy of courses both at secondary and university levels. Yet this is not an introductory text cajoling reluctant teachers away from literature and theory-based work into prescribed classroom exercises, but rather a group of cogent arguments rooted in historical awareness of the inherently experimental nature of the stage. The volume offers models, but its goal is to provide an outlook on teaching Shakespeare that insists on discussion of the plays from the perspective of the playwright, actors, costumers, and stage designers as well as that of the audience, and teaching all of that actively, so that students can discover through experiments that drama is a dynamic art, always being re-created.

What I like best about Riggio's book is that the essays reinforce a central premise: that the unpredictable dynamics of the classroom usefully mirror the

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immediacy of performance before a live audience. Reading silently, says Richard Schechner, reduces drama to a monologue in which the reader is likely to impose a circumscribed interpretation onto one editor's text as she creates an internal, imaginative, virtual performance. While the intense scrutiny individual reading offers is essential to scholarship, drama—perhaps more than other genres—requires an openness to the concept that a text is itself fluid. For example, we are unable to establish a single text for *King Lear*, so why do we not take this fact as an opportunity to discuss textual variants and what they might imply for interpretation and performance? Especially when these variants may have arisen from different performance venues? Working through the possible meanings of a selection of lines with students is not unlike a theatrical rehearsal during which actors debate how best to reach their audience. Collectively, the essays insist that if we agree that plays are stories full of contradictions and that the sticking points in meaning will change along with the material culture, then students will inevitably debate meaning as they work through planning a performance line by line.

Riggio's collection is very wide-ranging and detailed; the focus, however, remains on teaching through performance. For many readers, the volume may serve as an excellent review on several fronts. Conceivably, a text-based literary teacher might review current theoretical approaches to drama, consider a range of active teaching strategies, and survey availability of electronic aids to teaching and web-based databases. Because of its ambitious scope, the book is extremely useful for anyone teaching Shakespeare, and its readership should not be limited to the instructors aiming for active student involvement. Some essays subtly recognize that a teacher implementing these strategies may encounter resistance from an internal self or colleagues trained in traditional pedagogies. The authors address this concern by providing explicit models or references about how, for example, to work with early editions or to do research in theater history. The concept of "performance" in the title is writ large—the volume's goal is to look beyond reading a single modern edition and to include study of older editions, acting scripts, theater history, and live performances.

I believe that anyone who reads through the diverse voices of scholars who are committed to research as well as good teaching will come to see how much they have to gain by investing more classroom time working through passages as if rehearsing for performance. The intersection of Shakespeare scholarship and teaching is everywhere evident, with dozens of models for student work. For example, one clever assignment springs from the goal of raising intellectual issues of plagiarism as well as discussing Shakespeare's amalgamation of sources: ask students to weave an essay together without attribution from a collection of materials. Riggio

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reminds us that students today are generally more attuned to the passivity of television than to the interactive conditions of theater. Getting them more fully engaged with solving problems in interpretation may be crucial not only for encouraging their study of Shakespeare but also will work, as they debate how to resolve the import of some line or other, to introduce students to the radical decentering of received authority. Thus performance-based teaching should not be relegated solely to drama departments, because juxtaposing various editions, different films, and live performances—their own as well as those of more professional actors—can draw students into active understanding of the nature of contemporary study of literature.

Each section is strong in its own right and can be consulted separately for teaching activities and guides to resources or as theoretical reinforcement for turning one's teaching toward performance as a way of staying current in pedagogy, invigorating reluctant or quiet Shakespeare students, or empowering more extensive use of technology. In part one, seven essays ground performance-based teaching in contemporary dramatic and literary theory while recognizing the differences between early modern and twenty-first century theatrical conventions and staging. These essayists show that Shakespeare will be most keenly explored by students when they can, for example, study a play's performance history, as Jill Levenson illustrates with the changing cultural contexts of performances of *Romeo and Juliet*. She provides helpful suggestions about how to research stage history. Stephen Orgel links the use of boy actors with the social construction of gender and then discusses how teachers might assign acting roles.

The second of the five sections focuses on teaching strategies, although the exercises, as in part one, are linked to specific plays. David Bevington and Gavin will suggest how to involve theater professionals; Michael Shapiro discusses practical issues such as getting actively involved in choosing one's assigned classroom to be able to approximate Renaissance staging through using multiple doors and moving desks and chairs. Thomas Berger, in an essay that is representative of the approach of this book, shows how contrasting the quarto and folio versions of *King Lear* engages students immediately in dilemmas of textual history and how that affects development of characters in performance. In particular, section two of Riggio's collection shows how teachers can convince students that any given interpretation is temporally bound and that the concept of a fixed text must necessarily loosen when teachers have ready availability of early editions, knowledge of period theaters, and electronic access to vast amount of scholarship as well as historical material.

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Part three offers descriptions of exemplary courses and specific commentary on how to set up performance-based coursework by scholars such as Lois Potter. Elise Ann Earthmann has excellent suggestions about how to prepare students to read Shakespeare, and Cynthia Lewis offers a detailed description of how her students financed and mounted a full production. Part four is particularly valuable for its incorporation of a survey or film and electronic resources with suggestions about how to use excerpts of videos efficiently. Moreover, there are extensive definitions of film terms and types of electronic and computer-accessed resources and how to locate them. This section does not condescend, but it also does not assume that teachers are aware of how rapidly on-line resources are expanding. Reading this section is a very useful review of what is available and in what format. Finally, there are sixty pages of annotated guides to American acting companies, festivals with academic affiliations, classroom editions of Shakespeare, film and video resources and publishers' addresses. Teachers will find that there are professional theaters with frequent performances of Shakespeare not listed here which will also be helpful in teaching. For example, Wisconsin teachers take students to the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and the American Players Theater in Spring Green. There is also the fun, although commercial and ahistorical, of Renaissance Fairs that often excite students to continue their study of the early modern period.

Riggio's collection is a splendid volume in both its scholarly depth and encyclopedic range. It is especially effective in insisting that a holistic approach to Shakespeare in classroom performance will lead to students reading texts more closely and to fuller understanding of drama as a genre involving playwright, actors, and audience in which every performance can be seen as itself research into the meaning of the play. Teachers can lead their students into deeper intellectual and theoretical engagement with the issue of what constitutes a text and to active discovery of negotiated meaning in literature. ✽