

TH256-15 Adapting Shakespeare for Performance

21/22

Department

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Ronan Hatfull

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Adapting Shakespeare for Performance is a practice-based module that invites students to engage in the adaptation process and produce their own creative responses to the plays of William Shakespeare. This module will challenge students to produce their own interpretation of plays which have helped shape how adaptation is received and practiced. An intrinsic part of Shakespeare's legacy is the adaptation of his work on stage, page and screen. Shakespeare himself was a consummate adapter, drawing on pre-existing literary and theatrical materials and re-working these for his audiences, for whom his plays were a form of popular entertainment. How is Shakespeare reconceptualised in the context of popular culture and what methods do modern artists use to render his work accessible? This module will challenge the perception of what can be perceived as an adaptation of Shakespeare and each 180-minute workshop will involve practical exploration of different media, including poetry, prose, film, television and theatre. Students will be asked to create a three-minute mini-adaptation/pitch in response to each week's material and asked to present this at the following seminar. Using this accumulative creative material and case studies as models, the module will culminate with the creation of group adaptations, which will be rehearsed in Weeks 8 and 9 and presented during Week 10. In addition, each student will create an Artistic Dossier/Critical Review of their adaptation.

Module aims

Adapting Shakespeare for Performance will enable students to understand how adaptation functions as a creative process. Shakespearean adaptation is such an archetypal subset of adaptation that the practical and theoretical skills gained on through this module will be applicable to students should they wish to adapt theatrical work beyond Shakespeare, from the plays of his contemporaries to modern directors and writers who draw inspiration from his work. The module aims to introduce students to the range of ways in which Shakespeare has been adapted in the twenty-first century in order to help them understand the playwright's continued relevance in modern popular culture and inspire them as creative artists. It also seeks to help them understand key motivations for adapting texts which have accrued significant cultural capital throughout history, be these artistic, celebratory, commercial or parodic. Shakespeare's plays further offer the opportunity to explore how the approach to adaptation differs depending on the source text's genre and, through the exploration of four key examples, this module aims to challenge students to question why particular plays are categorised as comedy, tragedy or history and what adaptive surgery adapters undertake when they adhere to or defy the generic expectations of their audiences.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

In this module, we will explore key processes and principles of adaptation, using Shakespeare's plays and their afterlives as a notable example of how creatives approach conventions of genre, character archetypes and narrative tropes. In the first seminar, students will be introduced to Shakespeare's biography and how he worked as an adapter and collaborative artist. The following four seminars will turn to Shakespeare's plays, exploring examples of contemporary adaptation in four different genres: comedy, history, tragedy and late romance. In the seventh seminar, we will return to biography to explore how Shakespeare's life has been interpreted and reimagined in biographical fiction. The final three seminars will be dedicated to the supervised devising, rehearsal and performance of the assessed group adaptations.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of Shakespearean adaptation for performance from a range of source materials (seeing the 'play' in the source)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of dramatic structure, character development, conflict, and theatrical environment ('special world')
- Understand how genre affects the processes and products of adaptation
- Create adaptations for performance from a different genre, art form or historical event (knowing what makes performance unique)
- Conduct background research necessary to develop an adaptation
- Work collaboratively in developing an adaptation

Indicative reading list

- William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-6)
- Gecko and Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, *The Dreamer* (2017). A collaborative physical theatre production which focuses on the lovers and imagines Helena and Demetrius's relationship after the end of Shakespeare's play. Trailer available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dcu6wWjJHfO>. Full version to be made available.
- Casey Wilder Mott (dir.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2017). Film adaptation which relocates the play to contemporary Los Angeles and recontextualises the action within the world of Hollywood. Starring Lily Rabe, Finn Wittrock, Hamish Linklater, Fran Kanz and Ted Levine. Trailer available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6d3-knbWaiY>. Full version to be made available.
- Nicholas Hytner (dir.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Bridge Theatre, 2019). Immersive, in-the-round production which reversed the roles of Oberon and Titania and added modern text and pop music to the play. Starring Gwendoline Christie, Oliver Chris and Hammed Animashaun. Extract from Act 3 Scene 1 available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPv9ICpMyRw&t=18s>. Full version to be made available.
- William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part 1* (1596-7)
- Kenneth Branagh (dir.), *Thor* (2011). Superhero film which draws on a number of Shakespeare plays, most notably *Henry IV Part 1*, for inspiration. Starring Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston and Anthony Hopkins. Available with a Disney+ subscription and on Box of Broadcasts: <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/001E3F19?bcast=65874223>.
- Richard Eyre (dir.), *The Hollow Crown: Henry IV Part 1* (2012). Television film adaptation which was broadcast as part of the BBC's first *Hollow Crown* series and sets the play in its original historical setting. Starring Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons and Simon Russell Beale. Available on Box of Broadcasts: <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/02AFF702?bcast=121529979>.
- Dominic Dromgoole (dir.), *Henry IV Part 1* (2010). Filmed recording of this stage production at Shakespeare's Globe. Starring Roger Allam and Jamie Parker. Available on Drama Online: https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/video?docid=do-9781350996922&tocid=do-9781350996922_4598163311001.
- William Shakespeare, *Othello* (1604)
- Q Brothers, *Othello: The Remix* (2012). Stage adaptation in which four actors perform *Othello* through the medium of hip-hop. Filmed recording of the production, performed at Shakespeare's Globe as part of the 2012 Globe-to-Globe Festival, to be made available.
- Tracy Chevalier, *New Boy* (2017). Novel adaptation which is part of the Hogarth Shakespeare series.
- Nicolas Hytner (dir.), *Othello* (2013). NT Live broadcast of this stage production at the

National Theatre. Starring Adrian Lester and Rory Kinnear. Promptbook and production available on NT Live Archive: https://0-search-alexanderstreet-com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/nath/browse/metawork-page?ff%5B0%5D=metawork_facet%3AOthello%2C%20the%20Moor%20of%20Venice.

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1611)
- Kate Tempest, 'What We Came After' (2010). Poem based on the play performed by the award-winning poet, rapper and playwright. Transcript and film available here: <https://mbkitzel.wordpress.com/2013/08/04/a-transcription-of-kate-tempests-what-we-came-after/>.
- Julie Taymor (dir.), *The Tempest* (2010). Film adaptation which combines special effects and epic visuals to produce a science fiction inflected interpretation of Shakespeare's play. Starring Helen Mirren, Ben Whishaw, Djimon Honsou and Felicity Jones. Available on Box of Broadcasts: <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/05A9694D?bcast=123986425>.
- Phyllida Lloyd (dir.), *The Tempest* (2016). Live broadcast of this Donmar Warehouse production at Donmar Kings Cross starring Harriet Walter: <https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com/education/collections/donmar-warehouse/the-tempest>.
- Gareth Roberts (wr.), "The Shakespeare Code", *Doctor Who* (2007). TV Episode of the popular science-fiction series in which The Doctor and his companion time-travel back to Elizabethan England where they meet Shakespeare. Starring David Tennant, Freema Agyeman and Dean Lennox Kelly. Available on BBC iPlayer: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0074gmy/doctor-who-series-3-2-the-shakespeare-code>.
- Dead Centre, *Hamnet* (2017). Stage play which explores Shakespeare's relationship with his deceased son Hamnet. Full text to be made available.
- Maggie O'Farrell (wr.), *Hamnet* (2020). Novel which focuses on Hamnet's life and his family's response to his death.
- Reduced Shakespeare Company, *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play* (abridged) (2016). Filmed recording of the comedy troupe's condensation of Shakespeare's complete works which is framed by the playwright appearing in his own works.

International

The module explores adaptations from across Britain and North America

Subject specific skills

- To work effectively as a creative ensemble
- To gain an overview of Shakespeare's dramatic work
- To understand how Shakespeare has been adapted in different media
- To perform, design and produce adaptations of canonical work

- To research and write creative responses to pre-existing texts
- To develop their skills as actors by performing extracts from Shakespeare and adaptations of his work

Transferable skills

- Public speaking in each seminar
 - Group work through assessment and collaborative exercises in each seminar
 - Creating pitches for their adaptations
 - Leadership through directing, design and collaboration
 - Creative writing through the process of storyboarding and scripting their final adaptations
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Project supervision	1 session of 1 hour (1%)
Practical classes	9 sessions of 3 hours (18%)
Online learning (independent)	6 sessions of 3 hours (12%)
Other activity	20 hours (13%)
Private study	14 hours (9%)
Assessment	70 hours (47%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Students will be required to undertake workshop preparation in the form of reading and viewing. There are also required to rehearse each week to develop their weekly 3 minute mini adaptations as part of their preparation towards their practical assessment.

Other activity description

Unsupervised rehearsals

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
Performance Exam	50%	26 hours
The group performance will be an adaptation of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry IV Part 1, Othello, The Tempest, or a biographical adaptation of an aspect of Shakespeare's life. The performance will be 15 minutes long. It can be scripted or without words. The performances will be open to members of the department and will be advertised in Week 9.		
Portfolio	50%	44 hours
The portfolio has five entries all based on the performance adaptation. The portfolio/critical review should be 2500 words.		

The portfolio needs to include the following entries:

1. Documentation of your role and responsibilities in the adaptation process, your challenges, and your accomplishments in text and images. You may choose to include material from the three-minute mini-adaptations created throughout the module. This section should be about 1000 words.
2. Justification of the source material. Think about why you and your group chose this play; what it says to today's audiences; the significance of its themes; how it engages the audience; what you want the audience to take from the performance, etc. This section should be approximately 500 words.
3. Evidence of adaptation of the source material. In this section, you will map the adaptation by clearly indicating four or five key differences between source material and the adaptation. You can choose the format for presenting this mapping, i.e. two columns. In this section, you will explain, analyse and justify the adaptation. This section should be approximately 1000 words.

Feedback on assessment

Student will receive written feedback on both assessments and the opportunity to have a 1-2-1 tutorial to discuss this feedback or any aspect of the assessment process.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated

Year)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 2 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies