

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 029 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Shaping Theatre Performances and Informing Public Understanding of Shakespeare
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Professor Tiffany Stern's research into 16-18th Century theatre performance has restored a significant element of the cultural heritage to public understanding and has led to the creation of new cultural capital through her influence on present-day theatrical interpretations of Early Modern texts in England and America. She has also influenced the construction and use of theatrical spaces in both countries through her work as a historical advisor to theatre companies and cultural organisations. These direct influences have been supported by educational work with the general public and schools, in the form of lectures, podcasts, and interviews with newspapers and journals.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research spans Prof Stern's publication career to date. Her four books have each had an influence on theatrical methods both in England and USA. <i>Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan</i> (2000), written while a Junior Research Fellow at Merton College, Oxford (1997-2000), explored rehearsal methods throughout a two century period, and has been used as a template for sixteenth to eighteenth century 'O.P.' ('original practices') performances ever since. <i>Making Shakespeare</i> (2004) explored the construction and layout of early modern theatres, as well as early modern acting; it was written with a popular audience in mind. Made up of lectures given while at Oxford, though published while Stern was at Oxford Brookes (2001-5), <i>Making Shakespeare</i> is often given to O.P. actors who want to understand how to recreate the acting techniques of the early modern period. Her third book, written after her return to Oxford as a Faculty member, and co-authored with fellow Oxford Faculty member, Simon Palfrey (who also joined the Faculty in 2005), was <i>Shakespeare in Parts</i> (2007). It focused on Shakespeare's use of 'actor's parts': the texts from which actors learned their roles, which consisted of their speeches only, preceded by a cue of one to three words. This book has affected Shakespearean performances in particular; its methodology, dividing plays back down into parts and analysing them, is also now sometimes adopted in schools. Stern's most recent book, <i>Documents of Performance in Early Modern England</i> (2009), explores the different pieces of paper that made up early modern playtexts: prologues, epilogues, songs, scrolls, scenarios, audience arguments, backstage plots of entrance for actors. Its description of performance texts other than actors' parts is being introduced into theatres already using other aspects of her research.</p> <p>Stern's advisory work on architectural committees of theatres interested in (re)building a historic performance space (including the Globe, London; and the Blackfriars, Virginia) and on the archaeological committee of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 'Dig for Shakespeare' project, flowed directly from her writing on theatrical architecture, especially in <i>Making Shakespeare</i>.</p> <p>Her expertise in eighteenth-century theatre underpinned her work as textual adviser for the National Theatre's <i>She Stoops to Conquer</i> (2011), and her involvement in the RSC's <i>Cardenio</i> (2011).</p> <p>Stern's impact on delivery of school curricula stems largely from her scholarly work as editor and general editor for the New Mermaids plays: most A Level set plays are New Mermaids editions.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), i-xii; 1-337. DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199229727.001.0001 • <i>Making Shakespeare</i> for Accents on Shakespeare Series (London: Routledge, 2004), i-xiv; 1-

188. Available online on EBL

- with Simon Palfrey, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), i-xiv; 1-545
- *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), i-xiv, 1-362. DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199272051.001.0001
- “‘The Forgery of Some Modern Author’?: Theobald’s Shakespeare and Cardenio’s Double Falsehood”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62.4 (2011), 555-93. DOI: 10.1353/shq.2011.0074
- ‘Watching as Reading: the Audience and Written Text in the Early Modern Playhouse’, *How to do Things with Shakespeare* ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 136-59. DOI: 10.1002/9780470694114

Evidence of the quality of the research:

Shakespeare in Parts was supported by an AHRB Innovations Award (2001) granted jointly to Stern and Palfrey. *Documents in Performance* was completed using an AHRC Research Leave Award (2007). Stern also received an ARC (Australian Research Council) Discovery Project Award (2009) for ‘Rehearsal without a director: Rethinking theatre history’ (an international collaborative team researching rehearsal over time and across countries; stemming from her work on rehearsal).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Many theatrical companies, in the wake of the construction of Shakespeare’s Globe, have become interested in recreating the performance conditions of the past. Tiffany Stern’s research on historical performance conditions has become **a template for ‘O.P.’ (original practices) productions**. The New American Shakespeare Tavern in Atlanta, Georgia, regularly puts on plays using her methods, as does the Utah company, Grassroots Shakespeare Co., and the Toronto company the Queen’s Men Players (Ref. i). Her scholarship has brought about a yearly season at the reconstructed Blackfriars theatre in Staunton, Virginia, in which performances are mounted from actors’ parts without a director (Ref. ii). Ralph Cohen (Co-founder and Director of Mission at the theatre) considers that ‘The most important work that we have done since starting the company 25 years ago is to have instituted a yearly 3.5 month season based on the work that Tiffany Stern has done with regard to rehearsal. Her book by itself would have been a major contribution to this new approach (one that other theatres are now imitating), but Tiffany has gone far beyond that and become our most important consultant on this work. Annually she and our actors share an exchange of thoughts on the season and on the issues raised not only by director-less rehearsals but also on the efficacy of parts (cue scripts). These conversations in turn generate discussion and exploration by the graduate students in our MLitt/MFA ... I am certain that the work Tiffany has sparked and now monitors will prove an important moment not only in the record of Shakespeare in production but also in the development of a dialogue between scholars and professional actors’ (Ref. 1). Sarah Enloe, Director of Education at the Blackfriars, adds that ‘we frequently cite and employ her work in our workshops, lectures, and educator resource materials such as study guides and teacher seminars’ (Ref. 2). More recently, Stern’s work has started also to be used by companies interested in **rethinking historical performance in a modern context**. One Virginia company, Bad Quarto, has put on a modern production – of *The Vagina Monologues* – using part of the methodology described in *Shakespeare in Parts* and *Making Shakespeare* as ‘a model for our rehearsal process.’ Director Tony Tambasco elaborates: ‘My assistant director and I scheduled some early rehearsal sessions to work through the monologues on an individual basis, and then similar individual sessions later on to polish up.’ In line with the methods Stern describes, ‘We had a single group rehearsal to work through tops and tails of each monologue, and set the pace for “entrances” and “exits” (although the entire company was on stage throughout) on the day of the performance, ...’ (Ref. iii).

Stern’s research has **influenced the design and use of particular theatrical buildings**. Dr Farah Karim-Cooper, Head of Higher Education and Research at the Globe Theatre confirms that Stern has played a significant role as an advisor on the Globe’s Indoor Playhouse Academic Committee, her ‘contributions to the Globe Architecture Research Group ... help[ing] to shape our understanding of indoor playhouses and ... to construct an indoor Jacobean playhouse’ that will be called the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. ‘She has contributed lectures to our public audiences at the Globe and, in the past, provided notes/essays to our theatre season programmes which are

read by thousands of members of the public' (Ref. 3). Stern chairs the American Shakespeare Center's Globe II Committee, currently determining how to build an accurate replica Globe Playhouse in Virginia.

Certain specific productions put on by major English theatre companies have been informed by Stern's writings on performance issues of the 16th to 18th centuries. She is regularly referred to in O.P. productions, and wrote the programme notes for the Globe's production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* (2008, reused 2010). Her scepticism about Shakespeare's hand in the lost play *Cardenio* resulted in the RSC's changing the way they advertised their production: retitling it from 'Shakespeare's *Cardenio*' to 'Shakespeare's lost play re-imagined'. Her discussions on the subject with RSC director Greg Doran on Channel 4 news, and for a popular audience in Stratford, are available online and in his book. Doran reports: 'I approached Tiffany Stern to help me cut through the welter of conflicting material surrounding Lewis Theobald's claims to have discovered a lost Shakespeare play. She was very helpful in identifying precisely which claims were accurate and which were over-enthusiastic conjecture. She was also very engaged in my attempt to pursue the exact circumstances of the apparent special performance for the Savoyard Ambassador in 1613. I think we set a few hares running. These relationships between the theatre and academia are rare, but when they are as open and generous as the one we established with Professor Stern, they are very welcome indeed' (Ref. 4, iv). Stern's thoughts about 18thC production also shaped the National Theatre's *She Stoops to Conquer*, for which she was textual adviser. The Staff director confirms that 'Tiffany assisted with pre-rehearsal research with staff director Sam Yates and then continued to be of help up until opening night. Clarification of textual references and historical context were particularly helpful' (Ref. 5, v). Stern has introduced National Theatre productions for Sixth Form Conferences, giving talks there on *Timon of Athens*, *Othello*, and *Comedy of Errors* (the latter is available online); she has spoken on several occasions at the Globe, including a public lecture on 'The Blackfriars Playhouse' (November 2012).

Stern's work has been cumulatively responsible for a resurgence of interest in the 'page to stage' school of criticism and performance. The journal *Shakespeare Bulletin* is publishing an issue 'Rehearsing Shakespeare' largely on the effects of her work academically and practically (2012); the Open University is currently running a course on her work, 'Documents of Shakespearean Performance: Stage, Page, and Manuscript in Early Modern England' (2012) (Ref. vi); the journal *Shakespeare Quarterly* had an issue responding to her work in 2005. She has been invited to talk at many universities: as visiting professor, she has given talks open to the public at Vassar, Poughkeepsie, USA (2012), Utah Valley University, Utah, USA (2012), Washington University, St Louis, USA (2010), University of Auckland, NZ (2010; available online), Emory University, USA (2009), University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA (2007). She is regularly asked to comment on Shakespeare and early modern theatre by the *Times* and the *New York Times* amongst other newspapers; *The Economist* produced a 'Quick Study' article on her reading recommendations in 2012 (Ref. vii). She has also had significant **influence on schools** through her work as a general editor (with Brian Gibbons and William Carroll) of the New Mermaids play series (she has edited Richard Sheridan's *The Rivals*, and George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*). New Mermaids tend to be the texts of choice for GCSE and A level texts in the UK (Ref. viii). Schools and other educational institutions have also used her theatre history work, dividing plays into 'parts' and reading or performing from them, according to her methodology (Ref. ix).

All these forms of impact are supported by extensive public engagement work. Stern has given public lectures at Blackwell's Book Shop (Oxford) and at museums on issues of material textual culture. Subjects include (for the V&A, London) a lecture on playbills and, for the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard, a lecture (available online) about the history of note-taking (the Radcliffe also has an online exhibition for which she created an 'itinerary'). Stern's range and influence are readily visible in her online presence: several of her popular talks are freely available as podcasts (Ref. x); various blogs discuss her thoughts – not only on theatre but, for example, on early modern concepts of time (Ref. xi). Her podcast lectures on 'Shakespeare and the Stage' for the Great Writers Inspire Oxford podcast series had by the end of the audited period attracted 1863 downloads.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Testimony

- (1). Corroborating email from Co-Founder and Director of Mission, Blackfriars Theatre, 10.9.13.
- (2). Corroborating email from Director of Education, Blackfriars Theatre, 16.9.13.
- (3). Corroborating emails from Head of Higher Education and Research, Globe Theatre, 6-13.9.13.
- (4). Corroborating email from Director of Education, Globe Theatre, 9.9.13.
- (5). Corroborating email from Staff Director, Sam Yates, 9.9.13.

Other evidence sources

- (i). Companies naming Stern's influence on their productions: New American Shakespeare Tavern, Atlanta: http://www.shakespearetavern.com/index.php?/education/recommended_reading; <http://shakespearetavern.blogspot.com/2011/06/disclaimer-this-entry-contains.html>; Grassroots Shakespeare Co., Utah: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150708567054839.422385.78708834838&type=3>; The Queen's Men, McMaster, Toronto: http://tapor.mcmaster.ca/~thequeensmen/performance_research/rehearsal_and_performance/e_rehearsal.htm; Bad Quarto Productions, Staunton, Virginia: <http://badquartoproductions.blogspot.com/2011/02/vagina-monologues.html>
- (ii). American Shakespeare Center, Blackfriar's Playhouse, Staunton, Virginia: <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=38>; <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=987>; <http://sta2012.wordpress.com/2012/02/28/notes-working-with-cue-scripts-and-shakespeares-staging-practices/>
- (iii). <http://tonytambasco.com/directing/vag-mon2011.php> (follow link to 'Director's Notes'); Corroborating email from Tony Tambasco, 20 September 2013.
- (iv). RSC's *Cardenio*: <http://www.channel4.com/news/much-ado-over-rscs-lost-shakespeare-play>; <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/listen-to-cardenio-in-conversation>
- (v). National Theatre's *She Stoops to Conquer*: <http://microsites.nationaltheatre.org.uk/68406/productions/she-stoops-to-conquer.html>
- (vi). <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/english/book-history/documents-shakespearean-performance.shtml#ou-content>
- (vii). *The Economist: Quick Study*: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/01/quick-study-tiffany-stern-staging-shakespeare>
- New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/07/books/note-taking-seminars-at-radcliffe-institute-for-advanced-study.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- (viii). Sample ref. for educational take-up: <http://www.folger.edu/eduLesPlanDtl.cfm?lpid=741>
- (ix). New Mermaids play editions set as A-level texts: <http://www.literaryconnections.co.uk/resources/LTA4.html>
- (x). Public talks available online: <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/listen-to-cardenio-in-conversation> <http://player.fm/series/national-theatre-podcast/original-performance-conditions-of-the-comedy-of-errors>; <http://60-minutes.bloggingshakespeare.com>; <http://writersinspire.org/content/shakespeare-stage>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mRK-q1V3H4&list=PL3DE21962E80B6A89&index=8>
- (xi). Blogs about Stern's work: <http://virtualpaulscrossproject.blogspot.com/2012/01/tiffany-stern-time-and-bells-of-st.html>; <http://shakesyear.wordpress.com/2012/05/15/a-stern-article-from-tiffany/>