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Performing Restoration Shakespeare “Then” and “Now”: A Case Study of Davenant’s *Macbeth*

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Abstract

Focusing on a case study of William Davenant’s *Macbeth* (c.1664), this article sets out to explore how and why Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays succeeded in performance in their own time (especially in the 1660s and 1670s) and how they might be revived for audiences today. To achieve this, the article combines theater history and literary criticism with practice-based performance scholarship. Firstly, it draws on reviews and reports from the Restoration to examine how and why rewriting and adaptation were necessary to ensure the survival of Shakespeare’s plays after the end of the English Civil War. In the same segment, the article also examines how the emphasis on musical and visual spectacle and the use of heavily revised playtexts were received by seventeenth-century playgoers. The article then uses observations and conclusions made during a rare professional production of Davenant’s *Macbeth* at the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC (2018) to investigate how Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare can inform modern theater practice. The conflicts and obstacles that were encountered in this production, and the possibilities and solutions that were discovered, can offer lessons as well as strategies for performing Restoration Shakespeare both now and in the future. By considering the creative choices made during the Folger’s production and investigating how these were received by reviewers and audiences, the article suggests a selective and adaptive approach to using Restoration Shakespeare in modern theater practice: namely, one that exploits the performance potential of the musical spectacle and of the new characters that were added by Restoration adapters but treats with caution the revisions of Shakespeare’s plots and language.

Keywords

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Davenant, performance, theater, adaptation, Restoration, music

In his study of Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, William Moelwyn Merchant opines that "one of the problems throughout any consideration of these Restoration versions [is] that rarely did the literary competence of the adapters match their pretensions in handling the original text" (218). Opinions such as this have for a long time inhibited any serious engagement with the dramatic projects of Shakespeare's Restoration adapters. But adaptations like William Davenant's reworking of *Macbeth* (c.1664) show that Restoration Shakespeare was a sophisticated and popular theatrical experience that successfully integrated song, music, dance, spectacle, and acting.¹ Since most critics continue to focus on the textual alterations made by Davenant and others and often consider these changes to be inferior to Shakespeare's original texts, the performative and musical value of Restoration Shakespeare tends to be overlooked in the process of critical analysis. Seeking to redress this imbalance, the present article sets out to investigate the appeal of Restoration Shakespeare not just in its own time but, crucially, in our time, as well. Specifically, the article will move beyond the continuing critical obsession with textual revision and political context and assess the viability of reviving Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in the twenty-first century. Drawing on observations and conclusions from a rare professional production of Davenant's *Macbeth* at the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC (2018), which was staged as part of the international and multidisciplinary research project "Performing Restoration Shakespeare" (2017-20) and part-funded by the United Kingdom's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the article will investigate possible modes and strategies of employing these neglected Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare to inform modern theater practice.²

Making Restoration Shakespeare intelligible and credible on its own terms, while inviting scholars from different disciplines to discard inhibiting preconceptions that such performances were deformations of Shakespeare's precursor texts, is a necessary endeavor. Even though theater historians and musicologists have succeeded in producing new knowledge about Restoration repertoire (Cholij; Burden, *Purcell*), casting (Hume and Milhous; Burden, "Casting Issues"), period conventions (Burden, *Purcell*), creative processes (Herissone and Howard; Herissone; Hume and Milhous), and dramatic functions of music (Lowerre; Price), scholarship specifically on Restoration Shakespeare—except for a theater historical intervention by Eubanks

¹ "Restoration Shakespeare" refers to the body of adaptations of Shakespeare's plays produced during the period from the reopening of the London theaters in 1660 to about 1715.

² See www.restorationshakespeare.org for an account of the project's events and research activities.

Winkler and Schoch—tends to focus heavily on textual adaptation (Marsden; Clark; Johanson; Murray). As a result, much existing scholarship still fails to examine the multimedia theatrical and musical dimensions that make Restoration Shakespeare a distinct performance genre—a deficiency that the project “Performing Restoration Shakespeare” sought to begin to redress. Meanwhile, scholarship within the broader field of performance studies, despite important interventions by Jocelyn Powell and Tim Keenan, continues to gravitate towards a dichotomy between the early modern and the contemporary while neglecting Shakespeare performances in other historical eras, including the English Restoration. While the study of contemporary performance is driven by the presentist turn in Shakespeare studies and by the desire to interrogate the plays’ current cultural value, the study of early modern performance is driven by the urge to understand how Shakespeare’s plays were first performed.³ In recent years, early modern performance scholarship has moved from documentary to embodied research, notably in the “Original Practices” movement. Drawing on productions in the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London, UK (“Shakespeare’s Globe”) and the American Shakespeare Center’s Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, USA, the “Original Practices” approach seeks to recover and reconstruct what are believed to be original (Elizabethan and Jacobean) acting styles, rehearsal techniques, acting spaces, scenic possibilities, and playing conventions.⁴ The present article challenges this prevailing dichotomy between, on the one hand, studies of Elizabethan and Jacobean performance (“original” Shakespeare) and, on the other hand, contemporary performance by investigating the performance potential of Restoration Shakespeare both in its own time and in our time. By combining theater history, literary criticism, and practice-based performance research, the article also moves beyond the established, but arguably tired, research methodologies employed in existing studies of Restoration Shakespeare.

Ironically, the concern with historical authenticity, original practices, and Shakespeare’s authorial or dramaturgical intention that is shared by many performance scholars is largely ahistorical and derives from values about artistic purity and originality that did not begin to develop fully until the eighteenth century. Furthermore, original performances were created largely through improvisations that,

³ For a definition of presentism in theory and practice, see Gajowski 674-91.

⁴ The “Original Practices” approach was developed in the Globe’s early years by the inaugural artistic director Mark Rylance, composer Claire van Kampen, and designer Jenny Tiramani. For Rylance’s explanation of “Original Practices” and its aims, see Rylance 169-76. For examples of performance scholarship focused on the reconstructed Globe, see Carson and Karim-Cooper; and Karim-Cooper and Stern. For discussions of the American Shakespeare Centre’s Blackfriars Playhouse, see Menzer.

by definition, cannot be fully recovered.⁵ Shakespeare's (or Davenant's) contemporaries would not have understood any of these modern obsessions: early modern dramatists wrote plays collaboratively; they adapted the works of past playwrights like Seneca, Plautus, and Terence; and they imitated one another's styles and conventions. It is telling that some of Shakespeare's plays were published without his name printed anywhere on the title page; far more important than the author's name was the name of the acting company that had performed the play. When John Danter printed an edition of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1592) in 1594—making it the first of Shakespeare's plays to be published from an authentic manuscript—the title page read: “The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus: As it was plaide by the right honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earl of Pembroke, and Earl of Sussex their Seruants.”⁶ This practice continued during the Restoration. Michael Dobson puts it well when he writes that, “[i]n the 1660s, Shakespeare's plays belonged to the theatre more significantly than they belonged to Shakespeare” (*Making of the National Poet* 18-19). One of the Restoration adapters of Shakespeare's plays, Thomas Shadwell, appears to have used the preface to his reworking of *Timon of Athens*, entitled *The History of Timon of Athens, the Man-Hater* (1678), to justify why the play's title page named him as the work's author and omitted the name of Shakespeare: “it has the inimitable hand of Shakespeare in it, which never made more Masterly strokes than in this. Yet I can truly say, I have made it into a Play” (Shadwell sigs A2v-A3r). The importance of adapters and theater companies at the expense of the plays' original authors is an idea that appears to have been shared by audiences, too. As Dobson notes, the surviving accounts of performances of Davenant's first adaptation of Shakespeare, *The Law Against Lovers* (1662), which is a hybrid of *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, do not make reference to Shakespeare at all (*Making of the National Poet* 33).⁷ Restoration Shakespeare, then, has much to teach us about how we perform and understand Shakespeare's works in different times and different cultures; the approach taken by the first generation of playmakers to stage Shakespeare after Shakespeare's lifetime invites us to discard our concern with historical authenticity and encourages us to be bold in aligning Shakespeare with our own cultural, social, and political realities. To understand Shakespeare's performance past is to

⁵ For the objections that have been raised against the methodology of historically informed performance, also see Dessen 45-54; Kivy; Haynes; and Mazer 85-98.

⁶ The first play to be published in Shakespeare's name was *Love's Labour's Lost*, in 1598.

⁷ The accounts are by the diarist and Member of Parliament Samuel Pepys, two Dutch visitors, and the writer and diarist John Evelyn.

understand that his plays are there to be adapted, modernized, translated, and even rewritten or augmented. Thus, there are good reasons for striving to overcome the dichotomous view that Shakespeare is either early modern or contemporary and for exploring new ways of expanding modern theater practice. By investigating the performance potential of Restoration Shakespeare both “then” and “now,” the present article seeks to advocate and to pursue both of these methodological ambitions.

While the lessons that modern theater practice can learn from the Restoration approach to Shakespeare’s works might seem uncontroversial—it is a fact of Shakespeare’s global popularity in our time that his plays are frequently modernized, culturally adapted, and also translated, whether it be as a result of intercultural developments or presentist urges—the issue of whether, and how, these Restoration adaptations in themselves can enrich modern performance practice is a more contentious one. In order to explore this issue, the present article falls into two parts. Firstly, the article contextualizes the phenomenon of Restoration Shakespeare within its own time. By drawing on reviews and reports from the period, as well as on scholarly investigations of Restoration theater practices and politics, the article shows why these rewritings and adaptations were necessary to the survival of Shakespeare’s oeuvre after the end of the Civil War and examines how their emphasis on musical entertainment, visual spectacle, and textual revision was received by seventeenth-century playgoers. The article then takes these insights from theater history and literary analysis as a basis to proceed to a discussion of how Restoration-era adaptations of Shakespeare might inform theater practice in the present day. Can the performance spectacle and the representational strategies that guaranteed Shakespeare’s survival and revival in the Restoration still be attractive to audiences in our time? In order to answer this question, the article draws on its author’s involvement in a practice-based performance experiment conducted in 2018, for which Davenant’s *Macbeth* (including John Eccles’s late-seventeenth-century music for *Macbeth*) was revived in a professional production at the Folger Theatre. The article evaluates a range of testimonials and data pertaining to this production, including interviews with actors and directors, observations made during rehearsals, reviews in the printed and online media, and audience surveys. While it is true that a single production cannot, in itself, provide a blueprint for future productions of Restoration Shakespeare, the revival of Davenant’s *Macbeth* at the Folger was a landmark event and represented a unique case study: theater historians have not identified any prior professional production of *Macbeth* that used Eccles’s score since 1702 (Reimers and Schoch 488). Since a team of academics, including the author of

this article, was present at each step of the creative process, the production furthermore afforded unparalleled opportunities to study the reception of Restoration Shakespeare from the perspectives of artists, audiences, and scholars.⁸ The conflicts and obstacles that were encountered at the Folger in 2018, and the possibilities and solutions that were discovered, offer important lessons and even possible strategies for performing Restoration Shakespeare in the future. By considering the creative choices made during the Folger's production and investigating how these were received by reviewers and audiences, the present article ultimately suggests a selective and adaptive approach to using Restoration Shakespeare in modern theater practice: namely, one that exploits the performance potential of the musical spectacle and of the new characters added by Restoration adapters but treats with caution the revisions of Shakespeare's plots and language.

Performing Restoration Shakespeare in the 1660s and 1670s

When the English Civil War began in 1642, the London playhouses were shut down. A temporary parliamentary edict issued on September 2 declared that "Publike Sports doe not well agree with Publike Calamities, nor Publike Stage-playes with the Seasons of Humiliation, this being an Exercise of sad and pious solemnity, and the other being Spectacles of Pleasure, too commonly expressing lascivious Mirth" (qtd. in Hotson 36). By 1647, the ban on theatrical performance had become permanent. Sporadic performances continued in private houses, and playwrights like Davenant circumvented the ban by producing stage spectacles labelled as operas and consisting of singing and declamation. But public and commercial theatrical activity did not formally resume until late 1659, when the Royalist victory began to look inevitable (see Murray 15-16; and Wiseman). The London theaters did not officially reopen until 1660, when the monarchy was restored and Charles II returned from his European exile.

After he was restored to the throne, Charles II granted exclusive licenses, known as "patents," to just two theater companies: they were the King's Company led by Thomas Killigrew and the Duke's Company led by William Davenant. These two companies continued until 1682, when they were merged and became what was called the United Company. Since, by 1660, theatrical activity had been prohibited for eighteen years, very few new plays were immediately available to these two

⁸ The other participating scholars were Amanda Eubanks Winkler, Lisa Freeman, Sarah Ledwidge, Deborah Payne, Sara Reimers, Richard Schoch, Andrew Walkling, and Stephen Watkins.

acting companies. For that reason, the theaters turned to plays that had been popular before the start of Civil War in 1642: namely, the works of John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont, Ben Jonson, Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, James Shirley, and William Shakespeare. Killigrew's King's Company consisted largely of veteran actors who had been active before the start of the Civil War, including Michael Mohun, who had worked at the pre-war Cockpit, and Charles Hart, who had been a boy actor at the pre-war Blackfriars (Gurr 208-09). The King's Company's connections to the pre-war theater scene allowed it to claim to be the successor to the pre-1642 King's Men—the company for which Shakespeare had been a sharer, playwright, and actor. As a result, Killigrew's troupe was able to secure sole performance rights to most of the plays performed by the pre-war King's Men, including twenty-two of Shakespeare's plays that were deemed the most popular. Davenant's Duke's Company, in contrast, was made up of younger actors and, lacking any comparable stake in the theatrical past, was unable to dispute Killigrew's claim to the more popular Shakespeare plays. What Davenant's company did have, though, was acting talent. In 1661, it was joined by 25-year-old Thomas Betterton, who would soon become the foremost actor of his time. After petitioning the king for the right to reform and rework earlier plays, Davenant was given exclusive performance rights to nine of Shakespeare's plays: *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and *Henry VIII* (Gurr 207; Smith 502-04).

Initially, the Restoration theaters staged Shakespeare's plays mostly unaltered, and while performances of *Othello*, *1 Henry IV*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Hamlet* were largely successful, problems with other plays—especially the comedies—soon became apparent. The Member of Parliament Samuel Pepys, whose diaries are among the main surviving eyewitness accounts of Restoration theater performances, noted on September 11, 1661 that *Twelfth Night* was “a burden” and that he “took no pleasure at all in it” (Latham and Matthews 2: 177). He saw it again in 1663, when he found it “a silly play” (Latham and Matthews 4: 6). On March 1, 1662, furthermore, Pepys noted that *Romeo and Juliet* was “the play of itself the worst that ever I heard in my life” (Latham and Matthews 3: 39). He was even more scathing in his review of an unrevised *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which he saw on September 29, 1662: “I sent for some dinner . . . and then to the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer's Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life” (Latham and Matthews 3: 208). But Pepys did get his wish for an “improved” version of Shakespeare. Under Davenant's leadership, in fact, the Duke's Company rapidly

gained a reputation for creatively adapting plays and for pioneering theatrical innovations. Their changes were partly born out of necessity, because the plays given to the Duke's Company, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, were (in their original form) deemed unsuitable for the tastes of Restoration audiences. Davenant's first adaptation, performed in 1662, was *The Law Against Lovers*, a hybrid of *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Pepys was pleased with this adaptation, writing on February 18, 1662: "I went to the Opera, and saw *The Law Against Lovers*, a good play and well performed, especially the Little Girle's (whom I never saw act before) dancing and singing" (Latham and Matthews 3: 32).⁹ Pepys's contrasting reactions to performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Law Against Lovers*, respectively, show that staging the original plays of the pre-war era was not enough in the Restoration; instead, theater companies had to revise and adapt them.

Pepys's remark that he had never before seen girls act in the theater highlights one of the major changes introduced in the Restoration. Whereas in Shakespeare's time, female roles were performed by boy actors, they were now for the first time performed by female actors. In 1662, Charles II issued a royal patent against the practice of casting boy actors for female parts. The move gave rise to acclaimed actresses, including Moll Davies and Nell Gwynn (both of whom became mistresses of Charles II), Mary Saunderson (who went on to marry Thomas Betterton), and Anne Bracegirdle. The libertine Charles's dalliances with Davies and Gwynn suggest that, at least for some, the appeal of female actors in the Restoration was to do with sexual titillation. Pepys's diary corroborates this. When the King's Company staged Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding* with an all-female cast on October 11, 1664, Pepys wrote: "Luellin . . . tells me what a bawdy loose play this *Parson's Wedding* is, that is acted by nothing but women at the King's House, and I am glad of it" (Latham and Matthews 5: 289). The possibility of casting actresses was also exploited in adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. When revising *The Tempest*, for example, Davenant and Dryden added a number of female roles, including Caliban's sister Sycorax, Miranda's sister Dorinda, and Ariel's female companion Milcha. In addition, the new role of Hippolito, rightful heir to the Dukedom of Mantua (but usurped by Alonso), was designed as one of the co-called "breeches parts" that actresses were now frequently recruited to perform; these were male parts intended to be played by an actress and allowing for the display of her legs, which would have been covered by a gown when playing a female role. Both Jane Long and Moll

⁹ Today, we might think of "opera" as a work set entirely to music and performed by singers and instrumentalists. In the Restoration, the meaning of "opera" was more flexible and referred primarily to a play interspersed with significant musical sequences.

Davis—the latter was Charles II’s mistress at the time—have been suggested as likely Hippolitos (Rosenthal 14; Powell 72).

For the theaters, the introduction of female actors was not the only important change ushered in by the Restoration. In the light of the new political situation—that of a deposed and subsequently restored monarchy—many of the old plays needed to be substantially rewritten.¹⁰ After the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the period of republican government under Oliver Cromwell, the Restoration looked, from a royalist perspective, like “a half-providential . . . awakening from the tragedy of the Interregnum” (Dobson, *Making of the National Poet* 22). Not surprisingly given this “tragicomic” turn of events, the dominant genre performed in the Restoration theaters was that of tragicomedy (mostly, at first, in the form of John Fletcher’s romances). Many plays, including some of Shakespeare’s history plays and Roman tragedies, were also performed as more or less conspicuous political commentaries on the defeated Commonwealth and the restored monarchy. The revival of public theater, thus, cannot be separated from the political context of the Restoration. In fact, the 1660s were characterized by a traumatic denial of the previous twenty years; as Gary Taylor puts it, “[t]he Restoration was an act of collective, willed oblivion” (10). Public discourse was obsessively fixated on restoring and renewing the king’s divine right while suppressing any real or imagined acts and suggestions of rebellion. One of the first Shakespearean histories to be revived was *I Henry IV*, a play which conveniently shows the quashing of a rebellion. Fletcher’s *A King and No King*, about the restoration of a legitimate heir, was another early Restoration favorite. Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, meanwhile, was reframed as a tragicomic story about a failed (Commonwealth) tyrant, and a new prologue was written so as not to leave the audience’s interpretation of the play to chance: “This day we Act a Tyrant . . . Tyrants . . . Puft up with pride, still vanish in despair / But lawful monarchs are preserv’d by Heaven” (Summers 11). In other Shakespeare plays, any suggestions of usurpation and subversion were defused. In *Macbeth*, the line “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.1.11), whose semantic ambiguity may be politically and religiously subversive because it can muddy the distinction between good and evil, or between justice and injustice, was changed to “fair weather’s foul, and foul is fair” (Davenant, *Macbeth* 1.1, sig. A1r). Thus, the potentially dangerous

¹⁰ It was not just Shakespeare’s plays that were revised and adapted. For example, seventeen plays from the Fletcher and Beaumont canon were rewritten, alongside pre-war works like Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, Thomas Middleton’s *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman’s*, and Richard Brome’s *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (Dobson, “Adaptations” 40-51; for Restoration adaptations of non-Shakespeare plays, also see MacNeill).

imaginative reach of Shakespeare's antithesis was removed through literalization. Dryden and Davenant adopted a simpler approach to political revision and censorship when they rewrote *The Tempest*; here, Caliban's plot to overthrow Prospero, and Sebastian's scheme to kill Alonso, were simply omitted. In addition to these politically motivated revisions, the new tastes and expectations in the Restoration also demanded clearer and more intelligible language, increased sentimentalism, and poetic justice: Nahum Tate let King Lear survive (Lear also survives in the original legend, which Shakespeare had turned into a tragedy), and Dryden and Davenant thought it appropriate to "correct" Macbeth's famous "last syllable of recorded time" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.5.21) to read "last Minute of Recorded Time" (Davenant, *Macbeth* 5.5 sig. I3r). The desire for more precise and literal language, seen in the rewriting of this line from *Macbeth* as well as in the general streamlining of Shakespeare's plots, derived from Hobbesian epistemology and its commitment to "reducing complex structures to their component parts" (Kroll 838); in Restoration rhetorical theory, this epistemology translated into an imperative that language should communicate ideas clearly and explicitly.

The many changes that were made both to playtexts and to the theater spectacle, whether they were politically necessary or whether they arose from the different sensibilities and ideals of the time, ultimately meant that the Restoration theater companies did not perform Shakespeare's plays the way that Shakespeare's own company had done decades earlier. Rather, this first generation to stage Shakespeare after Shakespeare's lifetime decided to change almost everything. In the Restoration, Shakespeare was viewed as natural raw material that needed to be refined in terms of both language and dramaturgy. The poet and playwright Richard Flecknoe noted in 1664, during the first wave of Restoration-era revivals of Shakespeare's plays: "as another [said] of Shakespeare's writings, that 'twas a fine Garden, but it wanted weeding" (sig. G5r-v). Dryden's prologue to the Restoration *Tempest*, too, employs a gardening metaphor to make this point: "As when a Tree's cut down, the secret Root / Lives under ground, and thence new branches shoot; / So, from old Shakespeare's honour'd dust, this day / Springs up and buds a new reviving Play" (Shadwell et al., "Prologue," lines 1-4). Not everyone viewed the revisions of Shakespeare as success stories, however. An anonymous witness to a performance of Davenant's first adaptation of Shakespeare, *The Law Against Lovers*, describes how Davenant treated Shakespeare as a larder of cooking ingredients but ended up serving an inedible meal:

Then came the Knight agen with his Lawe

Against Lovers the worst that ever you sawe
 In dressing of which he playnely did shew it
 Hee was a far better Cooke then a Poet
 And only he the Art of it had
 Of two good Hayes to make one bad. (qtd. in Hotson 246-47)

It seems that the merging of two of Shakespeare's plays, and the wholesale rewriting that it entailed, was viewed by some as being as dull as the performance of unchanged Shakespeare. This raises the question of what exactly it was that ultimately ensured Shakespeare's survival in the Restoration. Pepys's review of *The Law Against Lovers* gives us an important clue, for it underlines the performative, rather than the textual or rhetorical, strengths of the play: Pepys comments on how the play was "well performed" and lauds the work of the female actors (Latham and Matthews 3: 32). Indeed, evidence suggests that the successful reopening of the theaters and the equally successful revival of Shakespeare owes less to the textual revisions than to the changes made to the staging spectacle. In order to cater to the new theatrical and literary tastes in the Restoration, the stage had undergone significant modifications. The plays were now performed indoors, in converted tennis courts, and since Charles II and his courtiers had during their European exile become accustomed to the use of lavish movable scenery in theatrical productions, the Restoration stage began to integrate music and dance with scenic and machine-based spectacle (for a survey of Restoration scenic practice, see Holland 19-54). These visual and aural effects were inspired by the theatrical endeavors of the pre-war court masques. As David Lindley observes, "[t]he court masque . . . permitted the evolution of musical and theatrical techniques that look forward to the post-Restoration era" (13). Davenant's Duke's Company led the way, introducing special effects including movable scenery and flight machines that used ropes and wires. Davenant was able to draw on his experience as a dramatist before the start of the Civil War, when he had been the Poet Laureate and had produced four court masques, for which he had collaborated with Inigo Jones and John Webb. Their masques had a penchant for "choreographed movement . . . enhanced by picturesque stage effects and the arts of painting in perspective" (Lewcock 33). In 1639, Davenant had petitioned King Charles I for a license to build his own theater near Fleet Street, which would have incorporated provisions for musical entertainment and scenery; in short, it would have brought the innovations of court masque entertainment to the public. The project was, however,

blocked.¹¹ In the 1660s and 1670s, the Duke's Company finally gave Davenant a vehicle through which he could realize the full potential of the movable painted scenery, the musical entertainments, and the choreographed dances known from the pre-war court masques. Davenant's dramatic entertainments showcased a heavy emphasis on music and dance, profiting from the fact that the indoor playhouses allowed for more nuanced vocal and musical performances than had been possible in pre-war outdoor theaters such as Shakespeare's Globe. After Davenant's company moved to the Dorset Garden Theatre in 1671, elaborate machines were introduced that enabled people and objects to fly across the stage; the theater also boasted a large substage area that could accommodate musicians (Hume 4-17). The actor, theater manager, and playwright Colley Cibber later wrote in his autobiography *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* (1740) that "Sir William Davenant . . . , to make Head against their [the King's Company's] Success, was forced to add Spectacle and Musick to Action; and to introduce a new Species of Plays, since call'd Dramatick Opera's . . . all set off with the most expensive Decorations of Scenes and Habits, with the best Voices and Dancers" (1: 94). While Cibber's account may well seem adulatory, it does underline the monumental changes brought about by the competition between Davenant and Killigrew, which resulted in the integration of musical theater and spoken drama and gave birth to the new genre of "Dramatick Opera"—defined by Dryden as a "poetical Tale or Fiction, represented by Vocal and Instrumental Musick, adorn'd with Scenes, Machines and Dancing" (sig. A2r).¹²

Davenant's changes were hugely successful and ultimately forced the rival King's Company to adopt similar innovations. The surviving appraisals of Davenant's *Macbeth* provide a sense of the success of his alterations. Davenant first adapted *Macbeth* some time in 1664. The first performance seems to have occurred on November 5, 1664, when Pepys saw the play and described it unenthusiastically as a "pretty good play, but admirably acted" (Latham and Matthews 5: 314). Between June 1664 and November 1666, the theaters were shut because of an outbreak of the plague; Davenant likely revised the play further during this period of enforced closure (Murray 51). Davenant's alterations simplified Shakespeare's language, omitted the Porter, and introduced the new part of Duncan's ghost: in keeping with the neo-classical drive to maintain onstage harmony and synchrony, Duncan's ghost appears to Lady Macbeth (Davenant, *Macbeth* 4.4, sigs H2v-H3r) while Banquo's

¹¹ For an account of Davenant's activities before and during the Civil War, and for a discussion of his work on court masques and its influence on the later Restoration stage, see Lewcock.

¹² For further definitions, descriptions, and examples of dramatick opera, also see Luckett 123-41; Walkling, *English Dramatick Opera*; and Eubanks Winkler.

ghost continues to appear to Macbeth. Davenant also included more song and music, made the witches sing and dance (2.5, sigs D1r-D2v; 3.8, sigs G1v-G2r; 4.1, sigs G2r-G4r), and gave a more prominent role to the Macduffs by developing them into “good” counterweights to the “evil” Macbeths: Lady Macbeth now meets Lady Macduff, who worries about her husband when he is away at war, before reading one of Macbeth’s fateful letters (1.5, sigs B1v-B2r); the Macduffs meet the singing and dancing witches who rejoice in regicide (2.5, sigs D1r-D2v); and, in an additional new scene without equivalent in Shakespeare, the Macduffs debate whether or not to take action against Macbeth (3.2, sigs D4v-F1v).¹³ When Pepys saw the revised play on December 28, 1666, it was no longer a “pretty good play” but “a most excellent play for variety” (Latham and Matthews 7: 424). Pepys’s opinion of the play had changed even more dramatically by the time he recorded his thoughts about a performance that had taken place on January 7, 1667: “a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here and suitable” (Latham and Matthews 8: 7). Pepys saw the play on three other occasions in 1667, and he returned to the theater for *Macbeth* twice in 1668 and once in 1669. Pepys’s account suggests that the play’s visual and musical “divertisement”—such as the witches’ operatic performances, which celebrate regicide with dance songs (“We shou’d rejoice when good kings bleed” (Davenant, *Macbeth* 2.5, sig. D2r))—did not diminish the tragedy nor render the witches’ scenes ludicrous, but rather added to their richness. When the text of Davenant’s *Macbeth* was fully published in 1674, it included, as per the title page, “all the Alterations, Amendments, Additions, and New Songs.” That Davenant’s alterations are advertised so prominently on the title page—while Shakespeare’s name is nowhere to be seen—says much about their popularity. John Downes, the long-serving prompter for the Duke’s Company, later remarked that the play, “alter’d by Sir William Davenant; being drest in all it’s Finery, as new Cloath’s, new Scenes, Machines, as flyings for the Witches; and with all the Singing and Dancing in it . . . it being all Excellently perform’d, being in the nature of an Opera, it Recompenc’d double the Expence; it proves still a lasting play” (33). Thus, Davenant’s *Macbeth* became one of the most popular plays of the period mostly because of its special effects, music, and dance: the witches flew on and off by utilizing flight machines with ropes and wires; the ghosts of Banquo and Duncan rose and descended via small traps; the witches’ cauldron and cave sank via a large trap (Davenant, *Macbeth* 4.1, sigs G3v-G4r); and sound effects imitated thunder and

¹³ For the various textual changes made to Shakespeare’s play by Davenant, also see Murray 55-63.

lightning as well as shrieking owls. Anne Greenfield has contended that Restoration “burlesques” such as Thomas Duffett’s mockery of Davenant’s play in *The Empress of Morocco* (c.1673), which includes a farcical “Epilogue Spoken by Heccate and three Witches, according to the Famous Mode of *Macbeth*,” are evidence of the “celebrity of Davenant’s version” (39). More than that, though, Duffett’s satirical evocation of Davenant’s singing and dancing witches also says much about the main selling point of the Duke’s Company’s *Macbeth*. Of all of Davenant’s changes, it was his recasting of *Macbeth* in the mold of the period’s popular genre of “dramatick opera” that assured the vitality and longevity of *Macbeth* amid the changed tastes and predilections of new generations of theatergoers. From its first performance until 1744 (when it was supplanted by David Garrick’s version), Davenant’s *Macbeth* was enacted over two hundred times (Stone 187).

Performing Restoration Shakespeare in Our Time

The documented success of Davenant’s *Macbeth* and other Restoration alterations of Shakespeare sits uneasily with the derogatory comments directed at them by critics. In his 1892 variorum edition of *The Tempest*, Frederick James Furnivall writes of Shadwell’s operatic 1674 adaptation of the Dryden-Davenant revision of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*: “no imagination, derived from a mere description, can adequately depict its monstrosity” (viii). This disparaging attitude towards Restoration Shakespeare continues to be implicit in the modern emphasis on textual revisions, which denies these adaptations any consideration as a performance genre and feeds the discrepancy in appreciation that can be observed between Restoration-era reviews and subsequent, more modern appraisals. Among modern scholars, Jean I. Marsden, for example, opines that the textual revisions carried out by the Restoration adapters have the effect of “[r]idding the plays of ambiguous and morally complex characters” (25), and Dobson asserts that the Restoration adapters “rarely made [Shakespeare’s plays] more sophisticated” (“Adaptations” 42). In order to gain a better sense of the intricacies of Restoration Shakespeare, and to assess its modern performance potential, the research project “Performing Restoration Shakespeare,” which ran between 2017 and 2020, brought together scholars and practitioners in theater and music to investigate how and why Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays succeeded in performance in their own time and if, how, and why they can succeed in performance today. In August 2018, the project—in partnership with the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Folger Theatre, and the early modern music ensemble Folger Consort—assembled a community of scholars and

artists, including the author of the present article, at the Folger Theatre to join forces and collaborate on a professional production of Davenant's *Macbeth*. Rehearsals began on August 7, 2018 and the first preview performance was on September 4, 2018. While artistic decisions remained the preserve of stage director Robert Richmond, music director Robert Eisenstein, as well as designers, actors, and musicians, the team of scholars were, as Sara Reimers and Richard Schoch put it in their account of this practice-based rehearsal experiment, "[e]mbedded in the rehearsal process" and "uniquely positioned in a professional theater setting not as dramaturgs but as co-creators of the production who simultaneously maintained an independent critical distance from it" (471). The concept for Richmond's production of Davenant's *Macbeth* was that of a play-within-a-play, revolving around a one-time private fundraising performance staged by inmates of the St. Mary Bethlehem Hospital in London (more commonly known as the "Bedlam" mental asylum) for the hospital's patron, the architect and scientist Robert Hooke, two weeks after the Great Fire in 1666. During this fundraiser, things go horribly wrong: the theatrical prop knives are replaced with real knives, Macbeth (played by an inmate) murders Duncan (played by the asylum's warden), and the inmates take over the asylum during the performance. Despite Richmond's framing device, the production retained Davenant's most distinctive additions to Shakespeare's original: namely, the witches' songs, which included Eccles's "Speak, Sister, Speak," "Let's Have a Dance," "Hecate! Oh, Come Away," and "Black Spirits and White." The production was fully sold out before the opening night and was widely reviewed in a number of national media outlets, including the *Washington Post*.

When assessing the success of the Folger's production of Davenant's *Macbeth* and drawing lessons for future strategies for reviving Restoration Shakespeare in our time, it is necessary to distinguish between commercial success and artistic success. The Folger's production of Davenant's *Macbeth* might be deemed a commercial success on the basis that it was fully sold out: it was seen by over 6,300 people and generated \$272,476.85 in box office income (Emelson). It is important to emphasize, however, that the box office income was only enough to recover part of the overall production expenditure. To make the production possible, the research project "Performing Restoration Shakespeare" contributed almost \$250,000, which covered about one-half of the total overall production costs (including two-thirds of personnel, design, marketing, and publicity costs). Could or would Davenant's *Macbeth* have been staged without this significant financial contribution? The question is not easily answered. In a discussion with members of the scholarly team, the actor Louis Butelli, who played the part of King Duncan, wondered whether Restoration Shakespeare

was “mass-producible,” given the need to devote considerable resources to the lavish musical entertainments. Eccles’s music for Davenant’s *Macbeth*, for example, requires several soloists (including the witches), and each of the witches’ four songs also calls for a chorus. The appearance of the witches in Act 2 is moreover preceded by a symphony with a serpent, an unusual wind instrument shaped like a snake. At the Folger in 2018, the cost of the musicians, including the witches/singers, was about \$100,000, with the AHRC research grant paying half. The financial constraints also limited rehearsal time to three weeks (instead of the usual four). The resources that are needed are not just financial, however, but also logistical and artistic, requiring the smooth and successful integration of musicians (who need to be knowledgeable about period music), actors, and actor-singers. The demands that Restoration Shakespeare can place upon acting companies are illustrated even better by the prologue to Shadwell’s operatic adaptation of *The Tempest* (1674), which at one point calls for an onstage orchestra comprising “24 Violins, with the Harpsicals and Theorbo’s,” and “several Spirits in horrid shapes flying down amongst the Sailers, then rising and crossing in the Air” (1.0.1, 19-20). In Richmond’s revival of Davenant’s *Macbeth*, much of the Restoration music had to be retained not just because of the imperatives of the research project but also because the framing device self-consciously set the production in the Restoration period; in other words, a sense of historical authenticity was required for the metatheatrical framing device and the production as a whole to be plausible (for an overview of the music performed in the production, see Eisenstein, “Playlist”). In addition, Restoration-era reports and reviews of performances confirm that the musical entertainment and the visual spectacle were the major selling points of these productions. For modern revivals, however, the play’s reliance on music and spectacle harbors inherent challenges, and it can seem hard to imagine (in Butelli’s words) “that a small company with limited resources could do anything interesting with it,” especially if it were committed to re-enacting the Restoration style authentically. Big commercial theaters possess the financial muscle, logistical expertise, and artistic resources to meet these challenges, but their penchant for presentist adaptations and contemporary sound design means that they may not be particularly likely to adopt the repertoire of Restoration Shakespeare in the absence of a research imperative like that behind the Folger’s production. Thus, the apparent box office success of the Folger’s production, which was staged in collaboration with, and co-funded by, a public research project, cannot by itself lead us to conclude that Restoration Shakespeare is popular with audiences today. Indeed, one might say that the project will have failed if no other,

commercially run, theaters pick up the Restoration repertoire of Shakespeare adaptations.

In order to gain a sense of the artistic and popular success of the Folger's *Macbeth*, and to begin to gauge whether, and how, any future revivals of this or other Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare might succeed, it is helpful to analyze how critics and members of the audience responded to it. It is important to note, firstly, that the big pull factor for most members of the audience was Shakespeare rather than Davenant or the Restoration. A post-performance audience survey revealed that 80% of respondents came to see the production because they were interested in Shakespeare rather than in the Restoration ("Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey"). Audience members were also very familiar with Shakespeare (but not with Restoration adaptations): more than 95% of respondents declared having a strong interest in Shakespeare prior to the performance. Why this matters is that the responses of audiences are usually conditioned by their previous theatergoing experience in the same way that artists are shaped by their previous acting experience. With playtexts as iconic as Shakespeare's, that can be an especially important factor. In the Folger's production of Davenant's *Macbeth*, these dynamics were exacerbated by the director's casting of Ian Merrill Peakes and Kate Eastwood Norris as the Macbeths; ten years earlier, Peakes and Norris had performed the analogous roles in the Folger's production of Shakespeare's original *Macbeth*, co-directed by Teller and Aaron Posner.¹⁴ Crucially, 25% of respondents to the audience survey had in fact seen the 2008 production. Even though the Folger's artistic team viewed its casting decisions as advantages—in his opening remarks, stage director Robert Richmond opined that audiences would be attracted by the "reunion" of Peakes and Norris a decade after their first joint performance as the Macbeths—these decisions may have infelicitously encouraged unhelpful comparisons.¹⁵ In addition, the production's audience was made up almost exclusively of Folger regulars. Since the Folger Theatre, like its parent institution the Folger Shakespeare Library, is devoted above all else to the public understanding of Shakespeare—and the theater had never before staged a Restoration version of Shakespeare—the audiences' knowledge of Shakespeare's plays and language was stronger than might be expected in most theaters. These factors unintentionally invited a comparison, and even a competition, between Shakespeare and Davenant, one which Davenant seemed destined to lose.

¹⁴ In addition, Karen Peakes reprised the role of Lady Macduff, which she had also played at the Folger in 2008.

¹⁵ The casting decisions also proved a hindrance in rehearsal, with Peakes having to overcome the muscle memory of Shakespeare's original lines.

As Peakes remarked in an interview with the scholarly team, some of Davenant’s rewriting “takes the fun away from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*” and Davenant’s characters “don’t have as big a range of emotion.” Some of the comments submitted by members of the audience as part of the post-performance survey likewise suggest a preference for a “pure” or “authentic” version of Shakespeare: “Amazing production... [I] just like *pure* text better” (emphasis added). In his interview, Peakes also voiced his view that it might be more interesting to explore an original Restoration play, such as one of Davenant’s original creations, because Shakespeare is always “ghosting this adaptation and you keep seeing the flaws rather than the benefits of Davenant’s text.” This points to an inclination, on the part of artists as well as audiences, to want to see original products, whether it is a Shakespeare play as it was written by the bard in his lifetime or an original playtext from the Restoration period (rather than a Restoration adaptation of a Shakespeare play). The preference for what is perceived to be “original” and “real” Shakespeare echoes the bias that has shaped most scholarly engagements with Restoration Shakespeare. The reactions of participating actors and spectating audiences confirm that this predilection is not confined to critical debates but can also shape artistic processes and audience appraisals.

While Peakes’s comments about Davenant’s “flaws” unquestionably stem in part from his personal frustration with Davenant’s lines, having previously performed and grown accustomed to Shakespeare’s lines, they also point to weaknesses in Davenant’s poetry. These perceived deficiencies derive, at least in part, from the linguistic and epistemological theories of Davenant’s time, which demanded explicit expression and clear manifestation of facts and ideas (as well as of cause and effect), rather than the suggestive and metaphorical language that is Shakespeare’s hallmark.¹⁶ The result is that Davenant’s play is “on all levels more explicit,” as Peter Dyson observes: “[t]here is a shift from indirection to direction, from connotation to denotation . . . the symbolic or connotative power evaporates” (403). An example of this shift can be found in Davenant’s replacement of Banquo’s question to the witches in Shakespeare—“Live you, or are you aught / That man may question?” (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.3.42-3)—with: “Live you? Or are you things / Crept hither from the lower World to fright / Th’Inhabitants of this?” (Davenant, *Macbeth* 1.3, sig. A2v). Here, the capacious imaginative possibilities that arise from Shakespeare’s evocation of existential mystery become a more explicit description of the witches’ locality and motivation. Reimers and Schoch’s account of the

¹⁶ For a discussion of how Davenant’s language is rooted in seventeenth-century epistemology, see Kroll.

rehearsal process for the Folger's *Macbeth* describes, or perhaps defends, Davenant's modifications of Shakespeare's figurative language as "concretiz[ations]" (470). But in spite of this line of defense, it is impossible to disregard the rhetorical inferiority of Davenant's revisions, which was noted not just by actors but also by critics and audiences. Davenant's ostensible concretizations also spoil much of *Macbeth*'s famous "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech: alliterative effects are removed as "petty pace" becomes "stealing pace" and "dusty death" becomes "eternal night"; and metaphorical richness is reduced as "the last syllable of recorded time" becomes "the last Minute of Recorded Time" and the "brief candle" becomes the "short candle" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.5.17-28; Davenant, *Macbeth* 5.5, sig. I3r). Many audience members expressed irritation at Davenant's rewriting of Shakespeare's famous lines and speeches. One respondent thought that "Davenant's revisions are so bad that the effect is simply to make one shudder and long for the original" ("Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey"). Another noted: "Judging from the post-performance audience conversation around me as we filled out, a lot of us missed some of our favorite lines . . . But universal praise for the cast dealing with that!" While Davenant's language and poetry are the products of the intellectual climate of the Restoration, and as such offer valuable cultural-historical evidence of past linguistic and rhetorical practices, it is highly doubtful whether they have a place in modern creative practice.

The creative choices made by the Folger's artistic team in the run-up to the public performances highlight the significant challenges that theaters can face in staging these Restoration adaptations, but they also provide clues as to how Restoration Shakespeare can inform modern theater practice. One thing that presented the artistic team with difficulties was the limited evidence from theater history about Restoration staging practices. While the printed playtexts from the period can include detailed stage directions and even descriptions of the scenery, visual evidence is limited and we cannot know what audiences actually saw and heard; the stage directions in playtexts may be aspirational and idealistic, and their connection with actual staging practice may be tenuous. As the theater historian Joseph Roach admits, "[v]isual evidence showing performers actually at work together onstage . . . is scarce" and "[h]istorians must speculate on the basis of limited evidence" ("The Performance" 23). A further obstacle arose from the challenge of reconciling the comic and tragic genre registers that coexist in Davenant's *Macbeth*.¹⁷ Richmond, a seasoned stage director but without any prior experience of staging

¹⁷ Hybridity of genre was a hallmark of these so-called semi-operas of the Restoration period. See also Fretz, "Marvellous and Surprising Conduct."

Restoration plays, felt uncomfortable with the hybridity created by the music; for him, *Macbeth* was a tragedy, but the music was comic. In particular, Richmond was disturbed by the comic-tragic tension in the witches' scenes; he even considered modifying the role of the comic Hecate (meant to be played by a bass singer in Davenant's adaptation), for example by casting a woman instead. It was not just the stage director who was grappling with Davenant's hybridity of genre. Ethan Watermeier, an artist performing the role of one of the singing witches, expressed confusion about whether the witches were meant to be comical or scary, while Karen Peakes remarked upon the discord between the witches' "foul" words and "what they are [actually] sounding like, which is beautiful" (Fretz, "Rehearsal Notes"). In the end, Richmond made the decision to introduce a metatheatrical framing action—the performance of *Macbeth* at the Bedlam hospital in 1666, indebted to Peter Weiss's play *Marat/Sade* (1963)—in order to "cope" with the Davenant text and to bring "some of the Restoration style" into the production (Richmond). Richmond had confessed in his opening rehearsal remarks that, when he first read Davenant's text, he "couldn't really get into it" and needed to find a "way into" the play. He reasoned that the Restoration convention of formal, gestural performance language, which emphasizes external manifestations of internal passions and can seem artificial or stylized to modern audiences, necessitated the creation of a world "in which more performative acting could take place" (Richmond): for him, this was the Restoration-era Bedlam mental hospital, which allowed for a demonstrative acting approach before giving way to a more realistic twenty-first century acting style after the inmates' takeover of the asylum.¹⁸ Richmond's asylum setting proved infelicitous, however. Not only did it obscure Davenant's play, but some members of the audience also expressed discomfort at the way mental illness was being portrayed ("Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey"). The asylum also created moments of unintended irony, as when Duncan (played by the warden of the asylum) commented on how "[t]he air does sweetly recommend it self / To our delighted senses" (Davenant, *Macbeth* 1.5, sig. B3r). Richmond's asylum was actually built above an open sewer. On other occasions, the metatheatrical frame was more successful, as when Duncan claimed that "[t]here's no Art / To find the mind's construction in the

¹⁸ The expressive practices of Restoration acting are indexed, for example, in John Bulwer's treatises *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* (1644), which relate hand gestures to individual expressions and include illustrations. In Restoration comedy, actors frequently deployed "bows and curtsies and gestures of deference, deprecation, flattery, or mock-modesty" (Kernodle 258). For a discussion of Restoration acting techniques and their emphasis on conventionalized gestures, postures, and facial expressions as signs of meaning, also see Powell 87-105; and Roach, *The Player's Passion* 23-57.

face” (Davenant, *Macbeth* 1.3, sig. A4v) while addressing the inmates, who were all about to become complicit in the murder of their warden.

Not all of Davenant’s revisions were unattractive to Richmond, however, and not all of Richmond’s conceits were unattractive to audiences and observers. When Davenant rewrote Shakespeare’s play, he added the part of Duncan’s ghost, which appears once to Lady Macbeth in Act 4. Richmond liked this new part so much that he decided that the ghost should appear even more often than in Davenant. He had Butelli appear as “Zombie Duncan” (as the actors humorously called the ghost) in Act 2, where his body was dragged onto the stage and reanimated by the trio of witches, and again in 5.1, where he appeared to Lady Macbeth while she was sleepwalking and somniloquizing. In addition to the popularity of some of Davenant’s new characters, it was the musicality and spectacle of the Restoration *Macbeth* that was well-received—just as it had been 350 years earlier. 72% of the audience members who were surveyed stated that the Folger’s rendition of Davenant’s *Macbeth* had been more musical than other theater productions of Shakespeare’s plays that they had seen, and 37% felt that it had offered more to look at visually. A string of comments highlights the music as the most intriguing and successful part of the production. Audience members commented on the “novel[ty]” of song and dance and on how the music “enhanced” and “enriched” the experience (“Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey”). One respondent noted how the music was “a substantial part of [their] enjoyment,” while another remarked on “the versatility of the use of sound effects,” which were “beautifully integrated” (“Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey”). The witches’ parts, which are one of the major differences to Shakespeare’s play in terms of both staging and function, were one of the few Davenant revisions that attracted wide acclaim. One enthusiastic audience member thought that they were “by far the best part,” while another described them as “unexpected” and “so interesting” (“Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey”). Sarah Pecknold’s review in the journal *17th-Century Music* suggested that, even though the production disappointed somewhat when it came to the storyline, framing device, staging, and the delivery of lines, it was in the musical interludes that the “weaving together of things old, new, early modern and postmodern served the drama to perfection” (12). In the same vein, Tamar LeRoy’s review lauded the production’s “intermedia approach” and “exciting combination of the familiar and unexpected,” but also noted that “Davenant’s correction of the language seems flat compared to Shakespeare, which might make an audience resistant to the changes” (138, 140). The reactions of audiences and reviewers support the thesis that witnessing Restoration Shakespeare as a performance event

can alert contemporary observers to the reasons why these plays appealed to their original audiences, despite the widely held view that the Restoration adapters mutilated Shakespeare's texts.

It is striking that the response of the Folger audience was similar to that of seventeenth-century playgoers like Pepys, despite the unique cultural and political context of the Restoration (neo-classical ideals; restored monarchy after eighteen years of civil war and republican government). As in Pepys's time, the Davenant revisions that were valued the most were those that added scenes of performative or musical spectacle, including the parts of the witches and that of Duncan's ghost. According to Kate McFadden, writing for *The Hill Is Home*, the "operatic witches" were in fact the stars of the performance. This feeling that the value of Restoration Shakespeare is not literary or poetic but performative and musical was also shared by the acting company. In an interview with the scholarly team, Butelli pointed to the flaws in Davenant's text, complaining that the actors are almost working "against it" and that they just wanted to "get on with it." But, at the same time, Butelli recognized the value of the text in performance, commenting that the performance worked well in conjunction with the music. While rehearsing, the artistic company also noted that some aspects of Shakespeare's original play were being fleshed out more in the Davenant adaptation. That was especially true for the additional scenes between the Macduffs, which, as Chris Genebach (acting the part of Macduff) put it, made "[these characters'] journey all the more tragic" and might recast Macduff as the play's true tragic hero (Fretz, "Rehearsal Notes"). Genebach's view was shared by a number of respondents to the audience survey, one of whom expressed his "appreciation" for the "extra backstory on the Macduff family" while another commented that the Macduff scenes were among the most "poignant" ("Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey"). The review of the production in *Broadway World* concurred, noting that the Macduffs' expanded roles brought "a human quality to a work of naked ambition" (Catlin). Modern revisionist scholarship has interpreted Davenant's Lady Macduff as a break with dramatic precedent and as a "rare and . . . subversive tragic heroine" (Greenfield 40). This analysis is particularly compelling when we contrast her function with that of Shakespeare's Lady Macduff, who appears in only one scene (at the end of which she is murdered) and serves as a plot device that amplifies the horrors of Macbeth's reign and "augments Macduff's motivation for vengeance" (Miller 858). The theatrical experiment at the Folger suggests that this modern-day, feminist sentiment of sympathy and identification with Davenant's Lady Macduff is borne out in performance, and that the dramatic

potential of the Macduffs might be underdeveloped and even unrealized in Shakespeare's original.

The qualitative and quantitative data collected before, during, and after the Folger's 2018 production of Davenant's *Macbeth* reveals as many problems as opportunities with Restoration Shakespeare. On the one hand, Restoration acting styles, the poetry and language, some of Davenant's omissions (such as the Porter scene), and the desire for "original" or "authentic" Shakespeare—regardless of whether such authenticity is actual or mythical—presented hurdles and challenges in the revival of Restoration Shakespeare. On the other hand, the stronger musical quality of Davenant's adaptation, the inclusion of additional characters, and the expanded roles for some of Shakespeare's supporting characters met with approval. This dichotomous pattern in contemporary reactions to Restoration Shakespeare is perhaps best summed up by a review in the *Washington Post*, which published a conversation between classical music critic Anne Midgette and the paper's chief theater critic Peter Marks. While Marks described the production as "tedious" and "lugubrious," lamenting the absence of Shakespeare's "lyrics," Midgette highlighted the "tranquil and jolly" music which "creat[ed] a pastoral effect at some of the piece's darkest moments" (Marks and Midgette). When assessing the performance potential of Restoration Shakespeare, it may be productive to take our cue from the *Washington Post*'s review format and elect not to assess the contemporary appeal of Restoration Shakespeare as a whole, but instead to consider each of its two main features in turn: the textual and literary revision, and the musical and performative quality.

The question of how Restoration Shakespeare can succeed today was tackled, perhaps unwittingly, by one of the respondents to the post-performance audience survey:

[T]he reason I attended was to get an idea of how Restoration audiences might have experienced Shakespeare. I felt that was a reasonable expectation given the marketing, and this is, clearly, not what I saw. Instead, I saw a highly modern/postmodern interpretation of a revision of *Macbeth* by Davenant ("Restoration Shakespeare Audience Survey").

It is true that any modern revival of Restoration Shakespeare is ultimately a modern adaptation of what is already an adaptation. In part, this is owing to our lack of sufficiently comprehensive knowledge of Restoration staging practices, which makes

it impossible to recreate seventeenth-century performance events accurately. Much of the original music from these Restoration plays, moreover, is lost; to compensate for what music director Eisenstein called the “paucity” of music sources for Davenant’s *Macbeth*, the Folger’s production adopted a hybrid approach, interspersing the surviving music by Eccles with other contemporaneous theater music (including by Matthew Locke and Henry Purcell) as well as with traditional Scottish tunes not from the Restoration (“*Macbeth*”; “Playlist”).¹⁹ Out of necessity as well as out of choice, Richmond’s *Macbeth* was ultimately a modern projection for which Davenant’s *Macbeth* was the starting point. As Richmond himself stated in an interview with *DC Theatre Scene*, the production could not be a “museum piece” and the Restoration demonstrative acting could, in any case, not be fully reproduced: “I knew that we couldn’t watch that for two and a half hours” (qtd. in Scafidi). The comment made by the audience member remains legitimate, though: why bother to stage an adaptation of an adaptation? From the perspective of the theater historian or literary critic, such a comment might be countered by pointing to the dramatic aspects of Restoration Shakespeare that remain inaccessible to us if we merely read the texts. From a theatrical and commercial perspective, meanwhile, the combined evidence from the Folger’s revival of Davenant’s *Macbeth* suggests that productions of Restoration Shakespeare that are historically informed and are based on the full playtexts may struggle both artistically and financially. The financial challenges and some of the negative appraisals from artists, audience members, and critics cannot be simply brushed aside. But there are many productive options situated between the one extreme of seeking to resurrect Restoration Shakespeare as it was conceived in the seventeenth century and the other extreme, which is not to stage Restoration Shakespeare at all. Restoration Shakespeare offers intriguing staging choices such as musical spectacle, genre hybridization, imaginative use of stage machinery, additional and interesting characters such as Duncan’s ghost in *Macbeth* and Caliban’s sister in *The Tempest*, greater depth for characters such as the Macduffs, and more roles for women. Theater companies, even without the financial muscle of big commercial theaters or well-endowed research projects, can benefit considerably from adding these possibilities to the mix of staging choices available to them. Already now, the idea of a pure and original Shakespearean text is a false one: ostensibly “authentic” Shakespeare is heterogeneous and compels directors to make choices, such as opting for one of the diverging quarto and folio versions of plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Hamlet*. Restoration Shakespeare can add to that

¹⁹ Walkling points out that the music for only around twenty plays performed in the 1660s survives today; in many cases, only single songs survive (*Masque and Opera in England* 194-96).

rich reservoir of dramatic possibilities.²⁰ Richmond's use of some of the Restoration music and his embrace of the expanded Macduff roles and of the part of Duncan's ghost, for which he created additional moments onstage, can be a template for selectively and adaptively integrating elements of Restoration Shakespeare into modern theater practice. Rather than seeking to resurrect the product of Restoration Shakespeare, it may be wise and rewarding instead to resurrect its spirit. When Davenant first adapted Shakespeare, he created a new play out of two Shakespeare plays. Adapting plays, including by taking what works and leaving out what does not, is an approach that not only matches Restoration sensibilities but also Elizabethan and Jacobean ones: it was how playwrights in Shakespeare's age revised and adapted old stories. By adopting the same spirit in our time, theaters can make Shakespeare and Davenant stand beside each other.

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²⁰ For the benefits of embedding scholars in the creative process in order to share knowledge of Restoration theater with directors and actors, see Reimers and Schoch.

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