

**Melissa D. Aaron**

### The current costs of "Original Practices"

When examining the utility of "Original Practices" to pedagogy and performance, one cannot go very far without running into the practical problem: "how much is this going to cost?" "Original Practices" productions are claimed to be less expensive than traditionally produced Shakespeare. Is that still true, if it is true, in 2025?

Examining the categories and definitions of "Original Practices" makes it possible to estimate the average cost of various productions and compare them to the overall budget of a theatre company, which in turn affects the ability of a Shakespeare company to provide access to students. This includes the sources of a Shakespeare company's income: corporate and individual donations, dedicated foundations, ticket sales, and government and educational grants, some of which may soon cease to be available in the foreseeable future.

A cross-comparison of Shakespeare's company, the King's Men, may be useful here. The increased reliance on royal patronage in the 1630s-40s may have doomed the company when that patronage was withdrawn. Is this the challenge "Original Practices" Shakespeare is shortly to face, and is it more or less financially vulnerable than more traditional theater productions?

Melissa D. Aaron is a Professor of English in the Dept. of English and Modern Languages at Cal Poly Pomona. She received her Ph.D from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She also has a Master of Sciences degree from the School of Music at Indiana University at Bloomington in stage direction for opera and opera history, and an MA from Cambridge University in English literature. Her previous work backstage at Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Pennsylvania Opera Theater informed her researches into theater history, including *Global Economics: An institutional economic history of the Chamberlain's/King's Men and their texts, 1599- 1642*, University of Delaware Press, 2005, a history of the Chamberlain's/King's Men, a.k.a. "Shakespeare's" theatrical company, as a business. Other papers include "Beware at what hands thou receiv'st thy commodity: *The Alchemist* and the King's Men fleece the customers, 1610," published by Susquehanna University Press in 2006 in the volume *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage* and " ' A Queen in a Beard': a study of all-female Shakespeare companies," published by *Shakespeare Re-dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008.

She has given other papers on the business of the King's Men at the Shakespeare Association in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2009, at the MLA in 2003 and 2006, and at almost every Blackfriars conference from 2001 – 2023, including "The Bear Essentials: Cost-effective bears in original practice productions of *The Winter's Tale*." Her specialties include the history of theater business, theatre economics, and theater technology. She has also written on John Bunyan, and on Harry Potter and Renaissance tragedy.

## **Kim Carrell**

“The Name and Not the Thing:” What “Original Practices” Truly Means for a Practitioner

The term “Original Practices” was ostensibly coined in a 1998 interview with Mark Rylance, and has since received a great deal of usage but very little clarity as to what it genuinely entails. For theatre practitioners, the term frequently becomes a critical bludgeon rather than an honest examination of these approaches to staging and the goals behind them, being reduced to “a quest for authority and authenticity.” In this paper I will focus on these practitioners’ approaches to the staging of Shakespeare’s plays, their stated reasons for utilizing such approaches, and the challenges of training in these methods - also drawing on my own experiences of the past 26 years as an actor, director, and professor whose work in each of these realms has been deeply influenced and enriched by the exploration of what I prefer to call “historically informed practices.”

Kim H. Carrell  
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**Kim H. Carrell** (He/Him) is an actor, director, fight choreographer, and professor based in Boston, Massachusetts. He earned his MFA in Staging Shakespeare at the University of Exeter and is currently on the Theater faculty at Worcester State University (MA,) also having taught at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Clark University, and College of the Holy Cross. He is a member of Actors Equity Association, SAG-AFTRA, Society of American Fight Directors, and the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat and has performed the works of Shakespeare across the United States and in the U.K.

## **Katharine Goodland**

### Original Practices from the Inside Out: Actor-Audience at Shakespeare & Company

Over the years, Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts has been mentioned in conjunction with the Original Practices movement. Yet, Tina Packer, Founding Artistic director of the company, has never used the label herself, nor has her approach to training and rehearsal aligned itself with Original Practices. Rather, in the simplest sense, her approach is the opposite of original practices, for rather than work from the outside in, as it were, endeavoring to recreate the methods by which Elizabethan actors rehearsed and performed, Packer's company has, from the beginning, trained and rehearsed from the inside out.

From its founding, the company focused on five areas of training necessary for performing Shakespeare: voice, text, actor-audience, fight, and clown. In the summer of 1999, I had the opportunity to participate in Shakespeare & Company's month-long training intensive with sixty actors and a fellow non-actor like me. In this essay, I discuss how the company approached training in the actor-audience relationship at that time. I have chosen this aspect of the training because it remains among the most illuminating experiences I have had in my own trajectory of exploring Shakespearean theatre on the stage as well as the page.

#### Bio:

Katharine Goodland is Professor of English at the City University of New York's College of Staten Island where she teaches courses in Shakespeare and Medieval and Early Modern Culture. Her most recent publications include *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Tina Packer* (Arden Bloomsbury 2024) and *Medieval Afterlives: Transforming Traditions in Shakespeare and Early English Drama*, co-edited with Daisy Black (Manchester University Press 2024).

## **Brent Griffin**

Moving past conventional historicist interpretations of original practices, my paper will argue for a reinvestment in formalist approaches to early modern playtexts, especially regarding what I will argue as the primary purpose of OP—to enhance, augment, and amplify the sound of verse drama in performance. To that end, the often overlooked element of “judicious editing” features prominently, as the process of crafting (indeed, scoring) plays to the particularities of the players proves crucial in creating an atmosphere conducive to embodied prosody. Just as Shakespeare wrote for a specific group of actors, each with their own instrumental idiosyncrasies, present-day practitioners should strive to edit extant texts with an ear toward the verse-speaking talents of their companies.

Brent Griffin is the artistic director of Resurgens Theatre Company. A past member of the research staff at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London, he holds a Ph.D. in Renaissance drama and performance studies from Florida State University, serves as the founder and chair of Resurgens’ biennial academic conference on the verse dramas of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, and currently teaches for Georgia State University.

**Lizzie Hughes and Valentina Vinci 1:**  
Shake-Scene Shakespeare

### **Original or Radical: The Opportunity of Cue-Based Practice**

Cue-based preparation is an original practice – this is unarguable.

The radical modern technique of preparing from cued parts and performing with minimal group rehearsal has been demonstrated in our research as unlikely to be the model of all Early Modern performance preparation. Does this invalidate the modern “cue script”? We contend that it does not: the practice, as it exists, has much of great value to offer modern theatre practitioners, teachers, actors and students.

Cue-based preparation can be taken into rehearsal, as a character development technique, and used as an exploration tool for preparing audition texts and monologues. This form of cue-based preparation is of specific benefit to neurodivergent students and actors, as it increases agency; cue-based performance with minimal rehearsal “levels the playing field” for those with neurodivergence, reducing the pressures of the rehearsal room environment.

The cued part approach improves confidence in handling text, and promotes active listening between performers. This all additionally helps to create accessible, immediate performance for the audiences. Also, not requiring long, immersive rehearsal processes makes cue-based performances cheaper to stage – a not inconsiderable bonus to commercial theatre.

Cue-based performance also presents a significant challenge to AI, as there is no predictable pattern of dialogue or intonation – which is an intriguing observation to pursue. This paper will refer to experiences of cue-based performance, teaching and workshopping.

**Hughes and Vinci 2:**  
Shake-Scene Shakespeare

### **Expecting the Unexpected: Cued Parts and Repeated Cues**

The modern, radical “Original Practice” of preparing performance from cued parts (“cue scripts”) provides many unexpected bonuses for the modern actor. The most surprising and unfamiliar (to modern performers, directors and audiences) is Repeated Cues.

The current process for rehearsing a play begins from a full, set, almost fossilised script. Actors and director all read from the full version; modern actors know who is speaking when and for how long, and wait their turn while preserving an air of spontaneity. However, Early Modern plays were written in the expectation of being studied as parts, more than as a full text, and the text itself (certainly in its earliest performances) was potentially still very fluid in form. Playwrights exploited the use of parts by (I contend) deliberately writing in moments of potential confusion by repeating the offering of selected cues from selected characters at selected moments.

Scholars and practitioners have seen these as aberrations to be avoided; my research and experience as a cue-based performer and book-holder suggest that they are deliberate, intentional, and were preserved by their original players.

This unexpected complication in the smooth modern turn-taking process is an essential aspect of Early Modern text and performance, which deserves to return to the public stage. This paper will refer to Original Practice performance and workshop experience, scholarly publications and parts from the Early Modern and Restoration theatre.

### **Bios:**

Valentina Vinci is an Italian actor, voice actor and technical producer based in the UK. In 2015, she took part in the last (to date) International Actors' Fellowship at Shakespeare's Globe, London, and she's since appeared in over 50 Shakespeare productions, both in the UK and internationally. She is a co-founder of the International Actors' Ensemble, and a regular contributor to the Beyond Shakespeare Podcast. Valentina joined Shake-Scene Shakespeare as a partner in 2019, and has since appeared in roles ranging from Lady Macbeth to Puck to Coriolanus

Lizzie has a BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature (Hull University, 1990), an MA (Leeds University, 1991) a PGCE (Oxford University, 1992), and has recently completed her PhD (The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham). She is an experienced teacher and tutor for students and actors of all ages and abilities, in the UK and internationally.

A lifetime theatre professional (actor, writer, producer and director) and teacher, Lizzie returned to academic study in her 50s. Lizzie's PhD thesis was inspired by her practical theatre experience, and re-examines the conduct of stage management in London's Renaissance playhouses.

Lizzie is the founder, partner and Artistic Director of Shake-Scene Shakespeare, the UK's foremost dedicated cue-based teaching and performing company. With Shake-Scene and uniquely in modern practice, Lizzie has produced performances (live online as well as "in real life") of the entire Shakespeare cannon, Shakespeare's apocrypha, and plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries, all performed from cued parts and without general group rehearsal. Shake-Scene have conducted two residencies at Shakespeare North Playhouse, and will be returning there in 2026.

## **Evelyn Reidy**

**Title:** What's "Original" in Original Practice(s)?

### **Abstract:**

In the recent history of the "Original Practices" (OP) movement, many of the practices utilized by artists and researchers alike have been closely associated with the early modern period's urban, commercial stage. Early modern theatre, however, was not limited by text or circumscribed within a dedicated theatrical space: its origins were in the street and the market square, in the hands of community members. In this paper, I argue that we must consider beyond what is textual and architectural if we truly want to embrace early modern performance's "origins." I will suggest how the guiding principles of OP can be applied to early modern festive performance, providing examples from my own experiences working with actors on festive performance forms such as May games, dances, and pageantry. Taking the enthusiasm for OP out of the playhouses and into the streets, I argue, allows us to explore a uniquely embodied, emotive approach to the period's complex and varied performance culture.

### **Bio:**

Evelyn Reidy (*she/hers*) received her PhD at the University of Roehampton and Shakespeare's Globe, funded by a AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award. Her creative-critical research project focused on female and laboring class performers in non-commercial drama and their use of festive performance-as-protest in the early seventeenth century. This research was the basis for an original play titled *Very Small Trouble*, which tells the story of a group of performers in Wells, Somerset and their controversial Midsummer performances of 1607. *Very Small Trouble* was workshopped at Shakespeare's Globe and recently performed as a staged reading at Mary Baldwin University. She has published performance reviews in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, blogs with Shakespeare's Globe, and is currently preparing journal articles for the *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* and *Shakespeare Studies*. In 2025-2026, she is an Artistic Research Fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library, where she is developing her next play, *More Weight, or I Saw Goody Proctor at the Gift Shop*.

## Joe Stephenson

Stephenson Abstract

“Rethinking Original Practices”

Shakespeare Association of America

Denver, 2026

My paper will share illustrative moments from my experience—as researcher, dramaturg, reviewer, and audience member— with “original practices” starting in the 2001. These should lead to ideas about what may be most and least useful for the tradition in the future.

I will share anecdotes and observations from the following:

--Study and friendship with Andrew Gurr starting in 2001 at University of Connecticut and continuing afterwards, noting Gurr’s work at both the Globe in London and the Blackfriars in Virginia.

--Continued study, work, and reviews of productions at these theaters and others, including the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in London and the Curtain in Austin, Texas.

--Work as a dramaturg for several Texas companies that explored the “original practices” dynamic. This will be my most original and, I hope, most valuable contribution.

As we look toward the future of “original practices,” I will share my thoughts about

--Casting (with a view toward race, gender, and age)

--Speaking (verse, “original pronunciation,” vocal production)

--Acting

--Lighting

--Music and sound

--The problematic term “original practices”

Joseph F. Stephenson a Professor of English at Abilene Christian University (Texas). He earned his B.A. from Yale and his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut, where his dissertation focused Dutch characters on the English stage, a field in which he still publishes. Joe teaches courses in Shakespeare and early modern drama both in Texas and at his university’s study abroad program in Oxford. His major research project at present is a scholarly edition of a Restoration comedy in manuscript, *The Dutch Lady*, located in the archives of the Boston Public Library.

## Marie Trotter

### Abstract:

Nicholas Hytner's 2019 (and 2025) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was far from an OP endeavour: fairies swung through the air on trapezes, the Mechanicals borrowed an audience member's smartphone, and Bottom and Oberon danced to Beyonce's "Love on Top." Hytner's production was aggressively modern, yet it allowed for the liberation—and direction—of a roving audience, who were empowered to participate with a proximity rarely afforded to audience members seated in an auditorium. My paper explores the possibility for conditions which create an "Original Practices" audience, even within a production that is conspicuously *not* OP: Hytner's *Dream*, through its emphatically non-historical design, encouraged audiences to participate in a manner more akin to the active spectatorship of the Early Modern theatre than the reserved spectatorship often demonstrated by modern audiences. I explore Original Practices as a potential sensibility, rather than a methodology: what original effects might be recovered through non-original practices?

### Bio:

Marie Trotter is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English at McGill University, studying metatheatre in the plays of Shakespeare. Her writing is published in the journals *Theatre Research in Canada*, *Early Theatre*, and *Literature and Theology*. She teaches at the National Theatre School of Canada.