

Cseicsner, Otilia

Romeo and Juliet Radiotised

-- a radio play as a test piece for a legendary theatrical production in Hungary. Shakespeare on Radio was equally popular among radio-makers working at broadcast media in totalitarian regimes as well as in countries lying west of the former 'Iron Curtain'. A legendary Hungarian radio production of 1962 was Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which was interestingly first produced on radio and only then put on stage at Vígszínház in Budapest, a theatre seating more than 1300 people. Vígszínház had legendary actors in its ensemble with whom the radio adaptation of 1962 was produced. In an immense corpus of Shakespeare on Hungarian Radio, this radio play stands out as the only one which was released as an LP 15 years later. I wish to investigate this *Romeo and Juliet* stage production's theatrical and political context and compare it to the radio version as its forerunner in the context of radio plays of the age.

Investigating Radio Shakespeares might be considered a recent development in Shakespeare Studies mainly drawing on the results of analyzing Shakespeare on Screen, I, however, consider radio an independent artistic medium.

In my analysis, I rely on my professional expertise gained at the former Hungarian Radio, where I made over 40 radio plays, edited the time slot 'Radio Theatre' for two years and visited nearly all European radio festivals to become familiar with the current trends of radio art between 2010 and 2018.

My analysis includes technical know-how meaning recorded and unrecorded information and knowledge relating to the development or production of radio plays, including but not limited to the knowledge gained from my experience.

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At Last, it's the 1948 Show: When Larry and Viv met Ngaio.

In 1948, Laurence Olivier led the Old Vic Theatre Company on an all-star tour of Australia and New Zealand, staging productions of *Richard III*, *The School for Scandal* and Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. The repertory was designed to showcase Olivier's virtuosity and to show how, despite his burgeoning film career, he owned the live stage as a space for classical acting. The tour was long and exhausting. Olivier carried an injury (from his athletic incarnation of Richard the Third himself) and his marriage with Vivien Leigh was collapsing.

Nevertheless both Olivier and Leigh grasped the nature diplomatic/cultural mission below the equator. The shows sold out across Australia and New Zealand: there were many civic receptions and public talks. A core component of the New Zealand leg was meeting with Ngaio Marsh. By 1948 Marsh was globally renowned as one of the best

selling “queens of crime”: her “teccery”, as she called her murder mysteries, frequently used theatrical and Shakespearean motifs.

In New Zealand, Marsh was renowned for her Shakespeare productions. Using students and community actors she had been directing full scale Shakespeares with swagger and panache She since the early 1940s. She lived in London in the late 1920s, and visited every year; and knew well the theatre practices from the generation of Olivier and Gielgud. Marsh met with Olivier and Leigh several times on the tour, entertaining them in her grand house in the hills above Christchurch.

The three of them broadcast several times on New Zealand public radio (then the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation), including a special broadcast to publicly farewell the Old Vic Company. Excerpts from Shakespeare were performed and in scripted addresses both Marsh and Olivier emphasized the centrality of Shakespeare to the mission of the British Empire. In the core of this paper I will use the oral, visual, print and newspaper archives from the National Library of New Zealand (where Marsh’s extensive paper are archived) to evoke and contextualise these broadcasts from 20 years after the beginning of public radio in New Zealand.

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Audio Shakespeare Abstract: Title to be determined

After the debacle of the 1937 Battle of the Bard, both the Columbia Broadcasting System and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) radio networks more or less gave up on Shakespeare, Columbia more and NBC less. However, a 1950 abridged release of the NBC series on long playing records, also broadcast on the network, reawakened NBC’s interest in Shakespeare. This took multiple forms including the focus of this paper, the comedy series *The Magnificent Montague*, which ran mostly unsustained for one year. If this paper goes as planned, it will look at how the series was created, will give details about the Shakespearean connections (the show is about a old and vain Shakespearean actor forced to take radio work on a children’s series), note the assumptions about Shakespeare’s cultural capital and the ways that capital is both affirmed and undermined, note the cliches of American radio comedy used to create these stories, and look at the occasional satire of institutions of mid-century America, radio comedy and acting styles of Broadway Shakespeare productions amongst them.

Blaire A. Krakowitz
“Audio Shakespeare Around the World: Radio, Recordings, Internet” Paper Abstract
SAA 2026

Abstract:

Radio, opera, and derivative stage adaptations of early modern drama have received substantial critical examination. In light of adaptation studies' steadily-increasing interest in video recordings of stage productions, audio recordings and cast albums of stage productions (including plays, musicals, and operas) of early modern drama warrant further critical attention. Just as video recordings of stage productions can be considered adaptations of their early modern source material, audio recordings are likewise derivative works that offer material for critical analysis.

This paper takes up the 2009 official cast recording of Wolf Trap Opera's *Volpone* (composed by John Musto and libretto by Mark Campbell and adapted from Ben Jonson's play of the same name) as a case study. The album, nominated for a Grammy Award in 2010, can be viewed as an adaptation not only of the opera but also of Jonson's play. Specifically, the cast album offers a unique presentation of comic villainy among the play's gallery of sinners—how they are both engaging and repellant—through purely auditory means.

This paper is adapted from my Ph.D. dissertation, *Comic Villainy in Adaptations of Early Modern Drama*, in progress.

Katie Lanning

Wondrous Strange: *Hamlet*, Elocution, and the Sounds of New Media

This paper traces how a single exchange in *Hamlet* became a proving ground for successive sound technologies. In 1881, Alexander Melville Bell (elocutionist, phonetic theorist, and father of Alexander Graham Bell) recorded a single line onto a wax-coated drum: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in our philosophy." This brief fragment marks not only one of the earliest literary sound recordings but also an emblem of how Shakespeare was used to introduce new media. Bell's choice of line and performance link nineteenth-century elocutionary culture to the dawning age of mechanical sound, inviting listeners, like Horatio, to believe in the reality of a disembodied voice. This paper follows that same exchange between Hamlet and Horatio – a moment of wonder, doubt, and persuasion – as it has been reinterpreted through successive sound technologies: the Graphophone, the radio broadcast, LP and CD audiobooks, and AI narration. Each medium reshapes what "wondrous strange" sounds like, using microphone placement, sound effects, filters, stereo imaging and more to stage the credibility of the ghost's voice and, by extension, of disembodied sound itself. By tracing this single scene across more than a century of recording history, I show how practices of elocution and the aesthetics of audio engineering converge to teach listeners to believe what they hear and, in Hamlet's words, "as a stranger give it welcome."

Marianne Montgomery

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Audio Shakespeare Around the World: Radio, Recordings, Internet

SAA 2026

Working Title: American Voices and (Color) Conscious Casting in The Public's *Richard II* and *Romeo y Julieta*

Abstract: Since its founding by Joseph Papp, whose vision for a populist and democratic American theater continues to shape its mission, the Public Theater has produced shows that not only look but also sound like America. Papp's colorblind casting has been developed into the color conscious casting described by Ayanna Thompson, a casting practice that considers how performers' bodies—and voices—carry meaning and shape the audience's experiences of Shakespearean and other

canonical plays. In my essay for our seminar, I will use Jennifer Stoeber's theory of the "sonic color line" to analyze two Public audio productions, both directed by Saheem Ali: *Richard II* (2020), a pandemic and #BlackLivesMatter era production with a predominantly Black cast and a female Bolingbroke, and *Romeo y Julieta* (2022), a bilingual production in English and Spanish. Both productions—in their audio paratexts and in the plays themselves—explore the auralty of race, how race is constructed and naturalized as an auditory as well as a visual phenomenon. The sonic color line is also a concern of other recent plays directed by Ali for the Public that localize Shakespearean language in distinctly audible communities: Jocelyn Bioh's adaptation of *Merry Wives* set in a West African neighborhood of South Harlem (2021, *Shakespeare in the Park*), James Ijames' Southern riff on *Hamlet*, *Fat Ham* (2022-23), and *Twelfth Night* (2025, *Shakespeare in the Park*), with Lupita and Junior Nyongo as Viola and Sebastian speaking Swahili at key emotional moments in the play. Listening closely to *Richard II* and *Romeo y Julieta*, I argue that they use Shakespeare to blur the sonic color line, making Shakespearean language accessible to new audiences and, for those of us who know the plays well, opening up new ways of hearing how their themes echo in a troubled present.

Charlene V. Smith

Shakespeare Association of America 2026

Audio Shakespeare Around the World

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Abstract

Remounting Shakespeare's Histories in Audio

In 2020, Brave Spirits Theatre, a non-equity theatre company in the Washington, DC, area, embarked on an ambitious project: to stage Shakespeare's eight history plays in repertory with a single ensemble cast. On March 14th, the company opened the fourth play of the repertory: *Henry the Fifth*. That night was also the closing of *Henry the Fifth*, and, as it turned out, the entire project, due to COVID-19 pandemic. At this point, the company had rehearsed the Henriad for seven months and performed twenty-six times. The four plays of the First Tetralogy had received a table read, and actor preparations were already underway, even though staging rehearsals were not to have begun until the fall of 2020. Rather than let all this work go to waste, the ensemble decided to reimagine the project as audio productions. Three years later, the company released the cycle as twenty-four podcast episodes.

Written by the BST's artistic director and director of the audio productions, this paper explores this unique situation of adapting existing live performances into a recorded audio format. This provided both opportunities and challenges, as the stage history of our productions guided our interpretation, but we also had to let go of choices that could no longer work in the new medium. This paper argues that to successfully present these eight plays in audio, we had to stop treating them as plays; i.e., as performances reliant on visual components. This led to a philosophy of narration that is markedly different from most audio Shakespeares, where narration is used to verbalize important or confusing stage action. Instead, our narration was used to strengthen our interpretive lens by providing historical context or amplifying repetitions across the cycle. This paper also considers how we recreated our stage productions' feminist

perspective. Much of that interpretive lens was achieved through embodied critique which was no longer possible in audio; instead, music and sound design filled that gap. Though the original version of Shakespeare's Histories was lost to the pandemic, the resulting audio series is just as large an achievement, and one that, unlike the ephemeral nature of theatre, lives on in a permanent digital format.