From Cultural Tourists to Shakespeare Fans: The Stratford Festival and the Construction of Audience

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Abstract

While the Stratford Festival of Canada has relied consistently on high quality productions of classical, contemporary, and musical theater, its approach to marketing itself has changed dramatically. The first decade of the 21st century has provided new challenges to both recruiting and maintaining audiences. By 2008, it became apparent that the appeal of cultural tourism as a means of drawing playgoers to a destination Shakespeare site was no longer enough. To attract new audiences, the Festival began a number of digital initiatives including a multimedia app, a social media version of *Romeo and Juliet*, and several online games. This article examines some of these initiatives, focusing on what they reveal about how the Festival saw (and sees) its audience(s). More than simply play-goers in search of Shakespeare's cultural capital, the Festival addressed its audiences as fans of Shakespeare and of the Festival. It provided opportunities for them to engage productively rather than passively. In so doing, the Festival contributed (and continues to contribute) to an understanding of Shakespeare as the subject not just of study, but of fandom.[1]

The Stratford Festival

In late September 2012, musical comedian Kevin Yee released a video shot in the park outside the Festival Theatre in Stratford, Ontario and featuring three young musical theater performers (dressed as swans) attempting to convince a curmudgeonly Shakespearean actor (Stratford Festival regular Tom Rooney) that musicals are as legitimate as Shakespeare plays. The video is amusing and its point, that the Stratford Festival is somewhat Janus-faced in its attitude toward musicals, mildly subversive. Although the video was not official, it did not draw any legal action from the Festival. In fact, this was likely a smart decision by the Festival as in retrospect, the video looks prescient in that it deploys audience-created media with the tacit approval of the Festival as a means of promoting itself to a younger digital media-savvy audience.

The first decade of the 21st century marked a time of transition for the Festival as its audience aged and younger audiences were no longer as easily attracted as their parents were. When the Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada formed in 1953, it was the latest instantiation of a wave of cultural tourism that began with early 20th-century theater festivals such as Richard Wagner's Bayreuth Festspeilhaus (Kennedy 1998, 176-77; O'Dair 2000, 89-114; Bennett 2005, 496; MacCannell 1976, 77-80). Its history has been recorded in numerous works, both worshipful (Pettigrew and Portman 1985; Hunter 2001) and critical (Falocco 2002; Groome 2002; Kidnie 2004; Knowles 1994, 1995, 2003, 2004; McKinnon 2015; Ormsby 2017a, 2017b; Parolin 2009; Rae 2017). As railroads and then automobiles made travel more accessible to more people across North America, destination Shakespeare sites such as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (1935), the Old Globe in San Diego (1935), the New York Shakespeare Festival (1954) and the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut (1955) became popular means for tourists to experience the "transcendence of high art" that Shakespeare provides (Kennedy 1998, 177; but see also Ormsby 2017a; Pye 2014; Watson 2007).

This is not to say that the Festival's success was guaranteed. Concerns over its viability were related as much to its location in south central Ontario as its proposed repertoire of classical plays. Artistic Director Tyrone Guthrie, designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch, and a company of established actors helped assure that the productions would be of high quality. But would people be willing to travel, potentially over several days to attend the theater? Would destination Shakespeare be as successful in Ontario as it had been in Oregon? The simple answer is "yes," and, as with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, it would prosper for over sixty years, regularly reinventing its appeal to audiences as the cultural status of Shakespeare changed, from largely high culture to include a range of popular offerings (Knowles 1994, Taylor 1989).

The Festival's repertory as well as its advertising and promotional strategies drew cultural tourists — travelers looking for experiences that would enhance their cultural capital and affiliate them with other possessors of that capital. Over the next fifty years, the number of plays offered expanded. The festival began with as few as five and as many as seven in the 50s and 60s, with at least two Shakespeare offerings each season. In the 70s, the number ranged from nine to seventeen and two to seven Shakespeare plays. The number varied in the 80s and 90s but never smaller than nine or larger than fifteen. Similarly, Shakespeare productions averaged four per season with as many as six. Since 2000, the Festival has regularly produced thirteen to fifteen plays per season and averaged about five Shakespeare. The season length increased concomitantly, starting out with six weeks in the summer and, since the 1990s, offering plays from April through October.

School group discounts and matinee shows targeted young audiences and ideally helped create future patrons. Lectures and workshops related to the plays were offered during mornings and afternoons. Backstage tours and informal talks with actors and directors created a sense of intimacy and community with the Festival, especially for returning patrons. These activities augmented the plays and gave overnight audiences cultural activities to engage in while they were waiting for curtain time. The city of Stratford, benefiting from a flow-on effect from the Festival, began to shift its commercial center to appeal to cultural tourists. Art galleries, gift shops, and specialized restaurants where playgoers could gather and discuss the productions appeared (Bennett 2005, 501-2).

The last fifteen years, however, have been particularly challenging for the Festival. Studies by the National Endowment for the Arts show a regular decline in attendance at live theater and music performances generally, a change often blamed, at least in part, on the increasing popularity of new digital media forms (Teachout 2010). Shakespeare as conceived by Guthrie perhaps is no longer the draw it once was. The Festival has not been passive in the face of these changes. It has long recognized that its viability as a destination Shakespeare site depends on a balancing act of pleasing older, but dwindling, generations of audiences seeking traditional live repertory theatrical offerings and attracting new, younger audiences who can choose between various entertainment options without leaving their homes.

In a June 2010 speech, Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino spoke of the changes in audiences since the Festival began in 1953 (Cimolino 2010). He was especially concerned with digital and social media, how they have transformed audience expectations, and how the Festival should embrace the transformations — and even whether it should. Though its social media presence had begun as early as 2007, the first social media staff position did not appear until 2011. Since then, the Festival's social media presence has steadily grown. It currently maintains a blog, a Twitter feed, Google+, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest pages, and YouTube and Livestream channels and links from its webpage to its TripAdvisor entry.

To this end, the Festival has invested in several initiatives aimed primarily, though not exclusively, at younger audiences. These enterprises have included extensive online and social media campaigns, forays into electronic gaming, and the development of an app for mobile devices. In addition to expanding the Festival's promotional activities beyond conventional print and broadcast media, these programs reveal how the Festival's conception of its Shakespeare audience has changed dramatically. While older generations of cultural tourists are addressed as content with access to the cultural capital of Shakespeare and the Festival's reputation, younger audiences are addressed as fans seeking a more reciprocal relationship with Shakespeare. The

Festival has become not only a destination for theater-as-event, but also a provider of a space for a kind of digital participatory Shakespeare.

The Festival's digital presence began literally at the box office. Until the late 1990s, patrons typically bought tickets and booked accommodation through travel agents, over the phone, or via the mail using a visitors' guide sent out every spring. The website presented a remediation of this material and added the ability to purchase tickets and lodging online. The next phase of the Festival's digital presence seems to have grown out of the booking function. Promotional material for current and upcoming productions directed browsers to the online box office. Clips and stills of past shows also became part of the promotional material. For the 2012 and 2013 seasons, the Festival released an iPhone app, named the Stratford Festival Guide, which largely reproduced the Festival features including information about future shows.[2]

Though the website provides images and YouTube-hosted video clips, these are passive promotional materials consumed by potential audiences via screens rather than printed pages. The sound and motion provide a greater immediacy than the guide and are thus closer to a live theatrical performance, but the act of clicking a mouse, the varied quality of playback, and the brevity of the clips are constant reminders of the limits of the online medium. Festival attendees encountered the computer and smartphone screen as an affordance for accessing the festival, and the user's experience of the printed promotional materials was enhanced, but it was not immersive and remained largely passive.

The App: Stratford Festival Behind the Scenes

Not long after Yee's video appeared, the Festival released an app for the iPad and Blackberry Playbook designed to engage the user more immersively with the Festival and its performances. The description the developers provide for the iTunes App Store promised:

> The Stratford Festival at your fingertips! Become a theatre insider with the Stratford Festival Behind the Scenes app. Explore the process of building a season at the Festival, from choosing the playbill to set construction to performance. Filled with interviews, observations and breathtaking photography, this app will lead readers on a fascinating journey into corners of the Festival seldom seen by members of the public.[3]

The decision to create an app rather than a website exploited the personal nature that the iPad affords. The emphasis on exclusivity suggested that the app was aimed at returning patrons and regarded them as fans who desired what any fan would: knowledge of "insider" information and access to "seldom seen" aspects of the Festival. Simply attending plays was no longer enough;

the audience could now observe the entire "process of building a season." Newcomers were not excluded, but the apparent lack of basic information about the Festival may have left unfamiliar audiences unsure about its nature. Was it a live theater festival or a streaming service or something else?

The use of present tense in the second and third sentences suggests that the viewer will see the development of the current season, but the list of details implies this is not the case. It offers:

· 360-degree views of treasures from the Festival Archives
· Interactive set models from productions at our two largest venues
· Exclusive images and slideshows from rehearsals and backstage
· Exclusive interviews with Antoni Cimolino, Des McAnuff, Lloyd Robertson as well as many more cast and crew
· Photos, stories, sketches, animations and insights into the world of theatre
· Full text version of [its] 60th season book to compliment the digital content

The first three items foreground the app's visual immediacy and the interactive potential of the iPad. The last three items sound less interactive and more passive. Omitted is any mention of the plays or of Shakespeare. The app offers insight into the mechanics of the Festival rather than its product.[4]

The press release for the app amplifies the content's exclusivity, and it "reveals the secrets of theatrical production, demonstrating the artistry that takes place behind the scenes is every bit as magical as the performance itself" (Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 2012). The intended audience — comparatively younger or more affluent users of smart phones and tablets — also becomes more distinct. Executive Director Anita Gaffney is quoted, "Thousands of visitors flock to our backstage tours each year....With this app, we're able to offer a new version of that experience to an even wider audience" (Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 2012). Not only do the backstage views provide rarely seen images; they reveal secrets and expose the viewer to the magic of theatre production. The appeal goes beyond theatrical audiences to address Festival aficionados who are not satisfied with the conventional audience experience. Akin to readers of celebrity magazines and websites, these theater-goers already know the performers and the plays, now they want to know what is behind the curtain of theatrical performance.

In the next paragraph of the press release, Gaffney modifies the idea of providing inside knowledge by suggesting it might appeal to new audiences: "the digital media channel allows us to...connect to younger audiences [and] employs techniques that draw the user into the theatre experience, animating it in a new and innovative way", and it inspires "follow-up projects including

study guides for students and teachers" (Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 2012). In addition to Festival fans, and certainly overlapping with them, Gaffney also hopes that the medium will appeal to the crucial "younger audiences" and make the content more attractive. These audiences are school age children and teens who the press release seems to imply need to be educated to enjoy theater or will most likely only attend as part of a school group and not become returning customers. They are also those who might rather watch a video on a screen rather than see a live play. *Stratford Shakespeare Festival Behind the Scenes* is more than a marketing tool or a souvenir. It constructs its audience as consumers of an innovative, hybrid, multimedia form of Shakespeare in which the actual product is the experience of learning how the plays are produced rather than the plays themselves.

The app's content does exactly what the promotional materials suggest: it provides users with a behind-the-scenes view of what has happened (and by implication what will continue to happen) at the Festival. The experience is repeatedly characterized in terms of wonder and its resolution. Words such as "amazing," "explore," "explain," "experiment," and "unlock" recur regularly. The photos and video clips reinforce a sense of magic. In one video, Andrew Mestern, Technical Director of Scenic Construction, describes the trial and error process of building a set feature so that it will safely support the actors, look convincing to the audience, and be simple enough to disassemble every day. In another, Head of Wigs and Makeup, Gerry Altenburg, explains the process of creating wigs with human hair and that European hair is easier to work with than American hair. The app provides numerous images of the creation of both the prop and the wigs to exemplify the wonder of the transformation of materials from ordinary objects to items of dramatic value.

The app also feeds the aficionado's interest in the Festival by emphasizing the celebrity of actors and directors. Many have been with the Festival for decades and many live in or around Stratford. It is entirely possible for an audience member see an actor play Prospero one evening and bump into him the next morning at a coffee shop. The actors are similarly humanized in the app through numerous photos of them in their street or rehearsal clothes and the relative paucity of images of them in costume. If actors are in full costume, they are almost always off stage.

This recognition of patrons' interest in backstage knowledge of the Festival is not new. Docent-led tours of the theaters and archives, and a variety of informal, interactive chats with actors, artists, and directors such as "Meet the Festival," "Talking Theatre," "Festival Friday Chats," "Star Talks," and post-performance discussions have long been a part of the Festival experience. But they were on-site events. The app and the YouTube playlist, "Stageside Shorts" have made it possible for

audiences to enjoy the backstage experience wherever they are and whenever they like ("Stageside Shorts").[5]

However innovative, *Stratford Behind the Scenes* was not designed to appeal to new audiences. It was designed to retain old audiences using new media by addressing them in a different way. The app does not provide clips of performances or recordings of songs and so does not recreate or substitute for a performance. It contains esoteric knowledge for those who have already seen the plays and desire a different way to re-experience the Festival, presumably while not at the Festival. The implication seems to be that the plays themselves are not enough to entice people to return to Stratford. People want to feel as if they have an affinity with and unique knowledge of the Festival and its workings. This generates a sense of community with other patrons and allows audiences to bring a form of expertise and participation to their theater-going rather than simply passive consumption.

In late 2014, the *Stratford Behind the Scenes* app was discontinued. The companion book can still be purchased online through the Festival store and secondhand copies are available via Amazon. At least some of the app's content has been added to the Stratford Festival's YouTube channel in a playlist called "Behind the Scenes." New versions of the app's sections on wardrobe, lights, and sets have been created using more recent productions.

The Games: "Staging Shakespeare" and "Who Killed Romeo & Juliet"

For the following (2013) season, the Festival expanded its technological promotional project to develop younger audiences. In 2012, the Festival had begun a collaborative project with the University of Waterloo and Industry Corporation, a commercial game and multimedia design company to create games related to the 2013 season's productions. The project, Gamifying Shakespeare, was intended to develop two games that would, in the words of Waterloo Drama Professor Jennifer Roberts-Smith, "increase Shakespeare literacy in eleven to fifteen year olds through game-based social media" (Roberts-Smith, DeSouza-Coelho, and Malone 2016). She goes on carefully to note that part of this goal is to develop "future audiences for its own and other theatres' productions" (Roberts-Smith, DeSouza-Coelho, and Malone 2016) Festival executive director Gaffney is more direct, saying "we want to use some of these great characteristics of gaming to engage people in theatre...to get them excited about coming to Stratford" (quoted in Beitz 2013).

The first Gamifying Shakespeare project, *Staging Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet Edition)*, was developed by Roberts-Smith, working along with her Waterloo colleague Neil Randall and post-doctoral fellows Shawn DeSouza-Coelho and Toby Malone. According to the development

team, the game, designed for mobile devices, allowed a player in the director mode to stage excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*.[6] Using a visual model of any of the Festival's four stages, the player could choose costumes and props from the Festival's archives, along with pre-recorded voices of Festival actors, and combine them to create an animated scene. Players would complete more and more scenes and progress through levels gaining access to greater resources. By choosing the "critic" mode, players could view other players' staged excerpts from different locations in the theater and comment on them. The comments fell into four categories and included a brief quotation from Shakespeare along with a modern paraphrase. These reviews could be posted to Facebook and there would serve to promote both the game and the Festival. The game's framework was designed so that it could easily be adapted to other plays.

The Festival's Twitter feed announced the project, still called *Staging Shakespeare*, as did its blog and the local newspaper, *The Stratford Beacon Herald* (Beitz, 2013), in the beginning of March of 2013. In April, the Festival blog began a contest to rename the game. *Staging Shakespeare* was the working title, and readers of the blog were invited to suggest alternate names. The contest was to have ended on 12 April, when a group of Festival judges would choose the winner. Sixteen people made a total of twenty-three suggestions, notably, "Angry Bards" (Nicholas Banks) and "World of Stagecraft" (Wendy Hirschegger) (Stratford Festival Blog, 2013). A new name was never announced, however, and *Staging Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet Edition)* was never released.

Much less information is publicly available about the second Gamifying Shakespeare project, tentatively titled "Staging Shakespeare," which began in autumn term of 2012 at the University of Waterloo. The students in English professor Dr. Katherine Acheson's first year Shakespeare course spent part of their time working on narratives for an interactive, online game called "Who Killed Romeo and Juliet?" According to Acheson's blog post, the students had visits from members of the team designing the game; Andrea Jackson, Director of Education at the Stratford Festival; and Andrew Matlock, CEO of a video game design company. The students' specific task was to gather evidence that one of five potential factors — the Nurse, Friar Lawrence, the Capulets, Romeo, or gang rivalry — was primarily responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Another group worked to create a diagram of the game (Acheson 2012).[7]

"Who Killed Romeo and Juliet?" was linked to the 2013 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. The release date was to be the opening night of the play. Unfortunately, despite the investment of large amounts of resources, "Who Killed" was also not released. The Festival made no official announcement about the status of either game. In their account of *Staging Shakespeare (Romeo*

and Juliet Edition), Roberts-Smith, DeSouza-Coelho, and Malone hint that the collaborators were not able to create a game that sufficiently met the goals of the Gamifying Shakespeare project. While the game seemed to function, it did not sufficiently engage the social media aspect. Less is known about "Who Killed Romeo and Juliet?"; Dr. Acheson's students apparently completed their work, but nothing has been heard of it since.

As described, the games would seem to have met one of the Festival's goals of kindling interest in Shakespeare for digitally conditioned audiences. The secondary goals of linking that interest specifically and publically to the Festival do not seem to have been achieved. *Staging Shakespeare: (Romeo and Juliet edition)* sounds as if it would be effective, requiring players to understand a scene or play well enough to make sophisticated directorial decisions. The critic mode would enable competition as well as players' learning from each other. On the other hand, "Who Killed Romeo and Juliet?" would also require players to understand the play and characters and to make choices that would test their understanding of narrative cause and effect. While materials from the Festival's archives might rouse players' curiosity, they would not likely be enough to motivate them to travel to Stratford to see a Shakespeare play. In fact, it might well have had a paradoxical effect, satisfying users' interest in and affinity for Shakespeare while they sat at home.

Rather than young audiences or new play-goers, *Staging Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet Edition)* might have appealed to returning patrons, as did *Stratford Behind the Scenes*. Play-goers who have seen one or more productions of *Romeo and Juliet* at Stratford could use the game to restage favorite scenes themselves in the manner of sports fans who record and replay favorite plays. They could also mash-up elements from different productions to create their own personal favorite version. But again, as with the app, the pleasure in playing the game could very well be personal, and there would be little incentive to publicize one's games via social media.

In addition to the challenges of creating a Shakespeare game that replicates the theater experience in a way that fluidly integrates social media, both games potentially raise questions of immediacy and presence. By creating an engaging online Shakespeare game, the Festival might have provided a way for the potential younger audiences (using an affordance with which they were familiar) simply to replace the conventional live theater-as-event and not visit Stratford (Purcell 2014, 212-222, passim). If the Festival were to create a Shakespeare game that incorporated social media and generated interest in attending plays, it might look deeper into programming that manipulates digital immediacy and presence to its advantage (Purcell 2014, 221-22; Crawford and Rutter 2007, 272-75).

Social Media: Romeo & Juliet on Facebook

The Festival did not limit its promotional efforts to games and apps. As did many theater companies and cultural institutions, it turned to its archival past for material for its social media staff to use including production, backstage, and candid photos, video clips of performances, interviews, and brief promotional vignettes. The Festival's YouTube channel, which dates to 2007, is updated monthly during the season, and it has hundreds of clips featuring cast members, excerpts of lectures and discussions, and of course scenes promoting the plays. It also hosts some of the material from the now unavailable *Stratford Festival Behind the Scenes*. The Pintrest page has thirty-five boards with over 750 pins, which promote the plays but also include whimsical behind-the-scenes photos and Shakespeare-related material. It also has 12.1k monthly visitors and 795 followers.[8] The Festival's Instagram account is similar. First established in 2012, it is updated as often as every day during the season and has over three hundred images and videos, with 22k followers. Begun in 2009, the Festival's Twitter stream has over 3,000 photos and videos, with 26.1k followers, and its Facebook page has nearly 150,000 followers. Linking all their social media initiatives are a sophisticated series of brand and campaign hashtags such as #sfShrew (*Taming of the Shrew*), #stratfest, and #stratfordfestival. Many Festival cast and staff members also have their own public social media accounts.

Facebook has provided the Festival with perhaps its most active social media outlet. Its page features a brief overview of the company, a description of the current season, and numerous links to its homepage. The photo section has an enormous number of images. Most are from regular timeline posts, but every Friday a themed selection of photos appear as "Flashback Friday." These may include an overview of an actor's career or photos of a character from various productions. Festival staff members seem to post mobile photos from various Festival-related events.

The 2013 season included a series of themed "Social Media Meet-Ups" hosted by the Festival to promote specific productions. They typically occurred prior to a production and included related activities such as a Noel Cowardesque tea party celebrating *Blithe Spirit*. Simple costumes and props were available so that attendees could photograph themselves appearing similar to characters in the play. These photos were, of course, posted to Facebook and hopefully viewed by friends of the participants.

The Festival states that it contributes to its Facebook timeline ten to twenty times during the workweek and as many as five times on weekends and holidays (Wilk, 2012). An informal survey over the past three seasons suggests that the Festival is true to its word. Most posts are promotions and announcements, but some seem to be Facebook-specific and are often light-hearted. Familiar social media topics such as #MondayMotivation and #ThrowbackThursday appear regularly. More

interactive is the "fan of the week award," an informal reposting of a visitor's note about the Festival — recognition of the visitor's enthusiasm for the Festival. Other posts pose questions such as "If I were cast in Romeo and Juliet, I'd want to play _____ because _____" and are intended to generate traffic on the site. One series of promotions shows cast members wearing souvenir t-shirts and reading texts of the plays in which they appear.

Other features include synchronous Facebook interviews with cast members. Actors make themselves available for a period of time before and during the season and visitors can ask questions, receive answers, and ask follow up questions. Still other posts are replies to troubleshooting requests from patrons attempting to order tickets. In the past, the Festival occasionally sponsored contests specifically for Facebook visitors. These included designing a 60th-anniversary t-shirt for the 2012 season and creating a vlog about the performers.

Along with "Social Media Meet-Ups," the Festival social media department has organized several other Facebook-centered ventures. For the 2015 production of *The Sound of Music*, a special website was created (www.soundofstratford.com; no longer active), that included links for purchasing tickets, ticket giveaway opportunities, and interactive features such as a "Match the Cast" quiz to test users' knowledge of the characters and the Festival actors. The site also featured another familiar social media convention, the interactive identity quiz: "Which Character Are You?"

The Festival's most ambitious social media project debuted on 4 February 2013. On that day, a Facebook page appeared: "*Romeo and Juliet*: A Social Summary The Greatest Love Story Ever Told."[9] On the 5th came Romeo Montague's page. Born, 9 February 1577, from Verona, Italy, Son at House of Montague. He added the life event "first time in love," with Rosalind (though he didn't mention her name). On the 7th, Juliet Capulet's page joined his. Their story unfolded over ten days, concluding on Valentine's Day. The work of the Festival, this Facebook adaptation was designed to promote the upcoming production of Romeo and Juliet. The photos were of the cast in their various roles. Cleverly executed, the event attracted anywhere from a handful to fifty-odd likes per post. Comments were fewer, ranging from none to a dozen or so.

The Facebook / Valentine's Day / *Romeo and Juliet* event was part of a two-week-long promotion by the Festival that also included traditional advertising campaigns. It began with a sort of prologue entitled "Romeo and Juliet: A Social Summary The greatest love story ever told." Beneath this were the first four lines of the prologue, and below that, a publicity photograph of Sarah Topham and Daniel Briere as Juliet and Romeo, gazing into each other's eyes while lying in bed. On its first day, the page drew fifteen likes and no comments. After a week, five comments

had appeared. Three apparently were personal messages to other, non-Festival Facebook members. One was a statement that came from someone familiar with the play, "I love this play. I think it changed the Western world -- who today questions that love is more important to people's lives than so many forces, and that we should never interfere with true love? Great Facebook parody, too!" (Brown 2013).

The page introduced the project as a summary of the play. The advertising aspect is subtle with only the logo of the Festival in the corner. The number of comments and likes are also small. The comments do not seem to promote the play or the idea of the summary as comment on the play itself. The longer comment introduces an element of skepticism, though it is not clear what the writer claims is the subject of the parody.

The Facebook page was not a conventional, personal page or even a group page. In an interview the promotion's creator, Christi Rutledge, described how Facebook works very hard to prevent people from creating pages for fictional people and to control the commercial use of its pages. So, Rutledge and her collaborator, Marc Raffa, created a series of images of Facebook pages and added them to the Festival's collection of photos. The images could still be liked and commented upon, but the links were not active. People could not friend Juliet or invite Romeo to play Candy Crush.

The second post[10] — Romeo's Facebook page — generated more likes and shares and shows a much higher level of engagement with Facebook conventions. Romeo has a photo, 895 friends, photos, maps, and events. His occupation, son at the House of Montague, residence and hometown, Verona, Italy, and birthdate, 9 February 1577 are given. We later learn that three of the images represent other characters in the play. The crown is Escalus, the arms are the Montagues, and the book is Friar Laurence. Romeo has no status updates, but his recent activity is listed as "First time in love." An image of masquers marks his events section. The comments engaged a little more fully than the previous day's. One comment provided a quotation, another simply "love[s] it!" and a third asked if he will fall in love with Juliet. This comment triggered a response from Ms Rutledge posting as the Festival, "You'll have to watch and see..."

The third page, posted on 6 February, provided still more. Romeo clarifies his timeline post to include "In Love — with Rosalind" and the comment, "She'll not be hit / With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit; / And, in strong proof of chastity well arm'd, / From love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd." Her silhouette is included. Benvolio comments two seconds after the post, encouraging him to compare her to others. The updates continue through the masque, their meeting, and then the sixth post, on February 7th, is Juliet's update the following morning. A friend request from Romeo has appeared indicating they have two mutual friends. The eighth image is

Romeo and Juliet's engagement along with another production photo. The ninth is their marriage, with accompanying likes by the Nurse and Friar Laurence, but no one else.

Mercutio's page, the eleventh, moved further outside the play and into the world of social media. An image of Mercury, a flaming letter M, and a depiction of a fencing match are all clever nods to the play. The "Friends" thumbnail includes Romeo, the Montagues, Friar Laurence, and Escalus. Mercutio's activities include liking the Stratford Festival and claiming an offer from it, suggesting that he has been browsing their Facebook page.

After Mercutio's page, the social summary picked up speed; the twelfth and thirteenth pages are memorials for Mercutio (created by Romeo) and Tybalt (created by Juliet). Mercutio has nearly ten times more likes than Tybalt. Page fourteen is Juliet and Romeo's parting words the morning after their wedding. Fifteen is Juliet's wedding announcement. Lord and Lady Capulet, Paris, and Friar Laurence have already accepted. Juliet and her Nurse have responded as "maybe." An advertisement for Whittawer glove maker offers a chance for a 20% discount. The next two pages are Friar Laurence's "kind of hope" line and Juliet's farewell speech. Eighteen is Romeo's memorial page for Juliet, replete with lilies and a lament from the Nurse. Romeo's visit to the apothecary, arrival at the tomb, and confrontation with Paris are covered by the next page and the twentieth is Paris' memorial, created by Romeo. The penultimate page is Romeo and Juliet's final words. The final page is a memory page for the two created by Escalus. Capulet's comment "O brother Montague, give me thy hand..." appears in the comment section and has been liked by Montague.

As an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, the social summary focuses heavily on love and death. Five of the twenty-two pages are memorials to characters' deaths, and the engagement and marriage are each given a page. This fits well with Facebook's structure, which encourages users to think of their lives as a series of public events on a timeline. The Facebook pages are less effective in representing the private moments. Short speeches, such as Romeo's profession of love for Rosalind and Mercutio's Queen Mab speech, here truncated, do not seem to invite much comment or social interaction. Romeo and Juliet share brief exchanges, but they are awkward because Facebook limits their length to two or three lines. The overall effect of the Facebook social summary is somewhat like a silent film version of the play. The action is reduced to the highlights, the dialogue is severely curtailed, and the social milieu invited audience members to react verbally to each other and to the screen.

Numerous people saw each page, though the numbers of likes (7-119), shares (0-41), and comments varied widely (0-7). Some of the comments address the creators, complimenting them on their cleverness in using Facebook or their knowledge of the play. One commenter wonders

who Juliet and Romeo's mutual friends are on page six, while another replies, "Two mutual friends might be Friar Laurence, Mercutio, or Prince of Verona" (Collier 2013). On page fifteen, Juliet and Paris' wedding announcement, the two comments are "It's all in the details! Even the ad is related to the period!" and "Love that Juliet is a 'maybe' to this event" (Clarke 2013; Lynn 2013). On Juliet's Farewell speech page, a commentor posts, "lol I love how she drank the poison before posting the message. ;p This is such a good idea, SF, and provides some amusement over the Valentine week" (Rothe 2013). Some include quotations or versions of quotations from the play, seemingly out of a spirit of participation. Others comment on the play itself, typically professing how much they love it, as the user above did.

In a small number of comments, people responded by correcting the earlier users. On Romeo's page a commenter wrote, "Wonder if he and Juliet are FB friends yet..." which elicited a reply, "probably not -- after all the event does not only say FIRST time in love... Which was many times before Juliette [sic] I bet" (Lobo 2013; Whittier 2013). More explicitly on Tybalt's memorial page, the first comment notes

> Romeo and Juliet must hold the record for the most deaths for one play! I remembering seeing it in Stratford years ago and at the end there were "dead" bodies littered across the stage and that didn't even count those who were killed earlier in the play. I remember one of the actors gingerly stepping across the stage so he did not step on any of the "dead" actors. (Nelson 2013)

The impetus here seems to be an offhand comment based on a fond memory of a past production. Three comments followed:

> Have you compared R&J to Hamlet? (Duvall 2013)

> Titus Andronicus? (Zile 2013)

> pretty sure Titus Andronicus takes the cake on total deaths. -- 14 killings, 9 of them on stage, 6 severed members, 1 rape (or 2 or 3, depending on how you count), 1 live burial, 1 case of insanity and 1 of cannibalism--an average of 5.2 atrocities per act, or one for every 97 lines (Marshall 2013)

Instead of reading the first comment as a casual statement, the replies take it as an inaccuracy and set out to correct it. The third post (which apparantly has been deleted) goes so far as to enumerate the deaths in *Titus Andronicus*. Online posts such as this that correct a previous post's

information are familiar aspects of Facebook posts or online discussions. Though on the surface they are presented as constructive contributions that correct errors, they also demonstrate the poster's superior knowledge of a topic. Within specific online communities, such as fan groups, these posts also serve a gatekeeping function, allowing users to present their qualifications and to cast suspicion on those who lack knowledge or experiences (Hellekson 2010, 58-70; Fiske 1992, 36; Baym 2000; Jenkins 1992, 130; Johnson 2007)

Most intriguing are the comments from users who treat the pages as if they were actual Facebook pages and that their comments might be seen by Romeo or Juliet. The first appear on page three, urging Benvolio to support Romeo: "You go Ben, get him out of that funk," and "Bro-volio!" (Dunphy 2013; Dranski 2013). Later comments engendered a brief exchange between visitors. "I gotta be real I highly doubt two people in a secret marriage would be making facebook statuses about it..." (Lansky 2013). To this, another replies "perhaps they've blocked their families so they can't see their statuses or perhaps some of their family members are behind the times and aren't on facebook..." and "if you can suspend your disbelief long enough to accept that two kids would secretly get married 24 hours after meeting and then kill themselves a few days later, you should be able to accept that they would talk about it on Facebook" (Dent-Couturier 10`3; Codling 2013). A third commenter offered "I am not surprised, seeing what people do share on Facebook" (LaCombe 2013). On Juliet's memorial page, more in the spirit of the comments on Benvolio, there is "Now don't go doing anything crazy, Romeo. She's only faking!" (McNabbulous 2013).

That these users are behaving as if the pages are real and are updated by Romeo and Juliet suggests two vectors of engagement. First is an acknowledgement of the medium by complimenting the creator on the quality and veracity of the content. The second treats the pages as if they are real and enable users to live out the fantasy of engaging with Shakespeare's characters just as they engage with their own family and friends. In other words, the Facebook project has created a participative space for audiences to behave as if they were characters contributing to the action of the play (Jenkins 2006, esp. 225-82; Lamerichs 2014).

Most of the comments demonstrated a more-than-passing knowledge of Romeo and Juliet and the Festival. These users are one of two groups the social summary targeted. Rutledge described them as "people who love us and everything we do" and "superfans...well-acquainted with the play" (Rutledge 2013). They are also people who had already bought their tickets by February or would buy them regardless of the promotion. The hope was that their activity would help the social summary reach the primary target audience, those who are not familiar with the Festival and might not be interested in attending a Shakespeare play. According to Rutledge, the promotion was

successful with both groups. More tickets were sold during the two weeks the social summary was rolled out than during any other Facebook promotion the Festival had undertaken. Although she did not give specific numbers, she said that many of the tickets were sold to people who had not visited the Festival before (Rutledge 2013).

The Facebook social summary of *Romeo and Juliet* was successful because it used social media to reach and sell tickets to people who would not ordinarily have considered travelling to the Festival to attend the play. The elicitation of comments and the opportunities for users to enter the fictional world of the play create a more productive audience experience than do *Stratford Festival Behind the Scenes* or the games. The experience is reciprocal because the Festival has gained some of the apparent credibility bestowed on Facebook by younger users, and Facebook and its users have gained some of the high cultural legitimacy possessed by Shakespeare (Lanier 2010, 104, 122-13). The practice of individuals placing themselves into the world of Shakespeare's plays or his biography is visible since at least the eighteenth century. It is a participative, productive engagement that has become more sophisticated and widespread. The more modern manifestation, wherein writers demonstrate their knowledge of and appreciation for a writer or work, is fan fiction. Though it may not have been its intention, the Festival's "Social Summary" created a type of fan fiction event.

Stratford and Participative Fandom

Thousands of examples of fan fiction based on the plays and the playwright's life are available online and have emerged as the subject of academic study (Fazel and Geddes 2015; Finn and McCall 2016; Teague 2011). The difference between typical fan fiction and Shakespeare fan fiction is the role it plays in overall fandom. Fans of Sherlock Holmes have formed clubs, gathered in conventions, and even influenced the plots of television shows. Fans of Shakespeare behave differently. Outside of a small (though growing) number of academic works, the word "fan" rarely describes those fascinated with Shakespeare. Terms such as "audience," "theater-goer," "aficionado," "professor," or "student" are typically used because, as Roberta Pearson points out, "Adherents of high culture don't have nicknames" (2007, 98). The RSC and the Stratford Festival are content to merchandise Shakespeare and his plays to audiences, profiting from t-shirts, posters, badges and other Shakespeare-related objects as the BBC does with *Doctor Who*. But as purveyors of high culture entertainment, theater companies operate under a set of self-imposed limits.

John Fiske characterizes these limits as the institutionalisation of official culture and the productivity of fans: "Fandom is typically associated with cultural forms that the dominant value system denigrates....It is thus associated with cultural tastes of subordinated formations

of the people" (1992, 30). Developing his argument via Pierre Bourdieu, Fiske divides culture into "official culture," which he says is "socially and institutionally legitimated" and "popular culture which receives no social legitimation or institutional support" (1992, 31). Despite a long tradition of amateur performance, Shakespeare, by and large, belongs to official culture, especially in terms of professional performance and academic study. Institutions such as the RSC, the Stratford Festival, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival position themselves as purveyors of official culture Shakespeare. However affective the plays may be, they are an "engagement of the intellect" (Pearson 2007, 107). Further, their study and performance have, for at least the past century, largely been dominated by higher education and professional performance (Levine 1988, 198; Lanier 2002, 3-4; Burt 1998, 1-28). Attending Shakespeare plays, especially as cultural tourists, is associated with what Fiske would call "certain cultural tastes and competences" that themselves lead to "enhanced social prestige" (Fiske 1992, 31).

Participation and productivity are fans' verbal and material engagement with the object of their fandom. They express their interest not just by consuming plays, books or films, but by becoming part of them, creating new texts (fan fiction), creating and contributing to online communities, creating their own terminology, attending conventions of other fans, and costuming themselves as the objects of their fandom (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, 149; Duchesne 2010, 21-27; Jenkins 1992; Lamerichs 2014). Popular culture encourages this behavior. Musicians will solicit videos based on their songs from fans. Entrepreneurs create t-shirts and other clothing based on characters and groups in films and television shows. Writers of fan fiction exchange and critique each other's work. Rarely is this productivity curtailed by elite culture, as it can be profitable to the creators of the original films or characters.

The Stratford Festival's social and digital media campaign from 2012-2013 expanded its construction of its audience from (older) cultural tourists to include a (younger) digitally literate Shakespeare fan comfortable with the immediacy provided by a computer screen. Fiske's model of productive fandom accounts for some aspects of this shift and audience productivity, such as Yee's, but it suggests fandom as subversive or oppositional to official cultural institutions, such as the Festival itself. The Shakespeare fan that seems to have been cultivated by the Festival, while productive, can hardly be construed as dissident. While fans may not seek Kennedy's "transcendence of high art" as tourists, they still legitimise the importance of Shakespeare and affirm the value of the Festival as a repository and source for Shakespeare (Kennedy 1998).

The Shakespeare fandom created by the Festival does not quite seem to have delivered on the goal of increasing attendance. It confirms the Festival's value and creates an active and engaged community (Jenkins 2006; 2008; Baym 2000). But the community is largely virtual, participating

via social media and at a distance. The Festival seems to have activated an engaged, young fandom but in a virtual destination, falling short of its true goal: to bring that fandom to Stratford — a realization that might well have caused the cancellation of the online games.

The Festival has nevertheless embraced its commitment to audience-as-fan at least in its advertising. In 2015, its promotional email for *Hamlet* claimed: "This is a production no Shakespeare fan can afford to miss!" Could the next step be a Shakespeare cosplay event, wherein the Festival invites patrons to Stratford to dress as their favorite characters, gather and share their Shakespeare fandom? Or perhaps even perform scenes from Shakespeare fanfic? This would be very different from the cultural tourists who first travelled to Stratford in 1953 to see Shakespeare performed under an enormous circus tent but it would also establish the Festival's institutional value in a world where institutional distinctions continue to blur.

Notes

1. This article is dedicated to D.K. Peterson, without whose suggestions, help, and support this project (and many others) would never have been possible.
2. As of the 2013 season, the app was no longer available.
3. This app is no longer available. quotations are taken from the iPad edition, version 1.
4. The bulleted list is quoted from Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 2012. This discussion develops material initially presented in a review of the app published in *Borrowers and Lenders* 11.2; some of that material is reproduced here, with permission of the editors, but readers interested in more details about the app should see Aune, 2018. The review also features screenshots not reproduced in the current discussion.
5. This playlist was established in 2011 but has not been updated since 2013.
6. For a full account of this game and its development, see Roberts-Smith, DeSouza-Coelho, and Malone 2016).
7. A brief mention of the game was made by the Festival on its online bulletin, *SceneNotes* in April 2013, and by the University of Waterloo on its press release page on 15 April 2013.
8. The numbers cited in this paragraph are current as of August, 2019
9. Quotations taken from the initial post and related pages can be found in the sequence beginning at Stratford Festival, 2013b.
10. The sequence of Facebook posts discussed here can be accessed from the link (https://www.facebook.com/StratfordFestival/photos/a.10151093486062168/10151093486137168/) in the initial reference above. Subsequent posts do not have unique resource identifiers.

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