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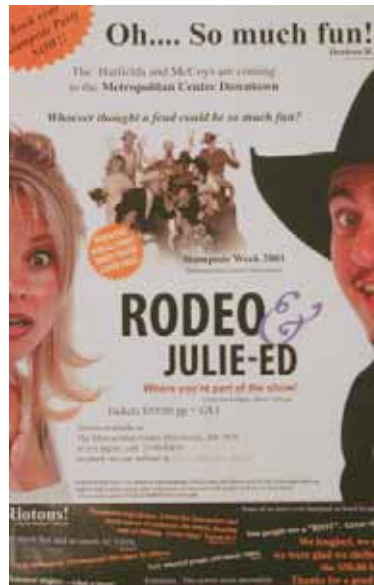
On Shakespearean Adaptation and Being Canadian

Adaptation and the Shakespeare Effect

SHAKESPEARE IS ARGUABLY one of the great iconic artists of all time in any field, any historical moment, and any culture—a beloved “universal” figure on par with the authors of the Popol Vuh, the enigmatic scripture of post-classic Mayan civilization; with the Kemetic artists of ancient Egypt who adorned the pyramids with hieroglyphs that give eloquent testimony to the deep learning of that culture; with the Yoruba and other African rhythmatisms whose sense of metrics and spirituality gave birth millennia later to jazz; and with a small elite of great Western artists like Michelangelo, da Vinci, Dante, Bach, Beethoven, James Joyce, Louis Armstrong, among others.

But to say as much is to beg all sorts of questions. What does it mean to have achieved this unique place in global culture? Who decides on this ranking and why are other artists (especially women) left off the list? What are the uses to which this cultural influence is put? What does it mean to have “universal” appeal? What makes any of this meaningful to contemporary culture, so shaped by technology, industrialization, and corporatism—all of which emerged as forms of social organization during Shakespeare’s own time?

Is it fair any longer to think of Shakespeare simply as the flesh-and-blood creator of *Hamlet* or *Titus Andronicus*, when in fact his cultural influ-



LEFT Production poster for *Rodeo and Julie-Ed* directed by Peter Skagen (Metropolitan Centre Downtown, Calgary, 1999)

RIGHT Production poster for *Danespotting* directed by Matthew MacFadzean and Amy Price-Francis (The Infinite Space, Montreal, 1997)

ence is diffused over so many areas that he has become something other than the writer of great plays, the creator of memorable characters? This other thing that Shakespeare has become, that makes him both what he *is* and *is not*, is the “Shakespeare effect.” This effect could not exist without the legacy of Shakespeare’s written, published, and performed works—works that have been given a life of their own by people who engage with them in ways that Shakespeare could never have foreseen. The Shakespeare effect is everywhere evident: from the ever-increasing volume of movies that adapt his works, through to his use in commercial advertising culture, his corporate influence through the many businesses associated with his name, and his general cultural presence that makes him a signifier for literary and artistic achievement.

In Canada, this diffusion is particularly evident, with hundreds of adaptations of Shakespeare’s works having been written since pre-Confederation, the creation of a major classical Shakespearean Festival in the early 1950s in Stratford, Ontario, and the interweaving of Shakespearean referents into all aspects of popular culture, from song (Rufus Wainwright) to television comedy (the Royal Canadian Air Farce) to intercultural film (Deepa Mehta). In Canada, if you don’t have *Shakespeare for Breakfast*, you can have him for dinner (as in Peter Skagen’s *Rodeo and Julie-Ed*, a dinner theatre adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*); you can go



Danespotting or catch Hamlet in an unguarded moment in *Denmark and Elsinore* (Debra Grant's R&B adaptation of *Hamlet*); or you can face off with the Bard in Chris Cocoluzzi's *Shakespeare's Comic Olympics* or in Ken Hudson's hockey-themed version of *Henry V*.

Shakespeare can be found as an affirmation of identity in French, Aboriginal, and Afro-Canadian cultures, as well as in a host of other multicultural and transcultural locations. The extraordinary theatrical venture 38, a single multi-authored event coordinated by Théâtre Urbi et Orbi and Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui over five nights, featured thirty-eight authors, each under the age of thirty-eight, who were commissioned to create adaptations of Shakespeare's thirty-eight plays. Aboriginal artists, such as Yves Sioui Durand and Yvette Nolan, repurpose Shakespeare to critique colonial injustice and heal the effects of that injustice (including tribal genocide). Djanet Sears's *Harlem Duet* is a reinterpretation of *Othello*, while Azra Francis's *A Caribbean Midsummer Night's Dream* is an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Allen Booth and Robin White's 1984 version of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hô Mão and Julieta: A Multi-cultural Romeo and Juliet* works in a wide assortment of aesthetic and political contexts. And these are just a smattering of hundreds of such variations, adaptations, and transgressions that place Shakespeare's plays in distinctively Canadian contexts.

LEFT Production poster for *Shakespeare's Comic Olympics* directed by Chris Cocoluzzi (Trinity College Playing Field, Toronto, 2004)

RIGHT Production poster for *A Caribbean Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Azra Francis (Joseph Workman Auditorium, Toronto, 1983)

The merging of Shakespeare's legacy with creative reinterpretation is primarily the work of adaptation, a mode of literary culture-making that repurposes existent material in new ways. This adaptive form of making is one with which Shakespeare was extremely familiar, his own plays rely extensively on source works that he assiduously chose for reinterpretation. I'm often asked to define what adaptation means. The short answer is "anything you can get away with in the name of another artist's influence." This definition often prompts anxiety. How can such a loose definition be functional? Shouldn't artistic creation have firmer rules in place? Shouldn't the theory around what an adaptation is be less elastic? My response is simple: adaptation in the name of another artist's influence cannot be predicted, cannot be predetermined, cannot be constrained.

Adaptation is creative energy unleashed across a full spectrum of artistic possibility: from the most orthodox and conventional, the most slavish to the "original," through to the most extreme and anarchic undoing in the name of artistic play and freedom.

So, if Shakespeare has come to hold a unique global cultural prominence, an iconic power encoded in the works he has left us and in the works his texts have engendered as adaptive inventions, what meaning is to be got from that code today? And especially so in the context of Canadian theatrical culture, which has invested so heavily in making Shakespeare central while simultaneously working so hard to find ways to shape-shift Shakespeare into the multiple and complex contexts that make Canada what it is.

Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP)

The Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition attempts to address these questions from a multitude of perspectives. Whether it be in the way in which contemporary theatre designers in Canada have sought to reflect Canada's changing multicultural realities in their interpretation of Shakespeare; the way in which the unique thrust stage design created by the Stratford Festival of Canada has globally influenced audiences' sense of how they interact with the actors on the stage; the way in which the amazingly varied responses to Shakespeare's work in a specific geo-cultural space (Canada) have taken his work as a place

DANIEL FISCHLIN

of inspiration, resistance, argument, and dialogue, and have made something anew of him; whether it is in the way virtually all students in English-speaking countries, Canada included, encounter Shakespeare as a core component of their education; or the way in which a small piece of painted wood has traversed continents and centuries all while remaining in one family's possession since the time of Shakespeare to arrive in Canada as potentially the most authentic image of the Bard—all of these show Shakespeare to be emphatically here and now in Canada, a cultural presence that cannot be denied, a cultural effect that continues, for better or worse, to have influence on the way in which various civic discourses in Canada are shaped.

Not to forget that Shakespeare's cultural influence is pervasive. He is the most inventive shaper and user of the English language ever—a language that has taken on global pertinence like no other language—the language of global commerce, science, and technology, and a kind of global lingua franca. Recall Shakespeare's roots in Elizabethan popular culture: he was emphatically an artist who flowed between the "Liberties"—the ungovernable suburban spaces of London where outdoor public theatres were located—and the court, where he curried favour like few others in spite of his Catholic religious sympathies. But Shakespeare is also present at the birth of corporate culture, as we perhaps *don't* know it.

Alongside the British East India Company, whose history of imperial trade and plunder extended over the centuries following its establishment by Royal Charter in 1600, the Globe Theatre, in which Shakespeare was a shareholder, was one of the first "corporations." The Globe Theatre was founded as a joint stock venture in 1599 and played its own role in staging forms of theatrical nationalism that justified and commented (sometimes critically) on historical genealogies related to British self-interest. Shakespeare has always been implicated in national cultures: from his own obsessive interest in writing history plays, through



The main page of the CASP website <www.canadianshakespeares.ca>.

to the global importance that his language has taken on, to the ways in which particular cultures have appropriated his works for the purpose of linking aesthetic excellence to nation.

The Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP) at the University of Guelph is the first research project of its kind anywhere in the world devoted to the systematic exploration and documentation of the ways in which Shakespeare has been adapted into (and out of) a national, multicultural theatrical practice. One of the defining features of Canada's cultural heritage is the extent to which it relies on a dialogue with traditional Shakespearean theatre mutated into multiple adaptations that stage what it means to be "Canadian." For better or worse, Canada's theatrical past is profoundly connected to Shakespeare, with productions, revisions, adaptations, and any number of spin-off representations a key feature of the Canadian cultural landscape. The *Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia* entry on Shakespeare states:

The most produced non-Canadian playwright, his works are at the foundation of theatre in this country [Canada] and are performed in all styles at virtually all the major theatres, in French and in English, across the nation. Like Molière, the works of Shakespeare appear as keystones throughout the history of theatre here [in Canada]. His were among the first works performed in the New World, they were the *raison d'être* of the foundation of the nation's largest theatre (Stratford Festival), and they are still being taught in schools, with interpretations which change from era to era.

As much as this Shakespearean presence is a function of Canada's colonial heritage with its dependency on immigrant cultures, it is also a function of how a new and emergent culture has sought to define itself in dialogue with—and frequently against—the Shakespearean tradition. CASP is an attempt to document the fascinating permutations this dialogue has taken with the understanding that Shakespeare is situated at a key nexus in a wide array of cultural activities and referents, called the Shakespeare effect.

Adaptation, though far from uniquely so, is a distinctively Canadian approach to theatrical production. In an article discussing adaptation

in Canadian theatre, playwright Michael Healey says that “as the third wave of Canadian playwrights emerges, the desire to tell our own stories continues, but alongside that is the recognition that we can successfully bring our own sensibilities to texts that already exist.”¹ This same article observes that while translation and adaptation in French Canadian theatre have been standard for years as a means of bringing international works to francophone audiences, English Canadian adaptations and translations are relatively new. In each case, however, these adaptive modes work to refigure the “original” work through the mediation of specific cultural influences and contexts.

Canadian scholarship, too, has played a crucial role in providing the necessary social, historical, economic, religious, and archival contexts for understanding the theatrical work Shakespeare produced. The Records of Early English Drama project housed at the University of Toronto, for instance, “provide proof that a man like Shakespeare—without a university education, untrained in the classical theatre tradition of the time, unacquainted with the manners of aristocracy—actually could have written the plays that are now universally regarded as the greatest in drama and literature.”²

CASP, then, was conceived as an attempt to produce an archive of lost or forgotten theatrical materials and practices important both to Canada’s theatrical and literary histories, but also to Canada’s emergent sense of itself as a nation as mediated by these same materials and practices. To that end, we have collected information on close to five hundred plays in which some form of Shakespearean adaptation is at work, as well as many more cultural referents that are to be found in mass media, film, television, pop music, visual culture, and so forth. These plays and artifacts span over three centuries in chronology and document a vast range of local, regional, national, transnational, and multicultural theatrical realities that form a significant part of Canada’s cultural heritage. The sheer quantity of theatrical activity occurring in the genre of Shakespearean adaptation over an extended historical period marks a significant economic, artistic, cultural, and social investment in doing “something” to/with Shakespeare.

I would note that this wide-ranging activity is over and above the theatrical work in which more conventional stagings and productions of Shakespeare occur—themselves always potential adaptations in their own right. Moreover, these adaptations, if anything, reinforce the cru-



Television and film adaptations featuring prominent Canadian Shakespeareans.

Screen stills from L to R: William Shatner in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991); Walter Pidgeon (far right) in *Forbidden Planet* (1956); two of William Shatner in *Free Enterprise* (1998); two of Paul Gross in *Slings & Arrows* (2003–2006); Colm Feore in *Slings & Arrows* (2003–2006); Christopher Plummer in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991)

cial linkage between works of the imagination and the political and social contexts out of which they emerge. Djanet Sears’s *Harlem Duet*, an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* in the form of a tragic, rhapsodic blues prequel, is an example of a critically aware theatre project that moved from the margins of “professional” theatre to the very centre of it at the Stratford Festival. That Sears led the first production by a Black playwright and an all-Black cast in Stratford’s fifty-four-year history with an adaptation of Shakespeare is an example of Shakespeare’s cultural capital in action. That *Harlem Duet* was staged in Stratford’s Studio Theatre highlights the hierarchy that remains firmly in place even when new Canadian work that reflects issues of cultural identity makes it to mainstream theatre venues. Adaptations challenge orthodoxies of interpretation, but they also ask us to reconsider the material realities of where and how theatre is made and who gets to make it. The extent to which Shakespeare’s capital is used to diversify, however minimally, what audiences see on Canadian main stages is worth noting as an example of the broader cultural effects associated with Shakespearean adaptation.

Both Shakespeare’s use of a wide variety of source texts and adaptive techniques in his theatrical writing and the recent explosion of Shakespearean adaptation studies provide another important context for understanding the impetus behind CASP. The diversity of Shakespearean adaptation in Canada is staggering: from Aboriginal and Afro-Canadian theatre through to colonial, postcolonial, fringe, multicultural, minority, popular culture, gay, lesbian, Queer, and youth theatre. The CASP digital archive includes adaptations with a range of thematic predilections: from cowboy Shakespeare to vampire Shakespeare to club (rave and DJ) Shakespeare to hockey Shakespeare to TheatreSports Shakespeare (TheatreSports being a uniquely Canadian theatrical invention) to Shakespeare and the October



Crisis of 1970 to all-female, “chickspeare” versions of *Julius Caesar* (Vinetta Strombergs, 1986) and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Kate Lynch, 2001), and all-Black versions of *Hamlet* and *Othello*.

If it is Canadian musicians who have a Shakespearean connection, think of, among others: the Arrogant Worms, the Barenaked Ladies, Humphrey and the Dumptrucks, Loreena McKennit, Diane Nalini, and the Williams. Even Oscar Peterson made a seminal trio recording on the Stratford stage in 1956. If it is Canadian television with a Shakespearean predilection, think of the brilliant series *Slings & Arrows*, of Wayne and Shuster’s Shakespearean sketches including the still hilarious “Shakespearean Baseball Game” first performed in 1958, or of any number of sketches by the Royal Canadian Air Farce.

If it is Canadians doing Shakespeare on film, think of work by the National Film Board of Canada, including the 1999 film *Shylock* by Pierre Lasry and the 1954 Morton Parker film *The Stratford Adventure*. Consider the McKenzie brothers’ film starring Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas, *Strange Brew*, a canny comedic version of *Hamlet* with toques and stubbies. Or think of William Shatner and Christopher Plummer, both Stratfordian/Shakespearean actors who appeared in various versions of *Star Trek*. At the entrance to the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition, brief clips of these examples and more are shown in a video montage created by CASP to document the amazing array of cultural production related to Shakespeare in Canada. The question remains how these varied cultural productions question and destabilize what Shakespeare is and how he circulates in Canadian pop culture.

And if it is Shakespeare in Canadian art you want, look no further than Guelph-born Rolph Scarlett’s modernist set designs; Joseph Légaré’s painting of what has traditionally been interpreted to be the great English Shakespearean actor Edmund Kean (given the name



Joseph Légaré, *Landscape with Orator Addressing the Indians* (formerly titled *Edmund Kean Reciting Before the Hurons*), circa 1842-1843 (oil on canvas)

Alanienouidet by the Wendat) reciting before the Hurons (Wyandot/Wendat); Cornelius Krieghoff's painting *The Shakspeare Club, Montreal, 1847*; Lawrence Hyde's dramatic woodcuts of scenes from Shakespeare; Tony Scherman's haunting encaustic evocations inspired by *Macbeth*; John Graham's beautifully rendered artist's book *Visions from The Tempest*; or David Garneau's version of Louis Riel transformed by an off-portrait viewer into Caliban, the figure of the indigene in *The Tempest*.

In response to this diversity, of which the examples above are merely the tip of the proverbial iceberg, we have designed both our website and our contribution to the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition to have multiple uses for a range of audiences—from students and teachers looking for access to classroom materials through to theatre-goers and practitioners looking for production details and other sorts of information. We have collected materials with inclusiveness as a key operating principle. Thus, no rigid definitions are used in relation to key concepts like *adaptation*, *Canadian*, and *Shakespearean*. Indeed, many of our archival findings challenge such rigid definitions and open the door to productive interpretive debates in relation to how these three key terms intersect. If anything, the incredible variety of adaptive shapes spun out in the name of the Shakespeare effect tell us that monolithic notions of “what” Shakespeare is or “what” it means to



be Canadian simply aren't tenable when examined through the looking glass of diverse adaptive practices in Canada.

Cornelius Krieghoff,
The Shakspeare Club, Montreal,
1847 (oil on canvas)

Visions of Shakespeare / Re-visions of Canada

CASP's research offers windows through which to view the critical and creative work of a diverse range of Canadian communities through the prism of Shakespeare. To that end, we have organized our portion of the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition to include a small sampling of the kinds of artifacts we have been able to gather through our research.

As you stroll the gallery space you will encounter a number of areas with distinctive themes. The first section, "Posters, Programs, and Placemats," gives the viewer a chance to see a range of the kinds of productions we have documented. Think of the effort that went into their making: from Matthew MacFadzean's post-punk, rave aesthetic, to Ben Taylor and Michelle Smith's "hip-hopera" version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to Toronto director Richard Rose's *Hysterica*, a collective work that rewrites the gender dynamics of *King Lear*, with Lear figured as a modern-day Greek matriarch and immigrant to Canada. Rose's adaptation teaches an important lesson: contemporary Canadian identity

must address diversity, and Shakespeare's oeuvre is a creative locus that offers a way of seeing and experiencing identity as a narrative that we must continue to tell ourselves in order to understand who we are.

The second section in the CASP installation is devoted to Shakespeare in pre- and early Confederation Canada. Not many people know this, but Shakespeare had a presence in Canada before Canada the modern nation-state was formed. You will find a number of fascinating artifacts related to Canada's colonial past, including an early Canadian text called *Ottawah, the Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland* (1848), a romantic novel that uses the structure of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to tell the story of the genocide of the Beothuk. The Beothuk (meaning "people") were the indigenous inhabitants of Newfoundland at the time of first contact with Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a civilization made extinct in 1829, some twenty years before *Ottawah* was published. That Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is made to service the retelling of this tragedy tells us that nineteenth-century Canadians understood, at least partially, how Shakespeare's work related to their own colonialist contexts.

How Canada's early identity formation was profoundly linked to Aboriginal cultures through failed moments of encounter are especially evident in the story of nineteenth-century writer and politician Nicholas Flood Davin. Davin is a key background figure to the short video *What Means This Shouting?*, co-produced by Marion Gruner and Sorouja Moll for CASP. The video documents some of the points of contact among Shakespeare, Canadian colonial culture, and Aboriginal cultures. Davin wrote an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, called *The Fair Grit, or the Advantages of Coalition, A Farce*, published in 1876. The play spoofs Canadian politics and concludes that the Grits and the Tories are essentially cut from the same political cloth—a canny observation from the nineteenth century that haunts us well into the twenty-first. At the behest of Sir John A. Macdonald, Davin wrote the *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* (1879), also referred to as the *Davin Report*, a document which formed the racist basis for the residential school system that caused and continues to produce such enormous suffering to Aboriginal communities throughout the country. The connection drawn between Davin's work as an adaptor of Shakespeare and as the author of this odious document is the same connection that links Shakespearean referents to nationalist discourses of various kinds in Canada.



The CASP installation also includes rare political cartoons by John Wilson Bengough, who used Shakespearean references to satirize late nineteenth-century political events in Canada. Take a look at these and think of our own times and how prescient some of Bengough’s insights are. Ask yourself why Bengough thought Shakespeare such a useful medium for transmitting this sort of satire, especially at this point in Canada’s colonial history? Was Shakespeare a kind of shared cultural icon (even then) through which this sort of subversive satire could easily reach its target audience? What compelled Canadians to implicate Shakespeare in their own work at this crucial moment in Canadian history?

Shakespeare’s colonial, canonical associations are no doubt problematic and part of a long history of how Shakespeare has been deployed in Canada. Adaptors’ refusal to ignore the colonial relationship that Shakespeare can invoke makes their adaptations rare potential sites of cultural and political criticism in popular discourse. In a section of the exhibition called “This Island’s Mine,” CASP shows some of the important places where Shakespearean adaptation occurs in various colonial, post-colonial, neo-colonial, and anti-colonial projects.

Lewis Baumander’s 1987 adaptation of *The Tempest* is one example. They play was consciously set at the time of colonization off the coast of British Columbia on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Without altering Shakespeare’s words, Baumander presents a New World interpretation

Sorouja Moll, *Messaging Shakespeare*, 2006 (detail)

The artist explains, “This is one panel of a triptych that presents critical research on the messaging of Shakespeare in late nineteenth-century Canadian media. The triptych explores the intertextual relationships between Nicholas Flood Davin, John A. Macdonald, and Louis Riel and questions how Shakespeare (in Canada) is sampled as imperial rhetoric enabling political agendas.”



William Chesney, set model for *The Tempest* directed by Lewis Baumander (Earl Bales Park, Toronto, 1987)

of the conflict that results when a peaceful, environmentally integrated, indigenous culture confronts a threatening settler presence. Baumander shows it is possible to adapt a play without even changing its text. Designer William Chesney's set maquette for Baumander's adaptation is an evocative rendering of this encounter—note how the wrecked ship's sails form a Christian cross that dominates the forest scene. As Chesney's aesthetic interpretation shows, design decisions can produce significant shifts in meaning. This crucial form of adaptation is explored more thoroughly in the installation devoted to Canadian design in Shakespearean theatre curated by Pat Flood.

Another focus of CASP's research and on-line publication details the birthing of Canadian bourgeois culture; that is, Shakespeare's relations to theatre in early twentieth-century Canada. The artifacts in the L. W. Conolly Theatre Archives gallery document the work of Josephine Barrington and the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression, and demonstrate the enculturation of elite Canadian youth using Shakespeare. Barrington was a prolific director of Shakespeare who used child actors to stage complete productions of the Bard's work in the 1930s. Tracing key figures from these productions and associations—Dora Mavor Moore being the most obvious example—this part of the exhibition captures in part the efforts to establish a professional theatre

in Canada. As evidenced in the various Shakespeare Societies and Clubs that were part of this trend, much of this process used Shakespeare as a legitimizing referent on the path towards creating the Stratford Festival, the National Theatre School, the National Arts Centre, and others.

Let us not forget that the Family Compact played a key role in shaping Canadian values via the its idealization of British institutions and strong ties to the British Empire, through governmental, juridical, and cultural systems. The Family Compact was a small group of public servants and businessmen, what some have termed a “local aristocracy,” who dominated the decision-making bodies of Upper Canada around 1830. Based mainly in what was then called York (Toronto), members of the Family Compact were from Canadian high society and no doubt played a major role in shaping the early theatrical and literary culture of Canada.

Reading the list of patrons and directors from the very first program published by the Stratford Festival (for its opening night version of *Richard III* starring Alec Guinness and Irene Worth), one is struck by key names from that aristocracy: Lady Eaton, wife of department store heir and president Sir John Craig Eaton; Floyd S. Chalmers, the former president of the Canadian Club, president of publishing giant Maclean-Hunter from 1952–1964, and president and founder of the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation; Edward Johnson, the great Canadian tenor born in Guelph in 1878 and after whom a school in Guelph is still named; Hugh Labatt, Esq., the grandson of the founder of beer baron John K. Labatt (in 1950, Hugh and his brother introduced Canada to the beer, Labatt 50); Sir Ernest MacMillan; and the Right Honourable Arthur Meighen—all of these names under the patronage of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, then Governor-General of Canada. The social, class, and cultural affiliations of this sort of network and its relationship to Shakespearean culture in Canada is a fascinating aspect of Canadian theatre history to which this portion of the exhibition points.

The artifacts in the children and youth cluster of the CASP exhibition use Shakespeare in a very different way from those in the pre- and early Confederation Canada cluster. Doreen D’earth deploys the dark images and themes of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* to engage her students in critical and creative literacy projects. Guelph resident Nick Craine’s

beautifully rendered chiaroscuro biography of Shakespeare, *Parchment of Light*, here given public display for the first time, aims not to elevate or support Shakespeare's revered cultural status, but rather to examine



Anthony Newman (age 7),
Witch Puppet (2004)

the development and formation of a creative genius who just happens to be Shakespeare. Craine's work, using the graphic novel medium so popular with youth, asks us to see beyond the texts associated with Shakespeare and to imagine what moved Shakespeare to write—or indeed, what motivates anyone to create. Arline Smith's miniature theatre, on view in the Possible Worlds installation, depicts the "Pyramus and Thisbe" scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, its consummate construction as important as its adaptation of Shakespearean performance. The appeal to youth audiences is no surprise, especially given Smith's use of high-end technologies like fibre optic lighting and audio narration to convey the sense of a scene within a scene within a scene. What happens to the viewer who is seduced by the call of the miniature theatre as the scene of encounter on the Shakespearean stage re-

plays? The coming together of creators and audience foments its own form of magic, its own technology of entrancement.

Finally, the CASP exhibition consciously tries to show how multiple narratives associated with Shakespeare are part of the weave of Canadian culture—and it does so in the shadow of the enigmatic Sanders portrait. The collocation of the two galleries begs a number of questions. As Canadians, what benefits do we accrue from the ownership and display of the Sanders portrait? How does this mesh with our values of and relationship to Shakespeare as Canadians? We adapt, we question, and we criticize—the buzz around this image and its "authenticity" should not distract us from this critical path.

Canada's questioning of Shakespeare and of his (British) cultural authority date back to the earliest days of the Stratford Festival. The festival was founded on the celebrity of director Tyrone Guthrie and actors Alec Guinness and Irene Worth, each recognized at the time as authorities (read British) on classical theatre. The festival quickly moved away from this model with the appointment of Québécois director Jean Gascon (1920–1988) as the festival's first Canadian Artistic Director. (Let's not for-

get that Gascon, who had co-founded the Théâtre du Nouveau-Monde with Jean-Louis Roux, Georges Groulx, Guy Hoffmann, and Robert Gadouas in 1951, died in Stratford.) Stratford has since developed a Canadian tradition of theatre training with a method and style that is recognized around the world. While no one would argue that Stratford is home to new Canadian theatre, it no longer attempts to reproduce directly a British tradition.

Much of the Canadian discourse around the Sanders portrait's authenticity relates back to the British-owned Chandos portrait as the benchmark—more valuable discussions would be centred on what the Sanders portrait image means to Canadian culture. To whom does Shakespeare belong? How do the narratives that are such an important part of the Sanders portrait's history reflect on what it means to be Canadian in relationship to various other forms of the identity quest staged via "our" relationship to Shakespeare?

Shakespeare may, indeed, be for all time. But as the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition shows, he is also very much here in Canada in the present moment, shape-shifting us perhaps as much as we shape-shift him.



Nick Craine, *The Sanders Portrait* (2006)

ENDNOTES

- 1 J. Kelly Nestruck, "The motto of Canada's dramatists: adapt or die," *Gazette* (Montreal), July 23, 2005.
- 2 Monika Stephenson. "Canadian scholarship gives the Bard a boost," *Globe and Mail*, May 1, 2004.

Daniel Fischlin is professor and research chair at the University of Guelph and founder and director of the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project. He is also co-curator of the Shakespeare—Made in Canada exhibition.