

SHAKESPEARE QUARTERLY

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Cover illustration: James Edmondson's 1976 production of *Macbeth* at the outdoor Elizabethan Stagehouse of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Photograph by Hank Krandler.

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Shakespeare in the Theatre, Then and Now

From the Editor

IN 1976 WAS A GOOD YEAR for Shakespeare in the theatre—and the performance reviews in this issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* afford ample testimony that it was—it was also, unfortunately, a year tinged with sorrow over the passing of the two Shakespearean greats.

On April 6, Ben Idon Payne died at the age of 94. A native of England, Dr. Payne enjoyed a remarkable career spanning three-quarters of a century as an actor, a director, and a teacher in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. His influence was both wide and deep, and it was directly felt in settings as varied as Chicago's Goodman Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon's Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, San Diego's National Shakespeare Festival, and Ashland's Oregon Shakespeare Festival, as well as in such educational institutions as the Carnegie Institute of Technology, the University of Iowa, the University of Missouri, the University of Alberta, and the University of Texas. We are all the richer for Ben Idon Payne's legacy, and it is gratifying to note that his autobiography, *A Life in a Wooden O: Memoirs of the Theatre*, will be published this spring by the Yale University Press.

Shakespearians around the world were also saddened to learn of the death of Robert Speaight on November 4. Mr. Speaight had just completed the proof for his last book on Shakespeare, *The Man and His Achievement*, which has recently been published by Stern and Day and was making preparations for a trip to Washington to speak about "Shakespeare in Performance" at a Folger Institute symposium on INTERPRETING SHAKESPEARE IN THE THEATRE, IN THE STUDY, IN THE CLASSROOM.

At the opening of the symposium on November 12, the following statement was read:

All who knew Robert Speaight will regret the passing of a dear friend—uniquely gifted actor, director, scholar, and critic; a man of un-

flagging gentility and generosity. Throughout his 72 years, Robert exemplified the highest standards in every endeavor in which he participated. As an actor, he played a number of major Shakespearean roles, including several distinguished performances at the Old Vic and at the Mercury; he also won acclaim in other roles of course, among them Becket in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. As a producer and director, Robert traveled widely, sharing his talents with theatre professionals and also audiences not only in his native England, but also in Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Australia, France, Egypt, and the United States. As an actor, Robert gave us dozens of books, articles, and reviews—including studies of *William Poel* (1934), of *Nature in Shakespearean Tragedy* (1935), and of *Shakespeare on the Stage* (1973). Readers of *Shakespeare Quarterly* are indebted to him for the intelligence, sensitivity, and wit that characterized his annual reviews of the Shakespearean seasons in Stratford-upon-Avon and London.

In Robert Speaight was epitomized that marriage of true minds—performer, scholar-critic, and teacher—that this conference was convened to examine and, where appropriate, to celebrate. As a token of the esteem in which we will ever hold him, therefore, we dedicate these proceedings to his memory.

In like manner, it seems only fitting to dedicate this issue of the *Quarterly* to the man whose impression is stamped so firmly upon it, borrowing a valediction from John Trewin's concluding remark in the conversation that commences the issue: "Thank you, Robert. Splendid."

Now for a few words about the issue itself. Readers will notice, first of all, that there have been some changes in appearance. In an effort to accommodate as much material as possible, including more plentiful illustrations than in the past, we have printed the text in smaller type than has become usual of the *Quarterly*. We have also adopted a new double-column format for the theatre

reviews, trusting that the savings in space and the gains in flexibility will more than compensate for any disadvantages occasioned by the alteration. And, finally, we have used coated paper to highlight the brilliant colors of the photograph selected to adorn the cover.

More substantive alterations will become apparent as readers begin examining the contents of the issue. First will be observed, for instance, that the section preceding the theatre reviews is assembled in such a way as to offer several retrospective assessments of Shakespeare in performance; critics Robert Speaight and John Trewin reflect on more than half a century of Shakespearean production in England; actor Morris Carnovsky talks about his years of playing King Lear at Stratford, Connecticut; composer John Duffy describes the music he created for John Houseman's "metastable" *Macbeth* in 1967; scholar G. Harold Metz summarizes the performance history of *Titus Andronicus*; and educator Homer Swander profiles the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, past and present.

The theatre reviews section is organized in such a way as to offer both comprehensive news and selectivity. There in the past have so many individual theatres, companies, and productions of Shakespeare been surveyed in *Shakespearean Journal*. The compilation is by no means exhaustive, of course, but it is broad enough in scope to provide an unusually vivid impression of the great variety of Shakespearean performances offered annually in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, not to mention the rest of the world. Limited space does not permit reviews of every Shakespearean production; however, nor does it permit an equal amount of coverage for every production included in the compilation. Difficult choices have had to be made, and the consequences of those choices are to be seen in the varying lengths and emphases of the theatre reviews here presented.

It should not pass unnoticed that this year's theatre reviews contain three new features: (1) compact production records, listing significant data and principal personnel for almost every production mentioned; (2) information, where available, about 1977 plans for theatres and companies that normally produce at least one Shakespearean play annually; and (3) addresses to which reviewers may direct further inquiries about particular theatres and companies. These kinds of information have not always been easy for us to collect and double-check, and we apologize in advance for any inaccuracies that may have gone undetected.

In some instances the *Quarterly* was unable to assign reviewers to new productions worthy of being recorded. In most of these instances, usually through the prompt and courteous assistance of staff members at the theatres concerned, we were able to obtain copies of reviews that appeared elsewhere, normally in regional newspapers and magazines. To provide some account of those productions, we have quoted selections from what seemed to be the most reliable of the reviews obtained. The Editor assumes responsibility for any production review in this issue that does not contain a *Quarterly* correspondent's byline.

Concluding the issue are several book reviews, all of them dealing with new publications about one or more aspects of Shakespeare in performance. The book reviews are intended to round out and complement every Shakespearean production, and valuable collection of critical essays on Shakespeare in the theatre.

JOHN F. ANDREWS

Interview

Talking about Shakespearians

J. C. TREWIN AND ROBERT SPEAIGHT

ROBERT SPEAIGHT TELEPHONED ME enthusiastically one day last autumn. "I have to talk about old Shakespeare," he said. "Will you ask me the right questions?" Now, any one who knew Robert will realize that there was no need whatever to ask him questions, right or wrong. Shakespeare's name was enough.

It was natural for him to talk about the plays and their performance—like Sir Bedivere (in another context) "this way and that dividing the swift mind." He had been, and remained, a front-rank classical actor, bred in the high tradition. He wrote about Shakespeare with a delighted fluency, knowing precisely what he wanted to say and how to say it. A rare fusion of actor and scholar, with a ranging, omnivorous mind, few could hold an audience as he did. His lectures to the Royal Society of Literature were memorable, but Robert was just as happy when talking across the fire on a winter afternoon, recalling Poel and Bridges-Adams, discussing *Lear*—he had long hoped to play the King in England—and, as all actors do, he did it better than most, using naturally the voices of the people he spoke of, from the mannered fastidiousness of Ernest Milton to the moon-cannon boom of Robert Atkins. His favorite story was of Atkins, the imperious veteran of English Shakespearean directors: "When I asked him what I should do before playing Richard III," said Robert, "he replied with the single portentous monosyllable, 'Fish.'"

Robert's own voice was as fine as any in the English theatre. I said once that it had the sun-blessed gravity of a classical landscape. He was also the liveliest of companions, and he was as fine as any in the English theatre. I said once that it had the sun-blessed gravity of a classical landscape. He was also the liveliest of companions, and he was as fine as any in the English theatre. I said once that it had the sun-blessed gravity of a classical landscape. He was also the liveliest of companions, and he was as fine as any in the English theatre.

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finished (and he was anxious lest something might have been forgotten), he insisted on walking with me to the station, ten minutes away through Bloomsbury. He was full of plans: happy that he was going to Washington again, excited that he had received the proofs of his book on Shakespeare—to read the book is to hear his voice so clearly that it is almost frightening—and wondering what he could write about next: he had not to be in full production.

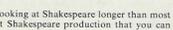
"Shakespeare again?" I suggested. "Well, should I?" he said wistfully. "So soon?" We lingered for a few minutes on the pavement in the autumn sun. "I'll see when I come back from the States," he said. "There are one or two things. . . ."

What they were I shall never know. But I am proud to have known a great Shakespearean and the dearest of men.

J. C. TREWIN



J. C. Trewin



Robert Speaight

Speaight. Well, John, we've been looking at Shakespeare longer than most people, I imagine. What was the first Shakespeare production that you can remember?

Trewin. It's a long time ago now, the spring of 1922. Ben Greet's production of *The Tempest*. He put it in Plymouth in a kind of annual three-weeks exercise that he used to do round the West Country theatres. I do remember it—very clearly. But after that it was a year before I saw anything else.

Speaight. I go back further than you. My first was Herbert Beerbohm Tree's *Henry VIII* at His Majesty's Theatre—it must have been in 1912 or 1913, shortly before the first war. It was a play that suited Tree's method of course—with its realistic reconstructions of Hampton Court and Westminster Abbey and the streets of London—and it was very well acted. Tree gave you the parents in Wolsey extremely well; I remember his first entrance, with a whole lot of chorboys under a canopy. Violet Vanbrugh was the Queen Katherine, and she was very well suited to the part, although my parents kept

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TALKING ABOUT SHAKESPEARIANS

on telling me that I ought to have seen Ellen Terry and Henry Irving. Henry Ainley was the Buckingham, a beautiful performance. And in that production I was the King. He was then married to Violet Vanbrugh and treated her very much as Henry VIII treated Anne Boleyn—except he didn't quite cut off her head. But, anyway, he was admirably cast as the King. Of course, at the same time I could have seen the revolutionary performances by Barker, at the Savoy, but I had no introduction to what they would have called avant-garde Shakespeare.

After Ben Greet, what did you progress to?

Trewin. Well, I just went on to another Ben Greet. This time he brought down Ernest Milton in *Hamlet*, and I must say that Milton still remains with me as the *Hamlet* of them all.

Speaight. And so he does to me, of course. In those early days at the Vic it was the finest that I'd ever seen. And I got rather near to it when I was playing Horatio to him in Egypt. As you remember, he was an actor who varied tremendously. I have seen his *Hamlet* at times when he would give you a look at it; but at its best it had a greater depth than any I've seen. Other people have felt the same—I know Alec Guinness has always said that it's the finest he remembers.

Trewin. Milton's mannerisms hadn't grown on him then, had they?

Speaight. They were threatening to, but he was always better when he was controlled by Robert Atkins, and that control, as I remember from personal experience, could be a fairly painful affair. Ernest was restive under it very often, but it was certainly good for him. Atkins also, and in that production truly Elizabethan *Hamlet* he'd ever handled—and by that I mean he meant that he had got away from *William Meyster* and all that.

There were other *Hamlets* that I also remember. Martin Harvey, for example. Did you ever see him?

Trewin. No, Ernest Milton was the first of importance, and other early ones were at Stratford. I saw George Hayes, a good imaginative actor, over and over again; he was a kind of recurring dream at Stratford.

Speaight. No names matter very much until you come to John Gielgud. I imagine you saw his *Hamlet* at the Vic?

Trewin. Yes, I saw all four of his *Hamlets*—over nearly fifteen years.

Speaight. Now there's been a good deal of discussion between Gielgud and other people as to which of his was the best. Have you any views on that?

Trewin. I thought the second was the best. He seemed then to have matured—without feeling his responsibilities too much, as I fancy he did in the early production at the Vic.

Speaight. I saw his first *Hamlet*, and the last one that he did during the war, at the Haymarket under George Rylands. Rylands was a professor from Cambridge, with a very fine mind on Shakespeare, and in that production he'd explained the play as well as ever I've heard it explained. And so did John. But, of course, you want mystery as well as explanation in *Hamlet*, and I think, today, I should see more characters than in a great part as a spring and spontaneity which it sometimes loses afterwards. But certainly Gielgud's *Vic Hamlet* was remarkable for a young man, and for many people it has

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become almost definite.

But what do you remember particularly of those years at Stratford? The *W. Bridges-Adams* year?

Trewin. I went originally because of the burning of the old theatre and the building of the new—the cinema seasons when Bridges-Adams had to work on that shallow stage up in Greenhill Street. I had a much opportunity then to get to London, so Stratford was my first genuine Shakespearean excitement. Ernest Milton kept. Going up from Plymouth and Cornwall to spend my holidays at Stratford, I saw the Bridges-Adams productions over and over

John Gielgud as Hamlet

Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Wolsey

Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Queen Katherine

again, and I still think of him, after all this time, as one of the most exciting of directors. He insisted on pace and rhythm; he cut little; his own sets were pictorial without being—shall I say?—aggressive; and he was very well civilized, refusing superfluous eccentricity, and for example, keeping *Jack Ado* (one of his and Stratford's favorite plays) rightly pictorial. You knew him very well, of course.

Speaight. I did know him pretty well, yes. I think he had really as good a mind on Shakespeare as any director I've seen at work. His productions would be considered very "hot" today, but then they were considered fairly advanced. He gave the text unbridled—Ben Greet used to claim I unbridled—

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Adams—and there was not much time for the making of fine points. It was all very straightforward and fast; but it was very effective.

And there was one actress that stands out in my memory: I mean Fabia Drake. It was very strange, you know, how she came to be chosen. Bridges-Adams was on the eve of an American tour, and he found himself at a loss for a leading lady. So he walked into the Garrick Club, where he met a well-known dramatist, and he said, "I'm looking for a leading lady." His friend said, "Well, why not try Fabia Drake?" Who's Fabia Drake? Has she ever done Shakespeare?" "No." However, he got hold of Fabia, gave her an audition, and engaged her on the spot. And then, as time was very short, he wrote her a forty-page letter, telling her how each of the parts, Beatrice, Portia, and the rest, should be played. It's a theatrical masterpiece that that letter went up in the Blitz.

Trewin: Yes, I was going to ask... certainly, if it had survived it would have been worth gold. She was such a charge after the tour's performances we'd had.

Speaight: Yes, they were rather routine. There were a lot of actors around who had been with Frank Benson, but the better Benson people had gone by then: Murray Carrington, Henry Ainley, Oscar Ashe—all had gone long before to the West End.

Trewin: I never saw Carrington in Shakespeare. Only in things like *White Cargo*.

Speaight: Oh, Murray Carrington was my first experience with Stratford. In 1920, I suppose, just after Bridges had taken over. He was as well-graced an actor as you could possibly have seen. I remember him as Richard II. His "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand"—I always think of that. And as Benedick too. Unfortunately, his career petered out, largely through his own fault.

But these were the great days of the Vic, too. Did you get there much during Harcourt Williams's time, and Tyrone Guthrie's?

Trewin: Yes, but I did miss two of the Williams years. The period, I'm afraid, when you were playing at the Vic.

Speaight: Yes, I was playing *Fuellen* and *Hamlet*, and a number of other parts as well.

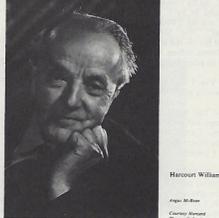
Trewin: What was Williams like as a director?

Speaight: He was entirely based on Harley Granville-Barker. He idolized Barker, and he did his best to put into effect the Prefaces, which were then just coming into print. Great excitement about them, *Romeo and Juliet* and the rest. Williams was in correspondence with Barker all the time. Unfortunately, the actors couldn't take the pace he demanded. I can't say I thought that he was a very creative director. You see, the first two years he had John Gielgud at his elbow, and then Ralph Richardson: two towers of strength. In a way, we rather took things into our own hands... I don't remember getting anything from Harcourt Williams except, perhaps, his conception of Malvolio as the putian, which he gave me. But what he did give me was a good workman, yes; but I wouldn't describe him as creative.

Trewin: How do you think these productions would stand up now? Bridges-Adams's at Stratford, Williams's from the Vic and Sadler's Wells?

Speaight: Whenever I see today a really good straightforward production of Shakespeare, I begin to think that those directors would stand up very well.

Absolutely straightforward: no gimmicks. From the visual point of view they could hardly have been more austere than the productions we are given now at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre—or, indeed, than the National Theatre's recent *Hamlet*, which I didn't think very much of from any angle.



Harcourt Williams
Agep. M. Brown
Courtesy Stratford Theatre Collection

What we're all delighted about in London is the new St. George's Theatre. I saw a *Twelfth Night* there the other day, and I've rarely, if ever, seen a better. A beautiful stage: from the point of view of shape and size, the best theatre I know of for Shakespeare. It's unfortunate there's no rake in the auditorium; that may hinder the sight-lines at the back. They're hoping to get the money to build a gallery. But I found the *Twelfth Night* most satisfying: admirably spoken, nothing revolutionary about it except that it was absolutely honest and true and rang the bell every time. I don't ask anything more than that from a Shakespeare production. The balance between Viola and Olivia was better held, I thought, than I'd almost ever seen it. And the *Oswino* was brilliant—the best I remember.

So my view is that, if one's got the actors, it doesn't matter in a way how traditional or how—what shall I say?—uninventive a production is, provided the truth of the play is given and the actors are there to give it. Because what one remembers, I find, are certain actors and the way they said certain things.

Trewin: I have found it rather alarming in the last few days that some of our drama critics, my colleagues, have been complaining about St. George's. They call it "an evangelizing enterprise." I think this is a most unfortunate response to a genuine attempt to get Shakespeare back to his true proportions.

Speaight: Yes, I find that intolerably condescending. If I compare the St. George's with similar theatres—say the Edinburgh Assembly Hall, the Stratford, Ontario theatre, or Chichester—I find it much better than any of them. It's smaller, and it's much prettier to look at.

That, of course, takes one back to my old master, William Poel. You never saw any of his productions?

Trewin: I know him from your biography.

Speaight: How he would have rejoiced at the St. George's! What struck me at the one performance I've seen there was the entertainment value. It was in no way an antiquarian rite; it was a genuine performance. I'm sorry the critics have been a little tepid. I think they were remembering what they were brought up on: Tyrone Guthrie. It was Guthrie's tremendous inventiveness that set a pattern for Shakespeare production in the twenty or thirty years that followed Harcourt Williams at the Vic.



Tyrone Guthrie
Agep. M. Brown
Courtesy Stratford Theatre Collection

Trewin: Do you think that was dangerous?

Speaight: Well, it was dangerous, but also very exciting. Of Guthrie's productions what do you remember now with pleasure?

Trewin: His *Titus and Coriolanus* at the Vic in '56, and the *All's Well*, again flamboyantly characteristic, in '59. Great fun, both of them.

Speaight: And I didn't find that the value of *All's Well* were in any way distorted. Let us not forget that when Guthrie took over at the Vic in 1933, he started by building what he thought was an Elizabethan stage behind the proscenium. This was to do service for all the plays to be given, but they found—as others have found within a proscenium—that it didn't work. I know Guthrie found he couldn't light it. Still, it was Guthrie, remember, who took us out of the proscenium arch. It was he who—first of all in the Edinburgh Assembly Hall, then at Stratford, Ontario, and subsequently at Minneapolis—abolished the proscenium and inaugurated what has now become pretty well the orthodoxy of the open stage. So Guthrie was in a way more traditional than he liked sometimes to appear. Though he liked his little joke.

Trewin: How would Guthrie and Poel have got on, had they met? Would

they have agreed on many things?

Speaight: I don't think they would have understood each other remotely. But I think they might sometimes have hit upon the same idea because Poel did hit upon some very extraordinary ideas, quite as peculiar as Guthrie's. I don't think Guthrie would have thought of the *Coriolanus* I did for Poel, back in 1931, when I started the play in a leopard-skin, ended up as a Roman general, and appeared in between as a Colonel of Hussars. It was the kind of thing Guthrie would have been amused at. No, Guthrie, I think, was a tremendously refreshing force, mainly because for him the theatre was entertainment. He was the reverse of an evangelist. Latterly, of course, we've been suffering from too much evangelism of another kind. What did you feel about the Peter Hall regime at Stratford?

Trewin: In one way, perhaps, it invigorated Stratford. But at the same time—and remembering the traditional work of Glen Byam Shaw, who preceded him—I did feel that Hall was beginning to go too far. And I think that his successors have gone much too far, on some occasions.

Speaight: Yes, yes, I think so. Sometimes I feel that these young men at Stratford have never been for me, let alone taken a cance down the Avon. I remember being in Switzerland a few years ago, toward the end of April, buying a copy of the *Sunday Times* in a little village, and reading an article by Harold Hobson. He said in it that he had been to Stratford, and there were a lot of perfectly ordinary people going about their business, and even going to church on Sunday, which was extraordinary. And then there were these young men at the theatre doing very extraordinary things. He pointed to a gulf, as he saw it, between what they were doing at the theatre and what the general public wanted, or expected.

What, now, does worry me is the standard of speaking. How do you find it yourself?

Trewin: I regret the loss of the standard of the 1930s. Today there seems to be astonishingly little music in Shakespearean speech. That's old-fashioned, isn't it? Plenty of sense, sometimes *too much* sense. No sound at all.

Speaight: I feel that too. I very much doubt if these young directors go up into the gallery while they're rehearsing, and really test whether the stuff is being heard. Because unless you *hear* Shakespeare, it's no good looking for the sense. I think Peter Hall was in reaction against what he called "emotional and vocal self-indulgence," and this led to a certain rigidity. But, of course, these things can be cured.

Trewin: People continue to talk about a "Stratford style" that's emerged during the last twelve or fifteen years. Well, I've tried hard to find it. It seems to me that the productions vary extraordinarily, according to the seasons. Is there any style that you would lay your finger on?

Speaight: No; such style as there is varies enormously according to the director. Sometimes there is something. Under Peter Hall I noticed a sort of style which was very slow speech, absolutely *squeezing* out the last ounce of meaning; no color in the costumes, never a glimpse of blue sky, a certain austerity which has now been forced on the theatre by economic pressure. At other times I've found the thing much more easy, flexible and relaxed. What you come back to at the end, I think, is that you cannot do Shakespeare, particularly in a big theatre like Stratford, without big acting. Glen Byam Shaw and Anthony Quayle went on the principle of getting the very best actors they could, and it generally paid off—not always, but more often than not.

They had Gielgud and Olivier and Redgrave and many others. The outstanding single performance that I can't forget over the last—what?—ten or more years at Stratford was Paul Scofield as Timon of Athens. Hugh Griffith's *Falstaff* was also very fine. And I did think Peter Hall's historical cycle was a considerable achievement; it really did make sense of the whole thing.



Peter Hall
Agep. M. Brown
Courtesy Stratford Theatre Collection

Trewin: Yes, I agree. Whatever one feels about the cutting and splicing, *The Wars of the Roses* was a landmark in Stratford history. Robert, looking back, what is the finest Shakespearean performance you've ever seen?

Speaight: Well, I think, though there were points which were debatable, that the greatest feat of acting I've seen in Shakespeare was Olivier's *Othello*. It seemed to me tremendous. Also his *Titus Andronicus*—about which there can be no debate at all. It was not only a great tragic performance but an extraordinary piece of character acting. When he came on the stage I didn't know who it was; a shambling, military figure, rather stocky, with wrinkled eyebrows, a furrowed face. I wondered who this was—and to get one to wonder like this is a power Olivier has beyond any of his compeers with perhaps the exception of Scofield, though Scofield has not been tried so high. I remember seeing Olivier the other night, in that film, *The Battle of Britain*, in which he played the relatively small part of Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding. With apparently no make-up at all except a moustache, he totally altered his face and his appearance. This was character acting from within, and that is something, a gift Olivier has to a greater degree than anyone else. When you add the power of character acting to the effect of personality and sheer histrionic art, you have something very considerable.

Trewin: Perhaps, then, would you say that this will be remembered as a period of great acting but not so remarkable direction?

Speaight: I think it will be remembered as the age of the director, but I'm also inclined to think that what people will talk about will be the individual performances.



Laurence Olivier
as Othello and
Maggie Smith
as Desdemona
Agep. M. Brown
Courtesy Stratford Theatre Collection

Trewin: Haven't we rather left the actresses out of the picture?

Speaight: Who do you remember particularly?

Trewin: Dame Peggy Ashcroft in half a dozen parts: Imogen; the three Margarets; young princess to old queen, in *The Wars of the Roses*; Edith Evans as the Nurse in the first Gielgud *Romeo and Juliet*; less vividly when she played Judi Dench, Susan Fleetwood. But I do regret deeply not having been at the Vic long, long ago in the early days of Sybil Thordike. The one great Shakespearean part I have seen her play is Voluntas; that was at the Vic in the spring of '38, to Olivier's *Coriolanus*. One heard then what the supplication could be.

And you, Robert?

Speaight: We've seen some very fine performances. Certainly we ought to have seen what Sybil Thordike because she has only just left us. I too remember her Voluntas to Olivier's astonishing *Coriolanus*. And I remember

her Queen Katherine in a rather unfortunate production of *Henry VIII* in 1925; one expected great things from it, but though Sybil Thordike was very fine, the Wolsey didn't come off.



Peggy Ashcroft
as Imogen
Agep. M. Brown
Courtesy Stratford Theatre Collection

Trewin: You didn't see her Lady Macbeth?

Speaight: No, she always wanted to play it with Henry Ainley, and this was at a time when Ainley was very uncertain. Apparently he gave a wonderful performance at the dress rehearsal, but never again. I don't really see why Macbeth quite as a Thordike part. I thought little Helen Mirren at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre the other day was much nearer the mark.

There are a lot of young actresses you remember—Judi Dench's *Viola*, and her remarkable feat of doubling as Hermione and Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*. Not done since Mary Anderson. Among the men, Ian Richardson has great style, and so has Nicol Williamson. Again a very uncertain actor, but his Macbeth was the most satisfying performance of that very difficult part that I'd seen. I saw it not at Stratford, but at the Aldwych when it came to London; I'm told it had changed. Did you see it at both theatres?

Trewin: Yes. Really, one wouldn't have realized that it was the same play, with the same director as the same actor.

Speaight: I think we can leave it at that. Thank you so much, John.

Trewin: Thank you, Robert. Splendid.