

Hands On Shakespeare

Animate Shakespeare Live

Tim Doolan May 2015

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Animate shakespeare live.

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Abstract

This is a pilot project all about finding new ways to make Shakespeare more accessible. By looking at one of the bards' comedy moments and interpreting it with Physical Theatre, sign language and kinetic typography (animated text) we hope to explore a visual understanding of Shakespeare's wordplay by actually interacting with his words.

The majority of "accessible" performances for D/deaf people, are captioned. We have been inspired by the notion of 'emotional subtitling' to experiment with other ways of using text in a performance. By animating text it can communicate the meaning of the word or the context or inclination used? We hope that the combination of physical theatre, sign language and kinetic typography can create new realms of accessibility for all.

A team consisting of actors, sign language workshop facilitators, and an applied theatre practitioner have been researching and developing the concept along with an animator to put the concept to the test. Early research has focussed on putting appropriate technology and software to the test. Then the early discoveries have been combined with theatre exercises in the form of a workshop. The aim is to create a workshop for young people who will benefit from kinaesthetic and visual learning that enables them to interact with Shakespeare's text, both on the page and literally in the performance space. The hope is to have created 2x2 hour sessions concluding in a short viewing of the outcomes.

The workshop itself will be both verbal and signed. The emphasis of the experiment is to explore the synergy between the verbal, the signing, the physical theatre and the projected kinetic typography. Hopefully this will create an angle on performing and understanding Shakespeare that enhances his word play and is more inclusive and hands-on.

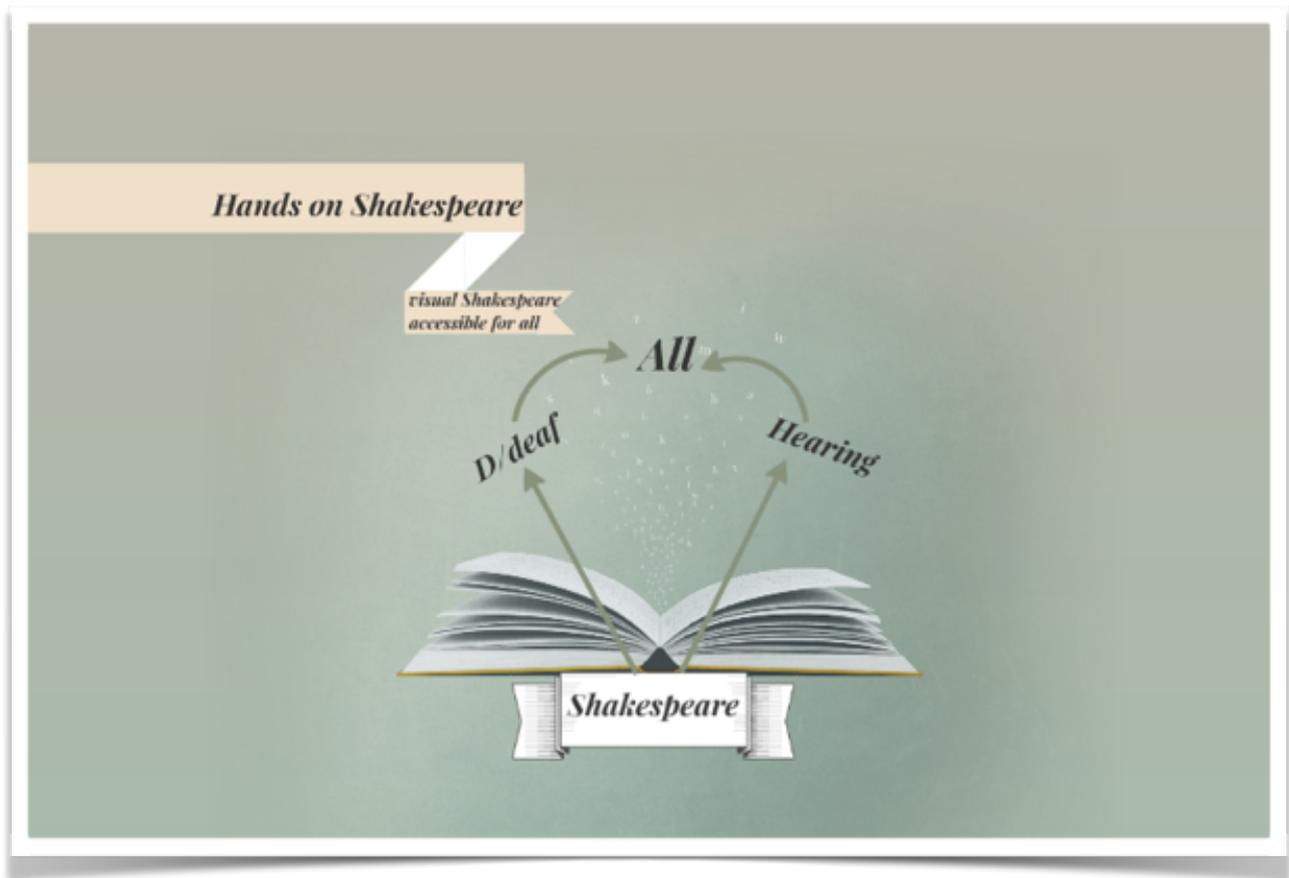
Youth Philanthropy initiative (YPI) has backed this project via student Aiyana Tandon who studies at Leighton Park School in Reading.

Hands on Findings

Research & development stage 1.

Overall Aim is to experiment with the interaction between Sign, Physical Theatre and kinetic typography, (Animated text) to help make Shakespeare more accessible to everyone. The findings should then be carried forward and delivered in the form of three separate workshops for groups that include those engaged in the D/deaf community.

The aim:



Experiment 1

Who's experimenting?

Simon Ball- an animator with little experience of Shakespeare.

Henry Jennings - A young untrained actor with a limited understanding of Shakespeare

Tim Doolan - an Applied Theatre practitioner with experience of Shakespeare.

Equipment used:

Projector.

Big sheet to project onto.

MacBook Pro - Software, Adobe After Effects.

We will be using Shakespeare's, *Much Ado about Nothing* with a focus on Act III scene I where Hero, Ursula and Margaret set up a love trap for Beatrice.

typography [ˈtʌɪˈpɒɡrəfi] noun [mass noun] the style and appearance of printed matter. • the art or procedure of arranging type or processing data and printing from it. [type](#)
3 [mass noun] characters or letters that are printed or shown on a screen: *bold type*.

After discussing the content of the project with the animator we agreed on some terms whilst working. Where the word 'text' has been used, it would be more specific to refer to, 'typography' which allows for the meaning and emotions connected to the word, to be expressed in the visual form of the word. 'Kinectic typography' builds on this expression by including movement and allowing the participants to interact with the typography.

Discoveries.

- Crude typography and images can be produced on the spot and projected around an actor/s within a workshop environment. For example...

Nature never framed a womans heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice



- The typography can also be made to travel thus enabling the actor to interact and create new meaning in a visual way. (Please see video, to follow.)
- Ideas for animating can be created as a creative team whilst working with the text but the animation needs to be created outside the workshop environment before it can be incorporated into a scene.
- This process of working with typography is a process of learning. Breaking down the text in this way offered the team an active, practical and enjoyable way to access the multiple layers of meaning found in Shakespeares lines. As Shakespeare paints pictures with words we would interpret those pictures into the interaction between actor and typography. This gave us a deepened understanding of Shakespeares language and its context within the play. So to summarise, those of us putting the workshop together expanded our understanding of the text. This may be an indicator of the pedagogical potential of working in this way which could be passed on in a workshop environment.

- We realised that while it was ok to create as a small team, (we were 3 people), typography phrases would need to be prepared and banked into a library to access whilst teaching larger groups in a workshop environment. Typography phrases can be agreed by the facilitators and then done by the animator.

To resolve:

1. A higher spec projector with HDMI connections and a suitable throw for a theatre environment is needed to carry the detail and precision from pc to projection.
2. A bigger space with a white wall to project onto that is ideally at least 6m wide 3m high. (If not bigger) This will be needed as soon as we involve all the players in the scene to allow enough space for actors and the typography to interact. The space also needs to have the possibility of blacking out.
3. Simon to research the best software to present the typography so that it fills the backdrop behind the actors.
4. Lighting was a problem as we needed to see the actors expressions and reactions. The facilitating team to research how companies working with projection light the actors without obscuring the images projected on or behind them.
5. We captured visualised meaning from some text in situations where it suited the action in the scene . However we didn't attempt to capture everything leaving room for actors and signing actors to also interpret. How will this be received by our target audience? Will the D/deaf community have a paraphrased understanding of the scene? Will the performance still need full captioning?

To Do:

Ideally the Next research and development meeting will include:

Someone from the D/deaf community. The animator

Myself

A select group of actors from the TAEDS course who can also sign a selection of text from Much Ado about Nothing. Act III scene I .

The workshop would be to test this way of working and it's suitability for all involved. If the session is successful the outcome would be a plan for a workshop including a series of exercises that culminate in a performance of a scene from Much Ado about nothing.

R&D day 1 summary.

The first R&D day focussed on working with the animator to convert Shakespeares wordplay into kinetic typography. This meant that the group participated in a mutual learning process where understanding of the text was reached together offering the participants more ownership of the visual explanation. With the participants creating and discovering possibilities together the learning process moved forward reinforcing understanding as an ensemble.

Hands on Findings

“I am really certain that different students need different methods of assessment or need different methods of teaching, but that doesn't mean that the standard changes or that we lower the standard to allow those people to succeed. It just means that different approaches are necessary to access the work.”

(Graeae Theatre Company. A guide to inclusive Teaching Practice in Theatre For teachers, directors, practitioners and staff. 2009)

R&D day 2

Who's experimenting?

Simon Ball - an animator with little experience of Shakespeare.

Tim Doolan - an Applied Theatre practitioner with experience of Shakespeare.

Radha Mamidipudi - TAEDS Student. Sign language interpreter and Theatre Facilitator.

Rachael Merry - TAEDS Student and Theatre Facilitator.

Molly Ramsey- TAEDS Student and Theatre Facilitator.

Equipment used:

Improved HD Projector.

6mx6m projector screen acting as a backdrop.

Studio space, blackbox style.

LX equipment.

FX 2x Fresnels on tripods lighting backstage figures from side. Spotlight from ceiling rig for downstage actors.

MacBook Pro - Software, Adobe After Effects.

Discoveries

Certain exercises need to be adapted to free up the hands for signing, 'Handshake give away then get back your name.' and 'Handshake don't let go.' (Appendix 1)

Interacting with the kinetic typography was really enjoyable and made learning fun. Visually stimulating to watch as a performance and enjoyable to do as a player.

At times the process relies on hearing the text spoken simultaneously with the typography to have the full understanding. So if deaf participants were to rely solely on the performance they would lose understanding.

However if the group had looked at the scene from several different angles in the previous workshop exercises then the visual/spoken performance could be seen as another layer of perceiving the text offering a greater understanding. This would rely on building the learning up in layers, i.e, looking at the scene in terms of language, context and character.

So simply put, with a good foundational understanding of the scene gained in part one of the workshop, seeing Shakespeare performed in this way could offer an enjoyable and much deeper understanding of the original text for all.

Kinetic Typography and Animation.

What technology are we using?

What software? Advantages and restrictions of the software.

Working live- advantages, disadvantages.

What's possible? Describe the best way of working with the ensemble/workshop participants and the facilitators that serves the purpose of this workshop.

Beyond the pilot:

Question- Which way do we pursue?...

Understanding through teaching

Do we ensure the participants have a thorough understanding of the scene using the exercises at the beginning of the session and then deepen their understanding with the interactive performance?

or alternatively,

Understanding through performance.

Do we attempt to project **every word** that is spoken using the methods that we have experimented with ie, speech bubbles, wrapping words around characters and kinetic typography etc? Once we have projected all the words then we could choose to emphasise and interact with a few of them, as we have been doing. This could give the effect of having a life size interactive book/story read to us in real time.

Examples of projecting every word can be found here:

[Sonnet 116](#) or [sonnet 130 Alan Rickman](#)

more...

[Kinetic Typography Channel](#)

& also

[34 must see examples of Kinetic Typography](#)

Mapping.

Projection mapping, also known as video mapping and spatial augmented reality, is a projection technology used to turn objects, often irregularly shaped, into a display surface for video projection.

Further research is needed into the current possibilities and how this could inform our work in communicating with our target audience.

You can find many examples of mapping projection and video mapping etc on You Tube, for example, <https://youtu.be/VrgWH1KUDt4>

Possible connections to pursue:

The FTT (Film, Theatre and Television) department at Reading University's, Whiteknights campus has great potential for engaging students who are interested in applying their knowledge and experimenting with this concept. The project could focus on building a body of academic research to contribute to the use of projected kinetic typography and imagery in live theatrical performance to improve understanding for those who rely on and those who benefit from a visual means of communication.

Appendix 1

Animate Shakespeare live. The Workshop.

- 10:00 Working with text.
11:30-11:50 Coffee
11:50-13:00 Physicalising the text.
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch
14:00-16:30 Acting with animation/kinetic typography.
16:30 -16:45 View the results on the big screen.

Intro

- Ha into Shakespearian greeting add My Lord, or My Lady.
- Handshake don't let go.
- Introducing each other with sign name.
- ~~Handshake give away then get back your name.~~ Change to - Exchange your sign name with another. Exchange the sign name you have just received with another who has done the same. Continue until you have received your own sign name back. When this happens sit down and relax. The aim is to try and get everyone sitting down - rarely works but good fun to try!)
- Pass on the expression in a circle being careful to observe the details of the person to your right and mimicing what you see/experience to the person on your left. The details should change slightly with each individual and the original expression should evolve as the game continues.
- You. Pass across a circle a spoken 'you' with an expression across the circle to another participant who then passes it onto the next making it bigger each time. When too big reverse so that the 'you becomes smaller each time.
- Fruit salad. All sat in a semi circle with one player standing who makes a statement/question in the circle that the others can either agree or disagree with. Anyone who agrees stands up an exchanges places with another whilst the one who was standing tries to steal a vacant seat. Whomever is left standing asks the new question.
- Introducing the day.

Physical warm up:

- Bermuda Triangle
- Dual in pairs.

Games

- Create Obstacles: Two players chase each other about the room. The player that is being chased mimes obstacles for the other, who then has to overcome these obstacles.
- Greetings: All players start milling about the room. You then ask them to greet each other, perhaps just by shaking hands. Players just shake hands, move on, and greet the next player they meet. Then ask the players to greet each other in a more specific way. Possibilities are:
 - greet each other like you greet a long lost friend
 - greet someone you don't really trust

- greet an ex-lover
- greet someone you really hate
- someone you have a secret crush on
- someone that sold you a rubbish used car
- someone with bad breath
- as shakespearean actors.
- greet someone like you are a cowboy, a soldier, a nanny, a Russian farmer,...

•Like this. Follow the leader who physicalises some mimed objects with sound effects.

Making an entrance.

A chair is placed in the middle of the floor. Take a moment to consider whose chair that might be and your relation to it. You will need to enter the space. Sit in the chair, then leave the room. Think of a reason why you enter the room. Why you approach the chair? Why do you sit in it? Find a reason for why you leave the room? All this should be rooted in whose chair this is and your relation to it.

Form an audience and watch.

The text.

- The background to the scene from Much Ado about Nothing. - Prezzi. <https://prezi.com/wjfukrdnbf4/>
- Walk with the script individually. Either verbally, with sign or gesture whichever is most natural to you. As you get to a word colour it with its meaning. Indulge, repeat, enlarge. Over the top.
- Read the scene together. Pencil to underline words, phrases that are not understood.
- Go through script and understand together. Questions

Physicalise the text.

In pairs-Pick a phrase and summarise physically by finding movement and gesture that fits the language. Bare in mind the characters and essence of the scene and phrase.

Aim- To remove the words and communicate visually without losing the essence of the original dialogue.

Distribute the phrases. Two lines at a time to physicalise.

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,

How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would spell him backward: if fair-faced,
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister; 1140

if tall, a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate very vilely cut;
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none. 1145

So turns she every man the wrong side out

And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

Lunch time work

Choose a phrase from the script that jumps out at you physicalise it and present it after the break.

Start putting scene together.

Continue building the scene with kinetic typography included.

Add music

Rehearse

Perform and film.

Watch.

Conclude and feedback in a circle. What did we learn today?

Much Ado about Nothing.
Act III Scene I. Leonarto's Garden.

- **Hero.** Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
As we do trace this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part
To praise him more than ever man did merit.
My talk to thee must be how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay.
For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

Beatrice crawls downstage in front of those whispering

- **Ursula.** The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream
And greedily devour the treacherous bait.
So angle we for Beatrice, who even now
Is couchèd in the woodbine coverture.
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.
- **Hero.** Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.

[Approaching the bower]

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful; **1110**
I know her spirits are as coy and wild
As haggerds of the rock.

- **Ursula.** But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?
- **Hero.** So says the prince and my new-trothed lord. **1115**
- **Ursula.** And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?
- **Hero.** They did entreat me to acquaint her of it;
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,

To wish him wrestle with affection,
And never to let Beatrice know of it. **1120**

- **Ursula.** Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortunate a bed
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?
- **Hero.** O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man: **1125**
But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;

Disdain and **scorn** ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her **1130**

All matter else seems weak: **she cannot love**,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear'd.

- **Ursula.** Sure, I think so;
And therefore certainly it were not good **1135**
She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.
- **Hero.** Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,
But she would spell him backward: if fair-faced,
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister; **1140**

if tall, a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate very vilely cut;
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none. **1145**

So turns she every man the wrong side out
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

- **Ursula.** Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.
- **Hero.** No, not to be so odd and from all fashions **1150**

As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable:
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.
Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire, **1155**

Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:
It were a better death than die with mocks,
Which is as bad as die with tickling.

- **Ursula.** Yet tell her of it: hear what she will say.
- **Hero.** No; rather I will go to Benedick **1160**
And counsel him to fight against his passion.
And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with: one doth not know
How much an ill word may empoison liking.
- **Ursula.** O, do not do your cousin such a wrong. **1165**

She cannot be so much without true judgment—
Having so swift and excellent a wit
As she is prized to have—as to refuse
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

- **Hero.** He is the only man of Italy. **1170**

Always excepted my dear Claudio.
- **Ursula.** I pray you, be not angry with me, madam,
Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick,
For shape, for bearing, argument and valour,
Goes foremost in report through Italy. **1175**
- **Hero.** Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.
- **Ursula.** His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.
When are you married, madam?
- **Hero.** Why, every day, to-morrow. Come, go in:
I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel **1180**
Which is the best to furnish me to-morrow.
- **Ursula.** She's limed, I warrant you: we have caught her, madam.

- **Hero.** If it proves so, then loving goes by haps:
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

[Exeunt HERO and URSULA]

- **Beatrice.** *[Coming forward]*
What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!
No glory lives behind the back of such. **1190**

And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
To bind our loves up in a holy band;
For others say thou dost deserve, and I **1195**

Believe it better than reportingly.

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