

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/131707>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

Shakespeare in Yosemite

Applied Theatre in a National Park

Katherine Steele Brokaw and Paul Prescott

Abstract

Shakespeare in Yosemite, founded in 2017, consists of an annual outdoor production of Shakespeare in Yosemite National Park on the weekend closest to World Earth Day and Shakespeare's birthday. The productions are site-specific and heavily adapted for a general audience; admission is free. In this article, the co-founders describe the origins and aims of the festival within the contexts of applied theatre, eco-criticism and the American tradition of free outdoor Shakespeare. In describing the festival's inaugural show – a collage piece that counterpointed Shakespeare's words with those of early environmentalist John Muir – we make the case for leveraging Shakespeare's cultural currency to play a part (however small or unknowable) in encouraging environmental awareness and activism.

Keywords: applied theatre, eco-criticism, John Muir, Ranger Shelton Johnson, Shakespeare, World Earth Day, Yosemite National Park

[insert Figure 1 not on opening page but in first available space]

Figure 1 Shakespeare in Yosemite performs in the Half Dome Village (Curry Village) Amphitheatre, Yosemite National Park, 23 April 2017. Photo Credit: Shawn Overton.

If twenty-first-century performance is marked by a re-engagement with meaning, politics and society through the creation of interactive encounters, as Andy Lavender has claimed, then no branch of Shakespearean theatre practice is more twenty-first century, more of the present cultural moment, than Applied Shakespeare.¹ This article is about Shakespeare in Yosemite, a project co-founded by the authors that attempts to apply Shakespeare to the crises of environmental disaster and the exploitation of public and native lands.

In 2017, we produced the first Shakespeare in Yosemite on the weekend of Earth Day and Shakespeare's birthday. Earth Day is celebrated on 22 April each year and is, according to its organisers, 'the largest civic-focused day of action in the world'.² Our inaugural show was a one-hour performance splicing together scenes from Shakespeare with the prose of John Muir, the so-called father of the National Park System (Muir's birthday falls on 21 April, so the show was devised as a conveniently neat triple celebration of Muir, Shakespeare and the planet). In 2018, on the same late April weekend, we mounted a fully staged, eco-inflected production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and returned in April 2019 to stage another environmentally sensitive version of *As You Like It*. The now annual project is co-sponsored and fully funded by our home institutions, UC Merced and University of Warwick, as well as receiving in-kind support from the National Park Service. The shows feature and are co-created by students, local community actors, a few professionals and – crucially – have a range of inputs from park rangers and staff. In effect, then, Shakespeare in Yosemite offers public university-sponsored free outdoor Shakespeare to a general audience. It does so, furthermore, on a weekend when admission charges to this flagship national park are waived in honour of Earth Day. Shakespeare in Yosemite thus applies place-based Shakespearean theatre in the heart of Yosemite Valley to

foreground themes relating to ecological crisis and to prompt individual and collective action in its audience.

In what follows, we will briefly outline our methods for creating and analysing this kind of applied theatre; describe how these performances are informed by eco-critical Shakespeare and eco-theatre practices; explain the particular context of Yosemite National Park and what we are trying to do there; and finally we describe and reflect on our inaugural 2017 show.

Methods and theories: applied theatre and eco-criticism

In conceptualising the various theories and practices involved in the project, we find the work of the late performance anthropologist Dwight Conquergood helpful. When articulating best practices for the field of performances studies, Conquergood identified three interwoven strands running through artistic, scholarly and community-engaged practices.³ Conquergood's three 'C's – which are also partnered and glossed by three 'I's – are: (1) Creativity/Imagination; (2) Critique/Inquiry; and (3) Citizenship/Intervention.

The Creative/Imaginative element of our project includes the collaborative process of adapting Shakespeare's plays to new purposes, and working with a team of primarily student and community actors to rehearse and produce the shows. Crucial to these artistic endeavours is the priority to value the insights of collaborators who are not professional Shakespeareans: scientists, park rangers, activists, community actors.

Conquergood's second strand – Critique or Inquiry – involves research and analysis of the texts and contexts that ground our artistic work and activist intentions. This includes our engagement with the Shakespearean texts, performance and eco-critical scholarship, and the local contexts of the people and places involved. This strand also involves doing theatrical field

work by taking note of how Shakespeare, our cast and production team, our audiences and the environments in which we perform are mutually impacted by our particular performance practices. In order to help us analyse this, we take rehearsal logs, interview and survey cast and crew members both in person and via email, and collect audience surveys.

Finally, the work aims to be what Conquergood describes as Interventionist, or engaging in Citizenship, which is to say that like all applied theatre, it hopes in some small way to make an impact on particular communities while addressing larger public concerns. As Helen Nicholson explains, one of the debates ‘most regularly revisited with regards to community-based and applied theatre is that of artistry versus instrumentalism’.⁴ James Thompson, for example, critiqued applied theatre in 2009, claiming that it pays insufficient attention to affective and aesthetic responses to performance.⁵ Nicholson and several other practitioners and scholars of applied theatre disagree with Thompson’s assessment, and we do too. We find that instrumentalizing the theatre – in our case, Shakespeare – for particular public and social purposes can enhance rather than diminish affective and aesthetic effects. We also find it important to defend ‘instrumentalisation’ itself, for art projects with purpose – Shakespeare for ecology, for example – would be worth doing *even if* they were not as artistically accomplished as ‘pure’ projects without an applied aim. The notion that instrumentalising Shakespeare might cheapen or diminish his body of work is also misguided. To echo what we also claimed in an op-ed that ran in local newspapers the week of the 2018 performances,⁶ Shakespeare is the most robust and renewable cultural artefact around. We can plunder his texts without ever diminishing their aesthetic, affective and academic capacities, or spoiling them for future generations. By contrast, many of the Earth’s material resources we are plundering are not coming back. If part of the failure of the modern environmentalism movement is narratological, the failure to tell the

story of climate change, can Shakespeare lend a hand? We agree with Randall Martin and Evelyn O'Malley who suggest in their recent and timely special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* on Eco-Shakespeare in Performance that 'far from shying away from Shakespeare's canonicity, it seems worth trying to exploit it for whatever (limited) potential it may contain'.⁷ Indeed, we think that Shakespeare seems as capable as any drama of participating in what Theresa J. May calls 'ecodramaturgy', which is theatre-making that puts ecological reciprocity and community at the centre of its theatrical and thematic intent.⁸

To think of a project like Shakespeare in Yosemite as ecological is to think about not only the ecological content we both find in and project onto the plays, but also to consider the ecosystem of humans, animals, plants, water and rocks in which Shakespeare is currently produced. The word 'ecology' was coined by Darwinian biologist Ernst Haeckel to describe the study of an *oikos*, or dwelling place. Yosemite is home to a diverse system of flora and fauna, and to the Park staff who help maintain this ecosystem in hopeful cooperation with the millions of tourists, hikers and climbers who visit the Park each year. Ecological thinking de-centralises the human by recognising that people are part of wider networks of interdependence, networks including animals, plants and elements, and in our inaugural show we sought to use Shakespeare, as well as the writings of naturalist John Muir, to help us address the specific ecological contexts of our current political climate, of Earth Day, and of Yosemite National Park.

Thus, the theories and practices supporting Shakespeare in Yosemite correspond to Conquergood's categories in the following ways:

- Creatively: we write original work and heavily adapt Shakespeare (and other writers, when relevant); we assemble a team of theatre artists with whom we collaborate on creating a new piece of site-specific theatre.
- Critically: we research before writing or adapting; we take field notes and collect surveys during the process and after the performances.
- In terms of Citizenship: we address issues of global and local concern through free and accessible performances in a public space not usually associated with Shakespeare or theatre.

Shakespeare in the (National) Park

Eco-Shakespeare is perhaps at its most effective when it is a performance practice, albeit one that is indebted to academic theory and criticism. The field of eco-critical Shakespeare is growing, and contributes important theoretical and historicist work to the study of Shakespeare, which informs both our theatre practice and our teaching.⁹ But we agree with Randall Martin when he argues that

Shakespeare's greatest possibilities for becoming our eco-contemporary arguably lie not in academic discourse but in performance ... Because Shakespeare in modern performance continues to appeal to a wide range of hearts and minds, his plays wield affective and imaginative power for shifting personal convictions and behaviors in ways that pioneering ecologists such as Aldo Leopold recognised were essential for stirring up environmental complacency and motivating progressive action.¹⁰

Indeed, as Martin rightly emphasises, Shakespearean performance attracts a wide audience base, particularly in its many manifestations of free, outdoor performance, a tradition that is particularly strong in the United States following the pioneering work of Joe Papp in the late 1950s and the example set by his Public Theatre in offering free Shakespeare in the parks and boroughs of New York City. According to the Institute of Outdoor Theatre, the combined attendance at free outdoor Shakespeare in 2017 was 231,007, while 405,619 people paid some amount of money – often quite small – to attend outdoor Shakespeare.¹¹

This tradition of outdoor performance means that Shakespearean events often call attention to how fields and trees and rivers and weather affect, indeed participate in, performance, and how the wider environment frames the lived experience of the human and non-human. Outdoor Shakespeare festivals can learn from the theories and practices of eco-theatre to create work in a productive relationship with the natural world. Indeed, performances of our 2018 *Dream* in Yosemite featured audience and actor interactions with a bobcat, blackbirds, a dog who barked back at Puck, and a passing family of mule deer who were echoed by the onstage fairy we had renamed ‘MuleDeer’, all of which encounters reinforced the ecological imperatives of the adaptation. As Martin points out, Shakespeare the playwright often draws audiences’ attention to both the stage and the physical environment at large: environment isn’t just decoration.¹² And that matters if you are looking out at a landscape like Yosemite Valley (see Figures 1–3).

But why put Shakespeare in this setting? We think that Shakespeare offers particular advantages to an art project focused on ecological advocacy. One of those relates to the work’s hyper-canoncity. Despite periodic calls from practitioners for a moratorium on Shakespeare’s plays, and despite the best historical efforts of anti-Bardolators like George Bernard Shaw, there

is a commonly held perception in many cultures that the act of putting on a Shakespeare show requires little explanation or justification. This general consensus on the self-evident ‘greatness’ of the works partly explains their attractiveness to practitioners operating in repressive contexts. Unlike most new writing, Shakespearean performance is able to mask its other intentions and, as Lear might have said, its ‘darker purpose’ (1.1.34). It is thus able to get people who might not otherwise consider listening to messages about climate change and human consumption to contemplate, at least for a moment, these matters. When the current federal administration in the United States is full of climate change deniers who have even forbidden the National Park Service (NPS) to confront directly anthropogenic global warming in their policies and communications, Shakespeare allows us to work with the park staff to address, obliquely but powerfully, issues that are currently being censored by the very federal organisations that should be broadcasting their urgency.¹³

This ‘Trojan Horse’ Shakespeare was much discussed in the 2018 Applying Shakespeare symposium held at the University of Birmingham’s Shakespeare Institute: over centuries, the works have acquired the capacity to bring together people from a variety of political perspectives who might not otherwise talk or collaborate, and can allow for an exploration of issues that participants and audiences might in other contexts resist. Shakespeare can attract more and different people into a space than projects that appear more experimental, edgy or postdramatic. Such projects sometimes run the risk of pre-filtering their audience by (in effect if not intention) appealing mainly to relatively narrow and socially homogenous groups.

In putting Shakespeare in Yosemite, we are bringing the Shakespeare in the park tradition to one of the most prominent spaces in the NPS. The mission of the NPS is to ‘preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the

enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations’. The NPS is focused on preserving both cultural and natural resources, but Shakespeare in Yosemite hopes to remind people that these categories are not necessarily distinct, and in fact are often co-constitutive. Jessica Rivas is a UC Merced alumna and now a Yosemite Park Ranger, who played Snout the Wilderness Ranger in our 2018 production of *Dream*. In conversation with the cast at our first rehearsal, Rivas explained that the arts have played a long and crucial role in saving Yosemite and many of America’s natural treasures from commercial exploitation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was the descriptive writing of naturalists (especially John Muir), the dramatic canvases of landscape painters and the wide circulation of early photography that convinced lawmakers back East that Yosemite needed protection. Such representations were often guilty of effacing the Native American presence in these landscapes and presenting them instead as somehow pristine and untouched. We hope that Shakespeare in Yosemite joins in the tradition of using artistic and cultural production to protect the natural world, while also being sensitive to the South Sierra Miwok and Paiute peoples who have seasonally inhabited the area for millennia.¹⁴

In particular, we hope that the theatrical event deepens park-goers’ reflective experience in Yosemite. It is an explicit goal of the NPS to prompt visitors to reflect on particular environmental threats to the astonishing landscapes they see before them so that they may better understand wider threats to the planet as a whole. The Parks system is studded with information boards and texts that often end with an ethical imperative to the reader-visitor; for example, here is one from Sequoia National Park: ‘Preservation of our wilderness and, in fact, all of our planet, is up to you and me’. Theatre can give active, dramatic form – words, sounds, *gestus*, moving bodies working in a particular environment – to these kinds of reflective experiences.

Thus, the material conditions of site-specific performance, the political conditions of the new federal administration, the recent environmental catastrophes that have affected Yosemite and California, and the long history of conservation, have all informed our first two ventures in Yosemite. We will now describe and quote our first production, the show that we have retrospectively titled *One Touch of Nature* (but which was simply called *Shakespeare in Yosemite* in 2017). The script and practices of this first production are one answer to the question Martin and O'Malley pose: 'How can Shakespeare ... become an ecological discourse on stage, as well as a model for environmental practices in the theater?'¹⁵

Shakespeare in Yosemite, 2017: *One Touch of Nature*

The project originated in two coincidences. The first occurred in spring 2016 when the authors, somewhat lost in Yosemite Valley, stumbled upon a small, evidently underused playing space. We would later learn this was the Lower River Amphitheatre and that it had, in effect, been closed since the severe flooding of Yosemite in 1997. Engirdled by beautiful pine trees, above which the granite walls of the valley soar skywards, this was clearly an ideal space for outdoor Shakespeare. But a quick online search revealed that there was little to no recent precedence for Shakespeare or any other kind of outdoor theatre-making in the Park.¹⁶ Our biggest obstacle, therefore, was to get permission to produce a public performance in the Park, as rights for such projects are carefully protected in the understandable effort to limit commercial exploitation. This is where we were vastly helped by a second coincidence, this one relating to time rather than space. Noting that John Muir's birthday, World Earth Day and Shakespeare's birth/death-day follow one after the other, the idea of an eco-Shakespearean event began to take form. We then contacted Lee Stetson, Yosemite's most famous actor, who has been portraying John Muir

in the Park and around the world for the past thirty-four years. John Muir was the Scottish-born naturalist, writer and activist whose writing about Yosemite and the Sierras and relentless haranguing of presidents and Congresses to protect them resulted in the formation of the National Parks system. Muir was a huge fan of Shakespeare: he carried the works around with him on his epic journeys across California and Alaska, quoted from him extensively and forced the plays to his daughters. Paraphrasing *Troilus and Cressida*, Muir was fond of observing that, ‘One touch of nature makes all the world kin’. At Muir’s memorial service in 1914, Enos Mills – who had been inspired by Muir to found the Rocky Mountains National Park – said this: ‘No one has ever written of Nature’s realm with greater enthusiasm or charm. He has written the great drama of the outdoors. On Nature’s scenic stage he gave the wildlife local habitation and characters; what he did with the wild, Shakespeare did with man’.¹⁷

As we immersed ourselves in Muir’s prose works, it became clear that there were a number of productive thematic and stylistic parallels between his writing and Shakespeare’s and that the Park coordinators might just be interested in a one-hour show on environmental themes as part of their Earth Day weekend offerings to the public. Armed with this idea and the encouragement of UC Merced Chancellor Dorothy Leland and former NPS associate director Steve Shackleton, we gratefully received the blessing of Rangers Sabrina Diaz and Jamie Richards and the rest of the Park staff to perform in two venues: the Lower River Amphitheatre and in the larger playing space at Half Dome (formerly Curry) Village.

Collaging excerpts from Shakespeare and Muir, *One Touch of Nature* explored themes relating to climate change, the rights of animals and the commodification of the environment. The cast of eleven was onstage throughout, and were dressed casually in hiking trousers and ‘Shakespeare in Yosemite’ T-shirts, shifting between roles and narration as the script demanded.

The only exception was Lee Stetson, who played Muir throughout in his trademark tweedy vest (and ample beard). Despite the size of audiences at Half Dome Village, actors' voices were not amplified and, partly because of this, the general style of acting was broad, presentational and interactive.

[insert Figure 2]

Figure 2 Lee Stetson as John Muir performing in Shakespeare in Yosemite. Photo Credit: Shawn Overton.

The show began with a prologue from a figure familiar to many Yosemite lovers. Ranger Shelton Johnson – author, interpretive park ranger and, along with Stetson, a star of the Ken Burns PBS documentary about the NPS – addressed the audience with a prose-poem he composed for the occasion:

For Shakespeare, Yosemite was an unknown land that could only be visited in his dreams ... Yet he would've appreciated a landscape powerful enough to be its own theater, script its own drama without the agency of a dramatist; a play of granite, soil, plants, animals, and indigenous people with their own stories, legends, joy and heartache thousands of years before the outside world had ever heard the word Yosemite.

Shelton's prologue ended with the injunction, 'Let this cross-pollination [of Shakespeare, Muir, and the Valley] bear an exotic, but sweet fruit for all to taste!' and, over the next hour, we did our best via a sequence of scenes and speeches from Shakespeare, intercut with Lee's delivery of Muir's powerful prose. For example, Jaques' reported protestations about the slaughter of the deer of Arden – 'we / Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse, / To fright the animals and

to kill them up / In their assigned and native dwelling place' (2.1.60–63) – was immediately echoed by Muir's words: 'How blind Lord Man is to the rights of all the rest of creation! It is a mean, blinding, loveless doctrine that teaches that animals were made only for man, to be petted, spoiled, enslaved, or slaughtered'.¹⁸

For the sake of balance, though, we also contrasted the two writers' representations of the shepherd's life, first hearing Corin on earning that he eats, and his great pride in seeing his ewes graze and lambs suck (3.2.64–67), then hearing Muir's strangely ill-tempered verdict: 'A sheep can scarcely be called an animal. An entire flock is required to make one foolish individual. Sheep brain must surely be poor stuff, eh? I cannot find the poetry of a shepherd's life: if flocks of sheep were hidden from me, I should rejoice'.¹⁹

There was lots of music – the cast gathered while singing 'Under the Greenwood Tree', sang and danced to 'The rain it raineth every day', and, in perhaps our only concession to Elizabethanism, a lutenist accompanied the songs and underscored throughout. And there was aural cross-pollination across time and space when Ranger Shelton Johnson joined in on an eagle bone flute, an instrument indigenous to many American peoples, including the Miwok who long called Yosemite Valley home.

[insert Figure 3]

Figure 3 Ranger Shelton Johnson plays the eagle bone flute during Shakespeare in Yosemite.

Photo Credit: Shawn Overton.

After a playful sequence aimed at younger members of the audience, the show's final fifteen minutes zeroed in on more obviously political-environmental themes. It began with Muir on the capitalist exploitation of natural resources:

Everybody needs beauty ... this natural beauty-hunger is displayed in everything from poor folks' window gardens to 'our magnificent National Parks' [quotes in original]. Nevertheless, like everything else worth while, however sacred and precious and well-guarded, they have always been subject to attack, mostly by despoiling gain-seekers – mischief-makers of every degree from Satan to supervisors, lumbermen, cattlemen, farmers, eagerly trying to make everything dollarable.²⁰

There followed short extracts from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens* which echoed this disgust for making 'everything dollarable'.²¹ And this rush to the economic bottom line, a narrator continued, can result in the loss of paradise. Suggesting that John of Gaunt's dying speech in *Richard II* sounds like something Muir could have said when lamenting the loss of Hetch Hetchy (a stunning valley in Yosemite flooded in 1923 to become a water reservoir for San Francisco), the narration switched back to Lee, who conflated Gaunt, Muir and his own present self, to deliver the lines:

This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself...
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England – or this America –
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land...
Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it...
America hath made a shameful conquest of itself. (cf. 2.1.41–43, 50, 57, 68)

Spoken in the 'demi-paradise' of Yosemite Valley on the first Earth Day weekend under an

administration more committed to gas and oil companies than the protection of federal lands, Shakespeare's (slightly adapted) words took on new meaning. Brokaw first got the idea to use this speech in the show when listening to a talk on the dangers of fracking by scientist and activist Sandra Steingraber, who itemised the ways in which hitherto public lands are being, in her words, 'leased out' to commercial interests. Important to the process of making Shakespeare in the world is the ways in which non-Shakespearean authorities such as Steingraber make us consider the relevance and resonance of Shakespeare's words in completely new ways.

More than six hundred people attended the show over four performances. A few came into the Park especially, on UC Merced-sponsored bus trips or because they'd read about it in newspapers and social media publicity, but most of the audience members just happened to be in the Park that weekend. They might have learned of the show via the free newsletter handed to every vehicle on entry to the Park or might simply have stumbled upon the performances while wandering around the Valley.

We hoped that the show's environmental messages resonated with our audiences, and encouraged them to fill out an online survey. Responses indicated that for a number of audience members this show had done some of the things we hoped it would. Several respondents talked about the way that Shakespeare's words, in particular, deepened their sense of place in the Park, making them more aware of their connection to it and need to protect it by giving them vocabulary and imagery to describe it. One wrote: 'I think it really made me realise how beautiful Yosemite is and how great it is to have words to describe it'. Another explained: 'We often forget the preciousness of [the Park's] beauties. We take it for granted, it has to be protected and cherished'.

Other audience members commented that the words of Muir and Shakespeare helped give them a long perspective on urgent modern environmental issues: '[I enjoyed] How the troupe wove Muir and Shakespeare together to create an historical perspective that is relevant on Earth Day 2017'. Or another wrote: 'I feel basic moral dilemmas that we face is exactly what Shakespeare's characters are faced with, plus he expresses these human struggles and aspirations with such a depth and delicacy'. Another added that the show made them think about how 'we certainly have a responsibility to this beautiful place'.

Some even explained the way that the play came back to them as they continued exploring the Park, fulfilling one of our hopes that the production would deepen the reflective experience of hiking through the landscape: 'We saw the play on our first day, but I had flashbacks to it as we spent time in the park'. Another spectator described the way that the play created a sense of an at least temporary community, enhancing the viewer's sense of ownership: '[It was] lovely to see a ranger and students and guests all involved with each other ... felt more accessible, like visitors are really part of the place'. The temporary community that formed for the performances contained both first-time visitors to the Park and what might be called connoisseurs of Yosemite. One of the former commented: 'My first time here and now I'm inspired to get more involved in the environment. One world and we need to look after it'. And a Yosemite regular wrote: 'We have been coming to Yosemite four times a year our whole lives, and we have never seen anything like this. We just spent four days hiking in the backcountry and feel so very lucky that we came back to the Valley in time to see this. We learned so much about Shakespeare and Muir!'²²

While it is very difficult to track or measure the long-term impact of such experiences, these responses are nevertheless encouraging. The particulars of Shakespearean (and Muirian)

language and the accumulated gravitas that comes from a long historical perspective together make Shakespeare particularly helpful (at least for some audience members) in conveying ecological messages. And the fact that a theatrical encounter can activate a deeper sense of connection both to the Park itself and to the community of people who must advocate to protect that Park suggests that projects like Shakespeare in Yosemite can play their small part in inspiring the action that is necessary to save public lands and natural habitats.

Indeed, we hope that Shakespeare in Yosemite addresses Shannon Jackson's concern that applied art projects should 'imagine sustainable social institutions'. Jackson worries that much social and activist art is anti-institutional: 'when a political art discourse too often celebrates social disruption at the expense of social coordination, we lose a more complex sense of how art practices contribute to inter-dependent social imagining'.²³ It is important to us to highlight the public nature of Shakespeare in Yosemite and indeed our support for the (ever increasingly compromised) institutions that sponsor it: public universities and federally funded national parks on public lands.

Eco-critic Sharon O'Dair argues that 'ecocriticism of Shakespeare is presentist, but it must stretch beyond the presentist criticism of the past to find ways to be active in public policy, in changing the ways people live – now'.²⁴ We hope that in changing – even just minutely – the way that our casts and some audience members think about our responsibility to the environment, we are applying Shakespeare for some good. As one audience member put it: 'I didn't see any connections between Shakespeare and the natural world before this performance!' At one show, many of our audience members had come directly from a 'March for Science' – having marched for science, they sat down for some art – and, on World Earth Day, in a vexed

and partisan political climate, the gap between the two cultures of arts and science seemed small indeed.

Katherine Steele Brokaw is Associate Professor of English at University of California, Merced. She is author of *Staging Harmony: Music and Religious Change in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (Cornell, 2016), co-editor of *Sacred and Secular Transactions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Northwestern, 2019) and editor of the Arden Performance Edition of *Macbeth* (Arden, 2019). She has acted, directed and adapted Shakespeare in a number of communities in the USA and Europe, and is currently writing a book on Shakespeare and community performance.

Paul Prescott is Reader in English at the University of Warwick and has acted, adapted and taught Shakespeare in a range of countries and contexts. He is the author of *Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge, 2013), a critical biography of Sam Wanamaker for the *Great Shakespearians* series (Bloomsbury, 2013) and, as co-editor and contributor, *A Year of Shakespeare: Reliving the World Shakespeare Festival* (Arden, 2013) and *Shakespeare on the Global Stage: Performance and Festivity in the Olympic Year* (Arden, 2015).

Notes

1. Andy Lavender, *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement* (London: Routledge, 2016), 3 and *passim*.

2. See <https://www.earthday.org/earthday/>.

-
3. 'Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research', in *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 41–42.
 4. Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of the Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005/2014), 5.
 5. James Thompson, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6.
 6. Katherine Steele Brokaw and Paul Prescott, 'Saving the Earth Needs All Hands on Deck, Including Shakespeare's', *Merced Sun-Star* and *Modesto Bee*, 11 April 2018, <http://www.mercedsunstar.com/opinion/article208648669.html>.
 7. Randall Martin and Evelyn O'Malley, 'Eco-Shakespeare in Performance: Introduction', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2018), 386.
 8. May defines 'ecodramaturgy' in 'Tú eres mi otro yo – Staying with the Trouble: Ecodramaturgy and the AnthroScene', *The Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 29, no. 2 (2017), 1–18. See also Dierdre Heddon and Salley Mackey, 'Environmentalism, Performance, and Applications: Uncertainties and Emancipations', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 17, no. 2 (2012), 162–192; and Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). And for non-Shakespearean examples of ecodramaturgical applied theatre projects, see Syed Jamil Ahmed, 'Applied Theatre and Climate Change in Bangladesh: Indigenous Theatrics for Neoliberal Theatrics', in *Critical Perspectives on Applied Theatre*, ed. Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 150–171; and Stephen Bottoms, 'The Agency of Environment: Artificial Hells and Multi-Story Water', in *Performance and Participation:*

Practices, Audiences, Politics, ed. Anna Harpin and Helen Nicholson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 167–188.

9. See, for example, Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Craig Dionne, *Posthuman Lear: Reading Shakespeare in the Anthropocene* (New York: Punctum Books, 2016); Lyn Bruckner and Dan Brayton, eds, *Ecocritical Shakespeare* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011); Gabriel Egan, *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory* (London: Arden Bloomsbury, 2015).

10. Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology*, 167.

11. See https://outdoor-theatre.org/wp-content/uploads/IOT_Traditional_Summary_2017.pdf. It should be noted that these figures are conservative given that many theatre companies and festivals do not share attendance data with the Institute. One such non-reporting company is Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; their touring summer 2018 *Dream*, for example, was seen, for free, by over [thirty thousand](#) Chicagoans.

12. In Martin's words: 'Shakespeare's signature practice of drawing spectators' attention to the temporal and physical actualities of stage performance also encourages them to reimagine both natural and manmade environments not merely as the décor of his dramatic narratives, but as dynamic contexts that materially shape human and non-human relations and identities'. [Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology*, 8.](#)

13. See, for example, [Rob Hotakainen](#), 'NPS Chief Scraps Climate-Focused Order', [E&E News, 31 August 2017](#), <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060059511>.

14. The long presence of indigenous people in Yosemite Valley was a theme of our 2018 *Dream*; we consulted with a few members of the South Sierra Miwok tribe on that production and hope to expand this collaboration in the future.

-
15. Martin and O'Malley, 'Eco-Shakespeare in Performance', 378.
16. Gordon Davis has told us about a memory of seeing *Twelfth Night* in Yosemite Valley around 1950; although we have not yet been able to do archival work on early twentieth-century performance in Yosemite, there has certainly been no Shakespeare in recent years. The nearest thing Yosemite has to an early modern, very vaguely Shakespearean event is the seven-course Bracebridge Christmas Dinner which, for three-and-a-half hours (and a charge of \$380.44 per adult), 'transports guests to Old England'; see <http://www.bracebridgedinners.com/>.
17. William F. Bade, 'Reminiscence of John Muir by William F. Bade', *John Muir Reminiscences* 4, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/cs-jmr/4>. The end of this quote would make more sense if reversed (i.e. what Shakespeare did with man, Muir did with nature), but we preserve the words as Mills apparently spoke them.
18. *John Muir in His Own Words*, ed. Peter Browning (Lafayette, CA: Great West Books, 1988), 70.
19. This line from the play conflates two different pieces of Muir's writing which can be found in *John Muir in His Own Words*, 7, and *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, ed. Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 29.
20. *John Muir in His Own Words*, 65.
21. These were Romeo's lines to the Apothecary (5.1.80–83) and an edited version of Timon's dissection of the transformative properties of gold (cf. 4.3.26–44), the speech [that](#) made such an impression on Karl Marx.
22. 'Shakespeare in Yosemite Response', SurveyMonkey, 2017, [surveymonkey.com/r/Z6FJCJC](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z6FJCJC) (accessed 8 May 2017). We have received an **IRB** waiver by UC Merced to conduct this research in the United States.

23. Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (London: Routledge, 2011), 14.

24. Sharon O'Dair, 'Is It Shakespearean Ecocriticism If It Isn't Presentist?', in Bruckner and Brayton, *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, 85.