We use cookies to ensure that we deliver the best user experience of our website. If you would like to, you can change your cookie settings at any time. Continue

Dr Abigail Rokison LAMDA Dip., LLAM, BA Hons (Open University), MA, PhD

Lecturer in Shakespeare and Theatre

Contact details

Telephone +44 (0)121 414 9511 (tel:+44 121 414 9511)

Email a.rokison@bham.ac.uk (mailto:a.rokison@bham.ac.uk)

The Shakespeare Institute
Mason Croft
Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6HP
UK

About

I joined the Shakespeare Institute in 2013, having been lecturing at Cambridge University for 7 years. I began my career as a professional actor, training at LAMDA and working quite extensively in theatre. Since deciding to move into academia my main research interests have been in the field of Shakespeare in performance, in particular verse speaking, adaptation and theatre history. I have written two monographs - *Shakespearean Verse Speaking* (CUP) (winner of the Shakespeare's Globe first book award) and *Shakespeare for Young People* (Bloomsbury Arden). I am now writing two books for Bloomsbury Arden - *21st Century Stage Adaptations of Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Nicholas Hytner.*

Qualifications

- Diploma in Acting from LAMDA (3 year course) - 1996
- LAMDA Teacher's Diploma (LLAM) - 1998
- BA Hons in Humanities with Literature (Open University) - 2001
- MA in Shakespeare Text and Playhouse (King's College, London/ Shakespeare's Globe) - 2002
- PhD on 'Shakespearean Verse Speaking' (Cambridge University) - 2006

Biography

I began my career as a professional actor, my acting work including numerous roles in theatre, and, amongst other television roles, Primrose Larkin in TV's *The Darling Buds of May.* Following a degree with the Open University, undertaken whilst acting, I went on to take an MA in 'Shakespeare: Text and Playhouse' at the Globe Theatre/ King's College London. I completed my PhD in 'Shakespearean Verse Speaking' in the English faculty at Cambridge University in 2006 after which I became a lecturer in Drama and English in the Education Faculty in Cambridge and Director of Studies in English and Drama at Homerton College, Cambridge. I joined the Shakespeare Institute in January 2013.

I was on the board of the British Shakespeare Association from 2002-2010 and Chair from 2008-10. My first monograph, *Shakespearean Verse Speaking* was published by Cambridge University Press in January 2010, and in July 2012 won the Shakespeare's Globe First Book Award, as a result of which I was invited to give public lectures at Shakespeare's Globe, Cheltenham Literary Festival and the Shakespeare Institute. Following these lectures Shakespeare's Globe and The Shakespeare Institute have collaborated on a series of Verse Speaking Symposia - 'The End of Shakespeare's Verse?' in which Giles Block and I have presented our ideas about verse speaking in venues in Staunton Virginia, New York, Stratford Ontario, Stratford upon Avon and at Shakespeare's Globe in London.

I completed a second monograph – *Shakespeare for Young People: Productions, Versions and Adaptations* for Bloomsbury Arden in 2013 – and am now writing two books for Arden Bloomsbury - *21st Century Stage Adaptations of Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare in the Theatre: Nicholas Hytner.*

I have contributed chapters to *King's College Cambridge 1415-2015* (Harvey Miller), *Shakespeare Beyond English* (CUP), *Shakespeare in Stages* (CUP), *The Children's Literature Handbook* (Routledge), *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry* (OUP) and *The Great Shakespeareans: Gielgud, Olivier, Ashcroft, Dench* (Bloomsbury Arden) and have written a number of journal articles including the only interview given by David Tennant on his performance as Hamlet.

I am represented for academic presenting work by Sara Cameron at Take Three Management. In 2011/12 I acted as an academic advisor/ interviewee onthe first series of *Shakespeare Uncovered* (Thirteen/ BBC) and have recently been appointed advisor on the second series. I am visiting professor of Shakespeare and Renaissance drama at the University of ICES, France.

Teaching

My teaching is largely focussed in the areas of Shakespeare in performance and Shakespeare for young people. In 2012/13 I convene the MA routes in **Shakespeare and Theatre (/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-theatre.aspx)** and **Shakespeare and Education (/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-education.aspx)** and co-convene the **MA in Shakespeare and Creativity (/postgraduate/courses/taught/english/shakespeare-and-creativity.aspx)** .

I convene the modules - 'Shakespeare and Creative Practice', 'Shakespeare and Pedagogy' and 'The Shakespeare Ensemble' and teach on the 'Shakespeare's Theatre' module.

I feel strongly that students can benefit greatly from practical exploration of Shakespeare's work in areas of both original practices and contemporary performance, particularly in terms of appreciating the impact of elements such as space, casting, textual choices, voice, movement, dialect and design.

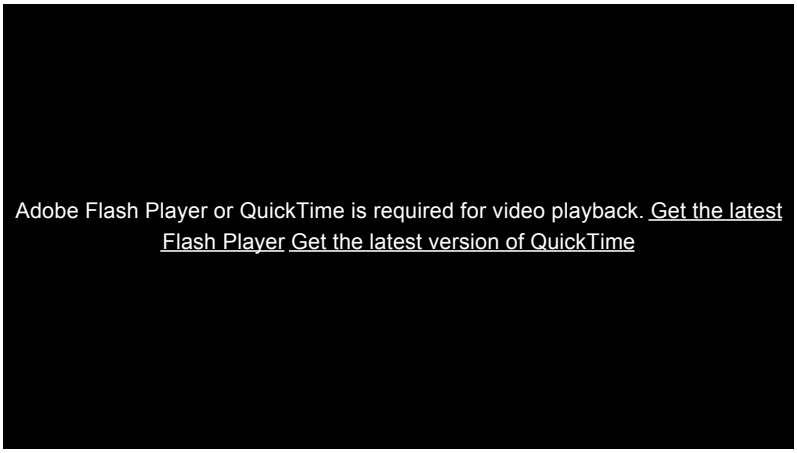
Postgraduate supervision

I am interested in supervising PhDs in areas of Shakespeare in performance, Shakespeare's language, Shakespeare and adaptation and Shakespeare for young people.

Doctoral research

PhD title Shakespearean Verse Speaking: Text and Performance

Research



I have just finished writing a chapter on theatrical performance in King's College Chapel (1515 –2015) for a publication to mark the chapel's 500th anniversary. I am currently acting as guest editor on a special edition of *Shakespeare* journal on 'Shakespeare and Authenticity' for Routledge and am undertaking research on stage adaptations of Shakespeare in the 21st century and on the work of Nicholas Hytner.

Other activities

I have been on the organising committees for a number of conferences, bringing together academics, theatre practitioners, teachers and students, the most recent being The Cambridge Shakespeare Conference in 2011, which attracted nearly 200 delegates from a range of fields.

I continue to enjoy performing and directing. In 2010 I artistically directed and performed in the first site specific promenade production of *Hamlet* around Kronborg Castle, Helisingor (Elsinore).

In the last year I have been touring the UK, US and Canada with the Shakespeare's Globe/ Shakespeare Institute symposia series - 'The End of Shakespeare's Verse' and have given a key note lecture at the Blackfriars conference in Staunton, Virginia.

At the moment I am working with National Theatre education on a series of public lectures entitled 'King Lear in Context' to compliment Sam Mendes' production in the Olivier.

Publications

Books:

- 2013 - *Shakespeare for Young People: Productions, Adaptations and Re-workings* (London: Bloomsbury).
- 2010 - *Shakespearean Verse Speaking* (Cambridge: CUP)

Book chapters:

- Forthcoming 2014 - 'Drama in King's College Chapel' in *King's College Chapel, Cambridge* (Harvey Miller)
- 2013 - 'Shakespeare's Dramatic Line' in *The Oxford Handbook to Shakespeare's Poetry* (Oxford: OUP)
- '*Henry V'* in *Shakespeare Beyond English* (Cambridge: CUP)
- 'Laurence Olivier' in *The Great Shakespeareans: Gielgud, Olivier, Ashcroft, Dench* (London: Bloomsbury)
- 2010 - 'Authenticity in the 21st Century: Propeller and Shakespeare's Globe' in *Shakespeare in Stages* (Cambridge: CUP)

Journal articles:

- 2010 'Our scene is alter'd': Versions and adaptations of Hamlet for young people' in *Literature Compass* (Oxford: Blackwell)
- 2009 'David Tennant: Playing Hamlet' in *Shakespeare* Vol. 5 No.3(London: Routledge)
- 2009 'Romeo and Juliet for the young viewer' in *The New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship* Vol. 15 Issue 1(London: Routledge)
- 2008 'The RSC Histories Cycle: Actor and Audience Perspectives' in *Shakespeare* Vol. 5 No. 1 (London: Routledge)
- 2005 'Shakespeare in Performance at the Second Biennial British Shakespeare Association Conference' in *Shakespeare* Vol. 1 No. 2(London: Routledge)

© University of Birmingham 2014