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## A Case for Using the First Folio as Directing and Acting Text

Megan Burnett, *Bellarmino University*

**D**irecting a play by William Shakespeare can be intimidating. Directing a First Folio version of one of his plays is so daunting not many academic, amateur, or professional directors will attempt it. Reasons may include familiarity with established editions of Shakespeare's plays such as Folger, Penguin, Arden, or Signet; not being aware of the map of clues given to actors in the First Folio text or how to interpret said map; directors and producers not trusting or believing their actors will be able to read the map they've been given in the text; directors being unable to find a First Folio copy that is easily readable; or they may lack an understanding of why using a First Folio text can be a most thrilling and rewarding experience for the director, the actors, and the audience. Actors taught to look for and use the clues in a First Folio text are empowered to make fresh and exciting choices for their characters; mentally, vocally and physically, making the performance more entertaining and interesting for the production team, the acting company, and, most importantly, for the audience. Directors should use First Folio scripts when directing Shakespeare's plays and they should give the First Folio text to their actors.

The First Folio is seen by some as an imperfect document, challenging to read due to the font and type used, and full of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. A workshop given by John Basil of the American Globe Theatre and author of the book *Will Power: How to Act Shakespeare in 21 Days* changed my perspective on the value of the First Folio text and led me to more in-depth research and practical application on this topic.

William Shakespeare died in 1616. His friends and colleagues, led by John Heminges and Henry Condell, prepared a folio of Shakespeare's plays in 1623. Scholars have explored the impact human involvement may have had in of the process behind printing this First Folio. (At least five compositors are believed to have worked on this text.) They've looked at how parts or sides, foul papers, and quartos were used by the printers, Heminges and Condell, as primary documents to create the First Folio.

Some plays have more than one quarto, and some plays have been in more than one Folio. The premise of this article is based on using the First Folio that was printed by Heminges and Condell as the closest we can get to what Shakespeare may have written, and possibly intended his actors to use. Graham Watts in his book, *Shakespeare's Authentic Performance Texts: The Case for Staging from the First Folio*, shares a portion of Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke's preface to the Pembroke Shakespeare Edition of *The Complete Works* (1903) in defense of using the Heminges and Condell First Folio: "The First Folio remains, as a matter of fact, the text nearest to Shakespeare's stage, to Shakespeare's ownership, to Shakespeare's authority" (Watts 10). Don Weingust in his book *Acting From Shakespeare's First Folio* shares his opinion on the First Folio vs. a modern acting edition:

The texts from which most Shakespearean actors now work have been created for a modern, often academic, reading public. Accordingly, these texts are printed in modern typeface; ... spellings are updated to modern equivalences of the originals; punctuation is altered to reflect modern grammatical norms; and lineation and metrical variation are often regularized where an editor believes that such regularization may have been the author's original intention.... (Weingust 4)

This author accepts that some scholars will argue we cannot know if what we see in the First Folio resembles exactly what Shakespeare may have given his scribes to create parts for his actors and prompt-books. The author also accepts that some practitioners will prefer a Quarto edition over a First Folio. Using the actual First Folio facsimile text, for directing and acting purposes, is the focus of this article. The author will discuss the visual map left for actors and directors in the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, how this director utilized the First Folio in a university production of *Much Adoe About Nothing*, and as an actor, as well as a voice and text coach in a professional production of *Henry V*, and the results of this work. These techniques work for beginning and professional actors.

## **Why Use a First Folio Text**

Directors and teachers have been taught for many years that the answers to issues of station, personal address, blocking, and character development in Shakespeare's plays are in the text. Using a First Folio text makes finding those clues easier. Quartos and Folios were printed from "parts" or sides the actors were given. Elizabethan actors had very little time to memorize a new play, perhaps only a few days. Some scholars, such as Watts, have suggested that Shakespeare wrote these "parts" in a manner that deliberately gave clues to the actors on character interpretation and staging. The spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and other grammatical anomalies in these "parts" or sides, may very well have served as original text for the published First Folio.

The First Folio has visual clues for the actor, including capitalized words other than proper names, repeated use of specific consonants, words and phrases, vowels added to words, changes in the spelling of some words and names, punctuation meant more for acting than reading, and split and shared lines and meter. These clues, along with others related to prose vs. verse, sentence structure, and consideration of major vs. minor punctuation (end stops, internal punctuation), put the creative power of acting back in the hands of the actor. The 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> -century actor has been trained to rely on the director to interpret the text as it relates to her vision of the production. Directors are also trained to do the thinking and interpreting for their actors. Giving a First Folio acting text to actors demands a more cohesive and ensemble-based approach to the text. The director needs to guide the actors in how to use the text, and then honor the choices the actors make. She must let go of what experts or traditional academics say the text or play should be and trust her instincts, trust the text, and trust the actors she cast in the production. Watts states, "The major difference between an academic and a performer's approach to the text is that where an academic will propose an explanation of a line, an actor will seek its motivation" (Watts 10). Actors will do the action suggested in the language rather than simply think about it and imagine it. Actors respond verbally and physically to language bringing characters to vibrant life for their audiences. Shakespeare's plays were scripts for actors to use to bring a play to life for an audience.

Increased literacy rates over the centuries have led to the use of improved printing techniques using modern typefaces and a greater

dependence on how we see the written word. As students move through the education process in school, they move away from phonics instruction to using syntax; spelling, punctuation, and grammar that are acceptable in a modern, educated society. Using phonological awareness, students and actors, can apply their “knowledge about the sound structure of words, at the phoneme, onset-rime, and syllable levels,” (Tompkins 13) according to Gail Tompkins in her book, *Literacy for the 21st Century*. When they read the word exactly as it is written on a page, students and actors are interpreting letters and words based on modern phonics. Understanding how we piece together phonemes and graphemes to create words we speak out loud can help when looking at text from the First Folio.

Looking at a page from the First Folio is now much easier due to wide availability of sources on the internet. MIT’s *Shakespeare Electronic Archive* (<http://shea.mit.edu>) is an excellent source for looking at the First Folio, as well as quartos and other folio editions. This short passage from *Much Ado About Nothing* will help illustrate some of the visual differences between the First Folio and modern editions of the plays.<sup>1</sup>

<p><i>Leon.</i> 'Faith Neece, you taxe Signior Benedicke too much, but hee'l be meete with you, I doubt it not. (ADOE. 1.1.46-47)</p>	<p>LEONATO Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not. (ADO. 1. 1. 46-47)</p>
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Both versions referenced in this table are from the MIT sources for Shakespeare’s texts. The one on the left is from *MIT’s Shakespeare Electronic Archive* which showcases the First Folio, available quartos, and other folio texts. The text on the right in the above table is from the website, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*.<sup>2</sup> Notice the differences in punctuation between the two versions. Note also the added letter “e” in “Neece,” “taxe,” “hee'l,” and “meete” in the version on the left. The spelling of “Neece,” on the left, is updated to the “correct” spelling, “niece,” in the version on the right. The version on the right is similar to many modern

<sup>1</sup> The MIT SEA line numbers do not reflect modern use of act and scene breaks. To coincide with modern use of act, scene, and line numbers this article uses Riverside Shakespeare to identify location of quoted text.

<sup>2</sup> From the website of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*: “The original electronic source for this server was the Complete Moby(tm) Shakespeare. The HTML versions of the plays provided here are placed in the public domain.”

editions of Shakespeare’s plays. Teachers, scholars, directors, actors, and students have become accustomed to the corrections in spelling, grammar, and punctuation made in the modern editions. While it is quite acceptable to use these modern editions (Arden, Cambridge, Dover, Folger, or Penguin) in a classroom and for rehearsing scenes and plays, Watts offers additional insight into why directors and actors should turn to the First Folio when working on one of Shakespeare’s plays. He points out that the Third Arden Shakespeare Series, as well as other modern editions, “removes or adjusts the very things the folio provides, and actors need, when using a script for creating a role: original spellings and punctuations, capital letters, italics, speech prefixes, punctuation, and verse/prose lineation. Not only do modern actors need them but their counterparts in the King’s Men needed them too – which is why it is probable Shakespeare took the trouble to include them in his text” (Watts 68-69).

The above First Folio example on the left side of the table offers the actor playing Leonato an opportunity to tease Beatrice with the extended sound of the long “e” in “Neece,” “hee'l,” and “meete.” He can, in fact, needle her with the sound in these words. This suggestion for the actor’s vocal expression in this passage may be missed in the modern edition listed above.

The following is an example of the impact of phonics in a production the author directed at Bellarmine University. During auditions for *Much Adoe About Nothing*, some of the student actors seemed genuinely puzzled by the text given them. Many auditioning tried to “correct” the misspellings and “oddly” capitalized words in the scenes they were asked to read. Then, an 11-year-old girl asked to audition for the role of the Messenger. She did not try to correct anything in the text. In a cold reading, her speeches were word-perfect. She didn’t know anything printed on the page was out of the ordinary. It was text and she read it. The younger student was more accustomed to sounding out words using phonics than were the older, college students. This example allowed the other student actors, all much older than the 11-year old, to relax and play with the text while auditioning. This was a great lesson to all the cast and crew; that when reading a First Folio text, allowing the eyes to relax and soften a bit, looking at the text as it is written, not at what ought to be there, will allow the actor to read the text with much greater ease. It’s a bit like using phonics when learning to read (Tompkins 13). The students were able to cold-read the text far better

than they had anticipated and this held true throughout the rehearsal process as well.

### **Choosing a First Folio Text**

Choosing the First Folio text is the first step. At this point it is important to address the visual aspect of the First Folio. It simply looks different than modern acting or class editions of Shakespeare's plays. MIT has created a *Shakespeare Electronic Archive* of the First Folio texts. Their website states, "This installation uses the *Oxford Electronic Edition*, published by Oxford University Press (1989), based on the *Complete Works* edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986)." The website includes a photo image of each page from the First Folio, as well as quarto and other folio editions where available, alongside a modern-type version of the text, making it much easier to read and follow than the facsimile. The First Folio pages are tightly packed with text, the typeface used is uncommon to our 21<sup>st</sup> Century eyes, several letters are used differently than we use them such as "V" for "U" and "U" for "V", character names are shortened and sometimes substituted for the actor's name, and one page from the folio has two columns of dialogue. These and other visual and verbal issues may cause one to believe there isn't enough time to sift through all this to get to the text with the students. Using sources created by other scholars and theatre practitioners who are using the First Folio can help.

Neil Freeman has many of Shakespeare's plays in the First Folio format available through Applause Books. Freeman's editions are easier to read because he uses a modern font style, but a bit cumbersome to use in a rehearsal hall.<sup>3</sup> Other sources for First Folio texts can be found online.

### **How to Use a First Folio Text**

The place to start when using a First Folio text is by scoring or marking it for repetitions in consonants, vowels, words, and phrases. When considering how to use these repetitions on stage, Basil suggests actors "remember the basic rule. Say the sound the second time because it sounded good the first time. Say it the third time because it sounded so

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<sup>3</sup> The typesetters of 17th-century England used a "V" instead of a "U", an "I" instead of a "J", and an "f" instead of an "S." Neil Freeman's editions of the plays make the modern use substitution for these letters.

good the first and the second time” (Basil 25). One purpose for these repetitions is to get the audience to listen closely. The character is relishing this sound or word or phrase and the actor needs to share that with the audience. A good example of repeated words or phrases comes from a short scene between Beatrice and Benedicke (ADOE. 2.3.247-264):

*BEAT.*: Against my wil I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

*BENE.*: Faire *Beatrice*, I thanke you for your paines.

*BEAT.*: I tooke no more paines for those thankes, then you take paines to thanke me, if it had been painefull, I would not haue come.

*BENE.*: You take pleasure then in the message.

*BEAT.*: Yea iust so much as you may take vpon a kniues point, and choake a daw withall: you haue no stomacke signior, fare you well. *Exit.*

*BENE.*: Ha, against my will I am sent to bid you come into dinner: there's a double meaning in that: I tooke no more paines for those thankes then you took paines to thanke me, that's as much as to say, any paines that I take for you is as easie as thankes: if I do not take pittie of her I am a villaine, if I doe not loue her I am a Iew, I will goe get her picture.

The scene above has the following repetitions: “I” is used 12 times; “you(r)” is used 11 times; “paine(s)” is used 7 times; “thanke(s)” is used 6 times; “will” is used 3 times; “dinner” is used twice; the plosive or hard “t” sound is used 38 times; the soft “th” sound is used 17 times; the plosive “p” sound is used 12 times; and there are six sentences in this scene. The actors playing these characters could be directed to explore the contrasts in how Beatrice says the “paines,” versus how Benedicke says the word. They could also be directed to experiment with the sexual tension between the characters when using either the hard “t” sound or the soft “th” sound. The rope in the tug-of-war between these characters is suddenly much shorter, leading Benedicke to suddenly choose to find her picture.

Next, an actor should look for the capitalized words, especially those that are not someone’s name.

*BEAT.*: He set vp his bills here in *Messina*, & challeng'd Cupid at  
the Flight: and my Vnckles foole reading the Challenge,  
subscrib'd for Cupid, and challeng'd him at the Burbolt.  
(ADOE. 1.1.39-42)

Capital letters are used in the same manner an actor might underline or circle important words, syllables or phrases. David Crystal, author of *Pronouncing Shakespeare*, as quoted by Watts, suggests that “it is possible to suspect an intention behind a use of capitals” (Watts 73). Watts adds to this idea: “The use of capital letters in the folio generally does the job for them. Take the capital letters away from the text and you take away yet another possible instruction to an actor” (76). The instruction to which Watts refers, and John Basil explores in his text, includes which words to stress, suggestions in vocal expression, and even whether a character is pleading, placating, or pleasing. Sometimes, the actor can see a pattern emerge and may be able to predict when the next capital letter will occur. I have found that, if actors are having trouble making sense of a passage of text, I’ll ask them to look for the capitalized words and say just those words out loud. This will often lead to an almost immediate greater understanding of what the characters are trying to say and do, and it will often keep the actors from falling into a sing-song pattern that can emerge when they think they should “sound” Shakespearean. The actors will discover, in the moment, stronger and more interesting vocal choices for their character, leading to stronger acting choices.

Now, look for the words with added vowels. Each of these is a clue telling the actor how to phrase that line of text, how to emphasize specific words, and even what the actor might do physically. The dialogue below offers the actor playing Leonato several options for how to refer to his niece, Beatrice, when using the word “she” or “shee.” His purpose is to get Benedicke, who is listening from a not so hidden position, to fall in love with her.

*Prince.*: Hath shee made her affection known to *Bene-dicke*:-  
*Leonato.*: No, and swears she neuer will, that's her torment.  
*Claud.*: 'Tis true indeed, so your daughter saies: shall I, saies she,  
that haue so oft encountred him with scorne, write to him  
that I loue him?

*Leo.*: This saies shee now when shee is beginning to write to him,  
for shee'll be vp twenty times a night, and there will she sit  
in her smocke, till she haue writ a sheet of paper: my  
daughter tells vs all.

*Clau.*: Now you talke of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty iest  
your daughter told vs of.

*Leon.*: O when she had writ it, & was reading it ouer, she found  
*Benedicke* and *Beatrice* betweene the sheete. (ADOE.  
2.3.123-145)

Vowels and diphthongs reveal a character's feelings and emotions. Consonants reveal the character's thoughts and intellect (Basil 22). Kristin Linklater, in her book *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, states,

[V]owels can be seen as the emotional component in word-  
constructions and the consonants as the intellectual component...  
Consonants are formed by a closure or near-closure of some part of  
the mouth, creating an explosive, reverberative, bussing or liquid  
sound with breath or vibration. Because of the direct and  
uninterrupted connection with the breath source, vowels can be  
directly connected with emotion... (Linklater 15).

Linklater also states, "The beauty of a vowel does not lie in the correctness of its pronunciation according to some arbitrary standard; it lies in its intrinsic musicality, its sensuality, its expressiveness" (13). Repeated consonants, vowels, and words and phrases build vocal variety. When words or phrases are repeated verbatim or with slight variations, this repetition can lead to an increase in the meaning of these sections of text. Why the similarity? Why the change? Looking for these clues will guide an actor to fresh and honest character interpretations which he or she can own and enjoy exploring in each rehearsal and in each performance.

The Boy's speech from *Henry V* excerpted below is a good example of the use of capitalized and italicized words and words with extra vowels.

*Boy.*: As young as I am, I haue obseru'd these three Swashers: I am  
Boy to them all three, but all they three, though they would

serue me, could not be Man to me; for indeed three such Antiques doe not amount to a man: for *Bardolph*, hee is white- liuer'd, and red- fac'd; by the meanes whereof, a faces it out, but fights not: for *Pistoll*, hee hath a killing Tongue, and a quiet Sword; by the meanes whereof, a breakes Words, and keepes whole Weapons: for *Nim*, hee hath heard, that men of few Words are the best men, and therefore hee scornes to say his Prayers, lest a should be thought a Coward: but his few bad Words are matcht with as few good Deeds; for a neuer broke any mans Head but his owne, and that was against a Post, when he was drunke. (H5.3.2.28-41)

This section of text capitalizes 15 words which are not formal names or words that begin a sentence. Twelve of these capitalized words are unique. “Words” is used three times. “Man” is used three times. This speech includes the use of italicized names three times: *Bardolph*, *Pistoll*, and *Nim*. This speech consists of only one sentence. This passage is written in a manner to help the actor, potentially a young and less experienced actor, make vocal choices allowing him or her to help the audience understand the Boy’s relationship with these men and his own future plans.

An important step to work on with your actors in the rehearsal process is to address the reason the character is speaking in either verse or prose. It is not always because the character is of a lower station and thus speaks prose, unlike his or her betters, who speak verse, as is often taught in high school and college settings. Basil suggests that when Shakespeare wrote in verse the character was speaking truth under pressure and that prose was used for exposition of information, for disguises and to make jokes. In *Will Power*, Basil states, “The more regimented and formal the verse, the more heightened the emotional life it expresses” (Basil 46). This is practical and helpful advice to actors. *Much Adoe About Nothing* has characters speaking in prose and verse throughout the play. More than half the play is spoken in prose, by the majority of the characters, upper and lower class. The first time we hear characters speaking in verse in *Much Adoe* is when Claudio asks Don Pedro for help in gaining the hand of Hero (ADOE. 1.1.296). This is an indication to the actors that heightened

emotions have entered into the play, and that characters are beginning to connect to each other through love and the challenges that love invokes.

Punctuation is the next aspect of First Folio usage to examine. Many directors and professors of Shakespeare's texts have differing views of the major and minor punctuation present in many editions of the plays. Basil's view that Shakespeare's punctuation isn't used for literary clarity, but for theatricality, is helpful guidance for directors and actors: "Actors must learn to approach Shakespeare's punctuation as acting punctuation rather than grammatical punctuation" (Basil 64). Spending time with actors discussing the differences between End Stops (. ! ?) and commas, semicolons, colons, and parentheses will help them find the thoughts, the ideas, the new ideas, and the breath of their character most effectively. Basil states this another way by saying, "[P]unctuation is for the actors' eyes only" (64). He adds, "Using punctuation well generates energy, emotion, specificity, and forward momentum, whereas using punctuation poorly only causes confusion" (Basil 66-7). Watts points out other practitioners such as David Crystal, Sir Peter Hall, and Neil Freeman all agree that First Folio punctuation is meant to assist the actors. The punctuation may not be logical, but it is actable. First Folio punctuation helps the actor find the drama, the sense of the play, and patterns in his or her character's thoughts.<sup>4</sup> Here, Beatrice can't quite seem to catch her breath easily. She's discovered that she is in love with Benedicke and has trouble containing her discovery and joy.

*BEAT.:* What fire is in mine eares? can this be true? Stand I  
condemn'd for pride and scorne so much? Contempt,  
farewell, and maiden pride, adew, No glory liues behinde  
the backe of such. And *Benedicke*, loue on, I will requite  
thee, Taming my wilde heart to thy louing hand: If thou  
dost loue, my kindnesse shall incite thee To binde our loues  
vp in a holy band. For others say thou dost deserue, and I  
Beleeue it better then reportingly. (ADOE. 3.1.107-116)

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<sup>4</sup> While there are examples of punctuation that do appear to be grammatically incorrect, either in a quarto of a play or a Folio edition, there may be far fewer of these errors than modern editors/adaptors would lead us to believe.

This breathless discovery of being in love includes five sentences, three questions marks, nine commas, and one colon. It is in verse, not prose, indicating heightened emotion. The only extra vowel is in “Beleeue” as Beatrice ends her declaration. The variety of punctuation encourages the actor to add physical action into this short and joyous scene.

Another way to use punctuation and lineation is when blocking, or adding physical movement to the scene. A shared line might be a short line for one character who needs to do something physical to another character in the scene. Parenthetical phrases give an actor the opportunity to turn, step, and move to or from the audience.

A speech that utilizes each of the techniques discussed above is the Chorus from the *Henry V* prologue. Performing this in an outdoor amphitheater with no microphones, highway noise, and an audience potentially unfamiliar with the story, as the actor portraying the chorus, I needed to use all the resources available to me to start our production with energy, power, and a true sense of urgency. Turning to the First Folio text with its capitalized words, repeated and contrasted vowels, diverse punctuation, and added vowels, gave me the guidance I needed for better vocal expression, as well as clues for blocking and how to speak to the audience. The speech excerpted below includes three periods, two questions marks, two colons, one parenthesis, 14 commas, and 28 capitalized words (not including proper names or the first word of each line).

*Chorus.:* O For a Muse of Fire, that would ascend  
 The brightest Heauen of Inuention:  
 A Kingdome for a Stage, Princes to Act,  
 And Monarchs to behold the swelling Scene.  
 Then should the Warlike Harry, like himselfe,  
 Assume the Port of Mars, and at his heeles  
 (Leasht in, like Hounds) should Famine, Sword, and Fire  
 Crouch for employment. But pardon, Gentles all:  
 The flat vnrayesd Spirits, that hath dar'd,  
 On this vnworthy Scaffold, to bring forth  
 So great an Obiect. Can this Cock- Pit hold  
 The vastie fields of France? Or may we cramme  
 Within this Woodden O, the very Caskes

That did affright the Ayre at Agincourt? (H5.P. 1-14)

### **Results of Using the First Folio with a Production of *Much Adoe About Nothing***

I directed *Much Adoe About Nothing* in February 2015 for Bellarmine University, using the First Folio edition, *Much Adoe About Nothing*.<sup>5</sup> I used a combination of the First Folio edition found on the *Shakespeare Electronic Archive*, from the MIT Shakespeare Project, and the First Folio text as prepared by Neil Freeman as the script for the actors and the production team. I also utilized techniques and advice from Basil's book, *Will Power*, and John Barton's book, *Playing Shakespeare*, when directing this play. There was a seven-week rehearsal period. The cast was a mix of experienced and non-experienced student actors, and many actors had never performed a play by Shakespeare. This production was set in 1968 America.

I started rehearsals with a cast reading of the play, and then spent two rehearsals focused on how to use the text with regard to repetitions, capitalizations, and spellings. At subsequent rehearsals, I reinforced the notion that Shakespeare may have used these visual and rhetorical clues so the actors knew what to do because they didn't have directors as we do now. Many times the actors responded with confusion because they seemed ready to wait for me to do most of the interpretive work for them. However, after going through a scene to get the basic framework of the blocking and character intentions, they'd often rehearse on their own, coming back with a stronger and more powerful scene than before. Experiencing this kind of ownership of a role can be exciting for the actor and a bit ego-threatening for the director. If a director needs to have her or his stamp firmly on the entire production, allowing the company to use a First Folio version could challenge this goal. The actors will make bolder and more creative acting and blocking choices if allowed to use the First Folio. A director will then be needed as a guide, a coach, and a sounding board, for the actors will be empowered to bring the play to life in a fresh and vibrant manner.

I met with each actor to discuss his or her character, text, voice, and vocal and acting goals within this production. Meeting with actors in one-

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<sup>5</sup> This author used the First Folio edition of *Much Adoe About Nothing*, acknowledging the Quarto of this play may have provided the text for the First Folio. I referred to Freeman's notes on differences between the Quarto and First Folio.

on-one coaching sessions was something I began when working with a professional Shakespeare theatre company in 2010.<sup>6</sup> I wanted the Bellarmine University students to explore the potential successes gained by the professional actors by doing this work with them. This gave me both a deeper and a clearer understanding of how each actor was choosing to interpret her or his character. I was then able to do a more effective job in guiding the actors' work and supporting choices they made. Each conversation started with a discussion about the text and what was needed to bring into focus the character's goals and intentions.

One practical result of using the First Folio map is ease of memorization. Actors memorize their text much faster when asked to score their scripts for capitalized words, vowels added to words, changes in the spelling of some words and names, and punctuation. The cast was 90% off-book by the time we reached week six of a seven-week rehearsal period. This meant we had a week or more of rehearsals in which we could "play". We tightened up scenes, restaged scenes that weren't working as we wanted, and did even more intensive character work. This meant the actors had time to truly settle into their characters and weren't frantic about their lines up to opening night. It meant that the actors had the time to make the text sound and feel easy and relaxed, as if everyone talks in this manner. They were able to "own" their lines and characters and seek opportunities for even more connections with other characters on stage. While this is a normal expectation for professional productions, it is highly unusual for a college production of Shakespeare to achieve this level of freedom to play and explore in only six weeks. As a result, we presented a play with polish and life. The actors really used their text to connect with other characters and had fun with the audience instead of worrying about whether they knew their lines. The audience came away knowing what had happened because the actors understood what they were saying.

While my preparation of a First Folio production of *Much Adoe About Nothing* took more time than other plays I've directed, the time invested paid huge dividends. The actors had fun, had more say in their own character development, had a much better and quicker understanding of their text, and had time to play and deeply explore their characters

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<sup>6</sup> Josephine SummerStage in Frankfort, KY has produced the following plays since 2010: *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Henry V*, and *King Lear*. I began using First Folio techniques as the Voice & Text coach with this company with *The Winter's Tale* in 2014.

because they were able to memorize their lines so quickly. These tools and techniques bring Shakespeare's text, the First Folio, to life like nothing else I've experienced.

## Conclusion

Don Weingust points out actors have often been left out of the discussion about which texts to use when working on a play by Shakespeare. These First Folio techniques place the actor back in "the very center" of the decision making process because it is, in the end, the actor who must bring these words, stories, and characters to life (Weingust 7). As a director, actor, voice and text coach, I have experienced first-hand that First Folio acting techniques allow the actors to be the authority on stage. Utilizing these techniques allows the actor to trust her or his own skills and instincts. This is a level of empowerment not generally given to actors, but when done, creates energized, creative, and powerful performances of William Shakespeare's plays.

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