Medieval Theatre Performance

Edited by Philip Butterworth
and Katie Normington

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Actors, Dancers, Automata and their Audiences

EDITED BY
PHILIP BUTTERWORTH
AND
KATIE NORMINGTON

D. S. BREWER

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This work is dedicated to the memory of

Claire Sponsler

1954–2016

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Abbreviations of Principal Sources Cited

EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
MED	Middle English Dictionary
METh	Medieval English Theatre
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OS	Original Series
REED	Records of Early English Drama
SS	Supplementary Series

Introduction

The title of this work, *Medieval Theatre Performance: Actors, Dancers, Automata and their Audiences*, arises from a concern about what actors (players), dancers and automata did and the way they did it in their respective contexts. When we were formulating and preparing our book *European Theatre Performance Practice 1400–1580* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), we became aware of the dearth of research into medieval theatre, dance, puppetry and automata in performance. We were aware of a considerable amount of research that had been conducted into performance contexts but not performance itself. Scarcity of relevant evidence perhaps offers a reason for such deficiency to date. This work therefore attempts to go some way towards rectifying this perceived omission.

The contributors have been asked to answer (or attempt to answer) questions such as: What was the nature of performance in theatre/dance/puppetry/automata? What were the performed qualities of such events? What were the conventions of performed work? What took place in the act of performing? What were the relationships between performers and witnesses? What conditioned these relationships? We recognise that these are tough questions for our contributors to tackle but we strongly believed that such toughness would stimulate and bring about some original research that would lead to significant contributions to knowledge. We have therefore invited selected international specialist colleagues to investigate the nature of performance by players, dancers and automata in order to extend the boundaries of our knowledge.

Given these distinctions, it is performance and not performance context with which we are concerned unless, of course, the latter contextualises the former. With this kind of difference in mind, Claire Sponsler adopts the useful approach of stating 'What we know' and 'What we do not know' in relation to performance, its nature and investigation. She poses the paraphrased question: 'Why should theatre historians care about performance practices?' Other contributors use different ways of pursuing their examination of performance issues. In Nerida Newbigin's chapter, discussion of the performance context is a springboard into the examination of the conditions of performance. Where contributors deal with a shortage of evidence, this acts as a spur to them posing some pertinent questions as to why there is a shortage of evidence and how this condition might be investigated. David Klausner examines the relationship between the written text and the absence of the written text and asks how he should investigate performance without evidence of text or recorded action. Katie Normington examines how evidence of players' clothing provides us with knowledge of how they performed. In particular, she considers how evidence of the use of disguise and cross-dressing on stage reveals the intersection between role and player.

Some contributors use the nature of spatial contexts as a means of directing their investigation into respective performances: Jennifer Nevile examines the characteristics of dancer/audience spatial, social and political demarcation as a way of assessing performance; Bart Ramakers concentrates on the spatial conventions affected by the features of the playing space and the tightly written requirements of the Rhetoricians' plays; Tom Pettitt discusses different kinds of spatial and social intervention in plays and folk drama.

The question, 'What is performance?' is implicit in the discussion by Kathryn Dickason when she investigates the phenomenon known as 'Choreomania' which refers to the frenzied dance behaviour across Europe between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Was this conduct performance? The chapters of Femke Kramer and Max Harris both focus on integral equine performers with varying and different kinds of religious and theatrical significance. In other contexts, the equine performers in Kramer's and Harris' chapters may be likened to theatrical props rather than non-human performers as they are considered here. However, their inherent composition and construction may also be likened to other inanimate performers such as the *Rood of Boxley*, as examined by Leanne Groeneveld, and Philip Butterworth's reconstruction of the semi-automaton, 'The Iorge', at St Botolph's, Billingsgate, London.

It is clear that the disciplines of theatre and dance and the operation of puppets and automata share a number of common characteristics in their respective capacities to engage with their audiences. It is also clear that the disciplines diverge from each other in their tasks of communicating purpose, form and content to witnesses. We generally think of the functions of player and audience as separate and distinctive roles in their contribution to theatrical statement. The players/dancers prepare a partial assertion (the text or rehearsed action) which is completed by audience response. But this black and white distinction is not always necessary or appropriate to the panoply of theatre and dance. In Chapter 7, Nevile demonstrates the interchangeable functions of performer and witness at Court which constantly reaffirmed and promoted dance expertise. In this sense, performers performed to other performers which brought about shared understanding and enjoyment of their common skill. Similarly, Klausner, in Chapter 6, discusses a similar experience when a performance appears to have taken place at the Priory of St Mary, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire in 1320 where monks seemingly performed to other monks. Playing to like-minded spectators is also a consideration examined by Ramakers in Chapter 2 where he notes that the Rhetoricians' plays 'dealt with issues that were significant to the general public, which consisted mainly of the Haarlem middleclass—the same layer from which the chambers of rhetoric recruited their members'. Just as the conventional performer/audience relationships are broken down in Nevile's and Klausner's examination, so too are they in Dickason's Chapter 8—but for quite different reasons. Another example of the breakdown of conventional roles between performer and witness is discussed by Pettitt in Chapter 3 where he examines the role and function of dramatic intervention into a social setting: this may occur within the different realities of performance and audience reception or any differently constructed realities between performers.

Any discussion of theatre, dance, puppets and automata raises the issue as to what constitutes performance and, indeed, begs the question: What kind of performance boundaries and distinctions exist between these forms? Early records of performers tend to be to 'players' but such references do not distinguish between different kinds of engaged performance. The *OED* cites fifteenth-century examples of the term 'player' in different theatrical forms but does not identify ways in which players played. Sir Thomas Eliot's *Dictionary* of 1558 identifies the separation of a number of terms regarding the types of performers. For example, Eliot draws upon Ancient Greek terms to identify a number of different expressions for a 'dancer': a *Cinedus* is a 'daunser of galyardes and wanton maskes. It is also taken for a tumblar', while a *Petaurista* is 'a propre daunser' (most likely a vaulter or rope dancer) and a *Chironomus*is a 'daunser of a moriske', (a morris dancer). Eliot's definitions of ancient terms, while seemingly separating dancers into different kinds, also reminds us that the origins of these terms were somewhat nebulous and often referred to overlapping performance requirements. Use of the words *histrio*, *mimus*, *pantomimus*, and *ludio*, as found in the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (1857), are interchangeable definitions in which the performance of theatre, mime, dance and song occurred through performers skilled in a number of these disciplines. It serves as a reminder that the separation of the disciplines of theatre/dance/puppetry/automata is a fabricated one and one that needs to be approached with some care and fluidity.

In this context, the root of the word 'puppet' is interesting. The related word 'poppet' exists as an earlier derivation in respect of a dainty person, child or young woman; a form of darling or pet; it could also refer to a doll-like figure played with by children. A third meaning points to an idolatrous object or image. Similar meanings are applied to the term 'puppet' at slightly later dates from the 1530s. Some confusion exists through overlapping of the two terms through Reformation-inspired use, misuse and abuse. The *OED* gives the same meaning of 'poppet' and 'puppet' when it refers to '*depreciative*. An idolatrous object or image, an idol (hence) any material object which is worshipped.'

Consideration of puppets and automata in this volume invites further questioning as to how such distinctions might be identified or defined. The boundaries of what might constitute one or the other and, indeed, the defining features of inanimate and animate sculpture are also open to question. Kamil Kopania in his impressively thorough work, *Animated Sculptures of the Crucified Christ in the Religious Culture of the Latin Middle Ages* (2010), discusses the appropriateness of generic terms to describe some 126 'animated sculptures' of the crucified Christ to be found over all of Europe. He arrives at this label having rejected terms such as 'crucifixes with moveable arms', 'theatrical props', 'mobile sculptures', 'marionettes', 'puppets', 'puppet images', 'Imago Crucifixi' and 'automata'. The term 'animated sculptures' seems to be an appropriate description, providing that the figures under consideration are indeed carved or moulded. If such animated figures are not so created but constructed upon frameworks of any material and clothed to mask the sub-structure, as indeed are many 'puppets', then the term 'sculpture' is not appropriate. The 'palmesel' figures examined by Harris in Chapter 10, although differently animated from the Easter sepulchre sculptures, can be similarly regarded as spirited ones whose processional progress conditions the nature of the animation. Harris describes one such Palmesel: 'Mounted on wheels and pulled over cobbles or other rough ground, the image shakes, joggling the figure of Christ and creating the impression that he is actively riding the donkey.'

The characteristics of the puppet and its possible link to an object or image of worship raises further the issue of what is understood by the nature of performance as investigated in this volume. The puppet or automaton is assumed to have moving parts, whereas an idolatrous object could be entirely static, as is the case with sculptures and carvings of the crucifixion which adorned medieval church altars. It is this distinction that Normington discusses in her chapter on costume and disguise, noting that Sir Philip Sidney in his *Apology for Poetry* coins the term 'speaking picture', envisioned by

Sidney as a metaphoric method to enable poetry to 'teach and delight'.[1] But this concept of the speaking picture is a notion which binds many of the branches of performance discussed in this volume, particularly that of the puppet or automaton; the word 'picture' in early useage could equally refer to a three-dimensional image as well as a two-dimensional one.[2] Use of the word 'speaking' also distinguishes the means by which narrative messages are delivered through performance.

The arrangement and delivery of narrative in these various performative forms differs considerably from the mechanisms that are used to deliver it. Such differences are instanced by the predominant use of the spoken word in theatre, as opposed to bodily movement in dance. These forms or performance lend themselves to differences in the use of what Umberto Eco calls open and closed texts. In *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (1979) Eco notes that closed texts:

> apparently aim at pulling the reader along a predetermined path, carefully displaying their efforts so as to arouse pity or fear, excitement or depression at the due place and at the right moment. Every step of the 'story' elicits just the expectation that its further course will satisfy. They seem to be structured according to an inflexible project.[3]

In contrast, an open text is defined as having multi-interpretative points and offers the reader a 'structured maze' through which they can interpret from a number of differing perspectives. If Eco's theory is applied to performance, then the genres examined in this book offer different approaches from the fixed and closed readings of material, such as the Rhetorician's plays, to the open interpretative performances created through the medium of dance.

While theatre, dance, puppets and automata are each capable of delivering narrative, all four forms can also exist without using narrative When any of these four disciplines do not use narrative as the basis of their respective forms then different conditions begin to apply. The key distinction may be identified and symbolised through the difference in meaning between movement and motion; movement tends to carry narrative whereas motion exists in its own right without inherent meaning. Although this distinction may be a fundamental one it may be possible to attach meaning to motion depending on its purpose, organisation and imaginative context. Alwyn Nikolai, the American choreographer, was preoccupied in his work with the differences between motion and movement. He wrote:

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[1] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: Henry Olney, 1595), sig. C2^v.

[2] See *OED picture*, n. 1.d.

[3] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 1–11. The concept involved here is similar to the one afforded by the distinction between 'open' and 'closed' questions.

> As art—dance is the art of motion, not movement. Let me qualify the difference. We may move an object from one location to another. We speak of a move in checkers or chess. Generally speaking this describes only the beginning and the end of the act, the manner in which the action takes place is motion. In other words motion qualifies the nature of movement. Therefore we speak of the laws of motion, not laws of movement—and it is within this detail of qualification that the element of mystery arises.[4]

We generally think of the creation and use of puppets as a means of entertaining onlookers in the form of a play or show and it is for this reason that it is not difficult for us to align and include the manipulation of puppets within the conventions of theatre in performance. Although this function may be seen as a primary one there are, according to purpose, others that may be deemed of equal importance. Such functions include representing, demonstrating, educating and worshipping. These last four functions appear to have driven creation of the *Rood of Boxley*, as examined by Groeneveld in Chapter 11. Here, remnants of the once seemingly and impressively constructed semi-automaton were described as 'certain engines and old wire, with old rotten sticks in the back of the same, which caused the eyes to move and stir in the head thereof, like unto a lively thing, and also the nether lip in likewise to move as though it should speak'.[5] As such, the puppet-like figures of Christ in the Easter sepulchres and the *Rood of Boxley* may be distinguished from puppets in puppet plays by virtue of their purpose, the motivation of the instigators and the form in which they operated. Irrespective of whether players or dancers engage in movement or motion, they create their own energy and this is perceived to be the case by the witness. The puppet, however, receives its energy from its operator and this may always be detectable by its audience whether the operator is seen or unseen. However, with skilled puppet operation the energy of the puppet may be perceived by the onlooker to come from the puppet itself regardless of whether the operator is seen or unseen. This is produced by skilful manipulation of the puppet and the illusion it creates. Audiences are perfectly capable of switching their focus from the puppet to the seen operator and back again without this condition weakening their engagement or acceptance of illusion as a convention. The same point may be made in respect of the player's adroit manipulation of inanimate figures, such as the hobby horse, where appropriate skill fuses embodiment of the player and horse as one. In Chapter 9 Kramer discusses different forms of inanimate horses and their activation by the player.

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[4] 'Nik: a Documentary', ed. and intro. by Marcia B. Siegel, *Dance Perspectives*, 48 (Winter, 1971), 6–56, p. 19.

[5] *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII: preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and elsewhere in England,* arranged and catalogued by James Gairdner (London: Longman, 1892), XIII, pt. 1, p. 79.

Part of the discourse of this volume is concerned with the nature of illusion inherent in performance. The very notion of performance suggests that something is prepared and premeditated and that what the audience eventually witnesses is therefore an intended copy or representation. The tacit contract with the audience is often based around what it is implicitly asked to accept or believe and that from which it is hidden. For example, in consideration of staged cases of disguise and cross-dressing, Normington discusses how the space between representation and deliberate exposure of theatrical artifice is used to create an awareness of the difference between player and role. This use of illusion is found in both puppetry and automata.

There is sometimes a fine line between the operation of puppetry and working automata—particularly semi-automata. The puppet and the semi-automaton are both driven by an operator who works in the same current time frame as the motional figures. English records or images of sixteenth-century puppets do not routinely refer to the formal organisation and presentation of puppet 'shows' or 'plays'.[6] Evidence of the manipulation of puppets tends to focus on the relationship between the puppet and its means of operation.

The earliest English recording of the word 'automata' also appears to be contained in Thomas Elyot's *Dictionary* of 1538: 'Automata, thynges without lyfe, wyche seme to moue by them selfes: as it may appere in olde horologes, and ymages, whiche by vices do moue'.[7] The *MED* does not record the word nor do any of the English fifteenth-century dictionaries.[8] The earliest example of its use in the *OED* is to one of 1616.[9] Elyot in his definition likens the motion of automata to those of 'olde horologes' [clockwork mechanisms], 'vices' and 'ymages'. 'Vices' were not automata but they were the means by which they operated; they were mechanisms that existed as clockwork type ones in automata and also as ones of larger scale employed in churches, royal entries and public presentations that included ropes, cords, packthread, and wires that were generally concealed from the viewer in their operation.[10]

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[6] An exception may be found in MS Bodley 264, fols 54^v, 76^r.

[7] Eliot, *Dictionary*, sig. Hh iij^v (The additions).

[8] Galfridus, Anglicus, *Ortus. Vocabulorum* (Westminster: W. de worde, 1500); Galfridus, Anglicus, *Promptorium Parvulorum Sive Clericum*, ed. by Albert Way, The Camden Society Old Series, 3 vols (London: Camden Society, 1843-1865); *Catholicum Anglicum, an English-Latin Wordbook, dated 1483*, ed. by J. H. Herrtage, Early English Text Society, O.S.75 (London: Trübner, 1881).

[9] *OED automaton* n. 1.

Thomas Cooper in his *Thesavrus* of 1565 defines 'automata' as: 'Automatus, a, um. That goeth by a vice, that seemeth to moue of it selfe. Euery thyng that happeneth, without a manifest cause.'[11] Here, Cooper corroborates the meaning of 'vice' by identifying it as the means by which an automaton is set in motion. Cooper's explanation of 'without manifest cause' is an important qualification in respect of the relationship between the automaton and its viewers. The viewer is only expected to witness the motion and be left guessing as to how the device works. Thomas Thomas in his *Dictionarium* of 1587 repeats part of Cooper's definition but omits reference to 'without manifest cause'.[12] Randle Cotgrave in his *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611) records *automate* as 'Any thing that goes by a vice, or peise [piece], yet seemes to moue of it selfe'.[13] Elyot, Cooper, Thomas and Cotgrave refer to automata appearing to move by themselves and it is this central feature that drives audience inquisitiveness and resultant engagement.

The automaton marks out a specific relationship with the audience. The key characteristic of an automaton, as outlined by Elyot above, is that the mechanism by which it operates is normally concealed: such automata 'seme to moue by them selfes'. Thus the viewer sees the motion but not the means of its creation. Because an audience does not normally witness the means by which the automaton moves, it is naturally curious and intrigued by the apparent cause of its seemingly mysterious motion. How does it work? The nature of spectator curiosity must inevitably be conditioned by the degree of perceived likeness to the 'real thing', whether this is humanoid or other living being. The purpose of concealing the means by which the automaton operates is to enable the viewer to concentrate on the motion and be impressed by the ingenuity that points towards verisimilitude. Since the watcher only sees and hears that which it is intended to see and hear this conditions the relationship of the witness to the performed motion. The motion of the automaton does not seek permission of the audience to do what it does; it exists independently of anything that the onlooker brings to bear as witness. The motion does not depend upon any interaction with the audience; the witness cannot interfere with the motion or contribute to it. The relationship between the performed motion and its engagement with an audience is one in which the onlooker is drawn into such engagement by the motion itself. The interesting feature about the presentation of automaton motion is that it dictates its own terms of reference. It does not attempt to communicate with or involve an audience. It is what it is.

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[10] *Collections, VII*, ed. by Giles E. Dawson, The Malone Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 192–97; Wynkyn de Worde, *The Cronycles of Englonde with the dedes of popes and emperours and also the descripcyon of Englonde* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1528), Part VII, fol. CXXXVI^{v}; R. M. Serjeantson and H. Isham Longden, 'The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights' in *The Archaeological Journal,* 70 (1913), pp. 219, 378; *Hall's Chronicle; containing the History of England, during the Reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding Monarchs, to the end of the Reign of Henry the Eighth* (London: J. Johnson; F. C. and J. Rivington; T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and J. Mawman, 1809), pp. 516–17; Thomas Coryat, *Coryats Crudities* (London: W[illiam] S[tansby], 1611), pp. 134, 254; Philips van Marnix van St Aldegonde, *The Bee hiue of the Romish Churche*, trans. by George Gylpen (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579), p. 201; Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline*, 2 vols. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), I, p. 186; Charles Wriothesley, *Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors*, ed. by William Douglas Hamilton, 2 vols (Westminster: The Camden Society, 1875-77), vol. II, p. 1; Robert Fabyan, *newe Cronycles of Englande and of Fraunce* (London: Richarde Pynson, 1516), fol. lxxxix^{r}.

[11] Thomas Cooper, *Thesavrvs Lingvae Romanæ & Britannicæ* (London: [Thomas] Bertheleti for [Henry] Wykes, 1565).

[12] Thomas, Thomas, *Dictionarivm Lingvæ Latinae et Anglicanae* (London: Richard Boyle, 1587).

[13] Cotgrave, Randle, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongves* (London: Adam Islip, 1611).

However, the working of the semi-automaton, like some forms of puppetry, creates and determines a different kind of relationship with its audience. The witness is able to see the means of operation through a visible operator. The motion may not be qualitatively different from that of the automaton but the audience witnesses both the motion of the automaton and that of its operator. The two actions are witnessed simultaneously so that both the cause and its effect are registered by the audience at the same time. This perceived duality brings about a different audience engagement which may be able to oscillate between the action of the operator and the motion of the semi-automaton. This may be a rapid process and occur many times during the cycle of operation.

The model of the encounter between St George and the dragon at St Botolph's, Billingsgate (1467), as discussed by Butterworth in Chapter 12, was such a semi-automaton. The device was operated by 'A Cranke ffor to turne the Iorge And the hors Crosse the beme'. In this instance, the operator and his action was clearly visible to witnesses of the confrontation. How did this condition affect audience relationships? Witnesses could either watch the operator or the motion of the figures or watch both actions simultaneously with the possibility of one of the actions becoming subliminal to the other. Viewers could, no doubt, switch their concentration from one to the other many times during the complete sequence of action.

Each of the contributors to this work has focused upon the nature of performance and its relation to its witnesses. There is some common ground between the conditions represented in the respective chapters but there are also conspicuous differences. Common ground exists through the manipulation of time, space, narrative, movement, motion and illusion. The clear differences between the forms and disciplines of theatre, dance, pupetry and automata invite investigation of shared criteria in performance. Such investigation also reveals areas where ostensible boundaries are not as well defined as conventionally considered. The questions, both implicit and explicit, posed by the authors in this volume attempt to penetrate issues of hitherto consideration of fixed boundaries.

Synopses of the Chapters

1. From Archive to Repertoire: The *Disguising at Hertford* and Performing Practices

Claire Sponsler's work opens the book with an analysis of John Lydgate's *Disguising at Hertford*. She begins by framing her discussion in terms of 'what we know' and 'what we do not know'. This enables her to outline major questions and issues concerning any historical research and more particularly those of theatre research. Her discussion not only frames her own topic but all those that follow in the book. She begins with the question: why should theatre historians care about performance practices? This leads her into the focus of her chapter concerning how performance was enacted. In turn, issues of methodology in research become focused through discussion of the significance of 'practice as research', 'reconstructions' and 'practice-based research'. Sponsler takes care in evaluating the criteria by which Lydgate's *Disguising* may have taken place and how these concerns may point towards the developed state of 'what we know'.

2. Walk, Talk, Sit, Quit? On What Happens in Netherlandish Rhetoricians' Plays

In his chapter, Bart Ramakers investigates the nature of performed action in the Netherlandish Rhetoricians' plays. He does this by concentrating on the properties of the performance space and the ways in which they were capable of realising the tightly written requirements of such plays. He concentrates his analysis on the play, *Verlaten Kennisse* (Discarded Knowledge), by focussing on what the audience saw and what it heard and, ultimately, what it experienced. A central feature of the investigation examines the significance of the term 'pausa' and its structural relevance to the performance of the play.

3. Performing Intrusions: Interaction and Interaxionality in Medieval English Theatre

Tom Pettitt's chapter is progressed through his newly devised concept of 'interaxionality', a term derived from the notion of 'intertexuality' as used in studying the relationship between literary works. Interaxionality encompasses all aspects of performance. Pettitt uses this concept as a means of investigating the significance of 'intrusions' into the social space of another group, whether this be planned, as in the text of a play, or more loosely created by the tradition of a folk custom. He examines *Fulgens & Lucrece* in terms of its explicit interaxionality; *Wisdom* in respect of its meta-interaxionality; *Mankind* as the focus of implicit interaxionality; and final consideration is given to nativity and Easter maskings.

4. Player Transformation: The Role of Clothing and Disguise

In this chapter Katie Normington asks, 'Is it possible to determine how a player played from the surviving records of clothing?' Setting the context of the Middle Ages as a period in which the dress of the player was of growing social concern, the argument makes use of evidence from legislative, social and cultural documents to suggest that it is possible to deduce that clothing was used to provide disguise for the player. While the player was in disguise, the audience was simultaneously aware of both the player and the role. Records indicate that the audience was reminded of how rank and gesture was affected by clothing.

5. Pavilioned in Splendour: Performing Heaven in Fifteenth-Century Florence

Although this book is primarily concerned with performance and only secondarily with performance context, Nerida Newbigin uses the performance context as a lever into the examination of performance and production. She is concerned with an examination of the spectacles of fifteenth-century Florence. Her investigation deals with successive developments in the changing genres of dramatic and theatrical spectacle, from the *laudesi* confraternities of the 1420s to the *Ascension* and *Pentecostfeste* performed annually by the confraternities of Santa Maria delle Laudi e di Sant'Agnese and Santa Maria delle Laudi e dello Spirito Santo.

6. Living Pictures: Drama without Text, Drama without Action

David Klausner's chapter distinguishes between the written text and the absence of such text in determining the nature of performance. His evidence is drawn from the reaction of the Bishop of Hereford in 1320 to an alleged performance of the *Crucifixion* at the Priory of St Mary at Abergavenny, Monmouthshire. According to the account, the monks 'play before their fellows and others staying there'. Klausner also discusses the ambivalence of a list of pageants at Hereford: are these pageants or tableaux? He similarly examines a sequence of processional pageants which took place in Dublin and concludes that the pageant lists from Hereford and Dublin deal with performance lacking in either text or movement.

7. Performer-Audience Relationships in 15th-and 16th-century Danced Spectacles

Jennifer Nevile's chapter focuses on surviving evidence of 'danced spectacle' in the courts of Europe. Her concern for what happened on the dance floor is not always represented through an accurate reflection of the principles and practices laid down in the treatises of the dance masters of Italy, France, Spain and England. Thus, she concentrates her investigation upon the relationship between performers and their audiences as a means of understanding what happened on the dance floor and how it was performed. She makes it clear that the dancers at court possessed a high level of expertise and that the composition of the audiences dictated what was performed; the dancers 'spoke' directly to the monarch. Even so, social protocols were often broken down in performance.

8. Decadance in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of Choreomania

Kathryn Dickason investigates the nature of the dance mania, *Choreomania*, which swept across Europe between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Contemporary accounts refer to 'how hundreds of people erupted in excessive frenzied movements, sometimes dancing themselves to death'. In this chapter Dickason uses modern medical understanding of this dance phenomenon to contextualise medieval action and its performed practice. She investigates the role of *Choreomania* as performance and its effects on religious belief and practice and goes on to discuss the collective manifestation of religious expression and its development from 'an aberrant to a manageable means of devotion'.

9. Writing, Telling and Showing Horsemanship in Rhetoricians' Farce

Femke Kramer examines three equestrian farce episodes from Rhetorician plays in the Low Countries. The performance qualities of these early sixteenth-century scenes are analysed in relation to the Rhetoricians' adoption of earlier comic presentations of horse devices. These equine sequences are considered as part of the developing influence of the Rhetoricians' tight establishment of their 'text determined approach in producing and preparing performances'. The Rhetoricians' obvious fascination with language, and hence their playfullness with it, directed and prescribed with some precision what the player could do and was required to do. Kramer's analysis is further informed by disciplined directorial thinking in respect of potential modern productions.

10. Inanimate Performers: The Animation and Interpretive Versatility of the Palmesel

Max Harris begins his chapter on the performance qualities and significance of the processional *Palmesal*. His concern is less with the value of the *Palmesal* as a museum object or theatrical prop and more with its value as a semi-automatous dramatic participant in the processional theatre of Palm Sunday. He develops his discussion in relation to fieldwork in two adjacent communities in Austria in 2015. Here, he observed two Palm Sunday processions: one in Hall in Tirol and the other in Thaur, a few miles east of Innsbruck. The two events are compared and contrasted as a means of conducting his analysis into the significance of past and present processions.

11. 'lyke unto a lyvelye thyng': The Boxley Rood of Grace and Medieval Performance

In considering the various layers of reality in the interaction of performance and reception, Leanne Groeneveld examines evidence of the animated semi-automaton, the *Rood of Boxley*. The discussion is framed through the thinking of Richard Schechner and takes on his concepts of 'not me ... not not me' in her penetration of the layers of the performer/onlooker relationship. She also adopts the term 'animated sculpture', as used by Kamil Kopania, to open up discussion of the nature of the *Rood of Boxley* and its animated performance qualities. Groeneveld also discusses a comparison of the behaviour of the *Rood* with modern-day film and goes on to consider the fallacy of modern 'reconstruction' (again, via Schechner) as a means to provide evidence of past practices.

12. The Mechanycalle 'Ymage off Seynt Iorge' at St Botolph's, Billingsgate, 1474

Philip Butterworth's chapter examines the maintenance document concerning the semi-automaton of St George and the Dragon at St Botolph's, Billingsgate, London in 1474. The document sets out instructions and guidance as to how unnamed people at the church should maintain the mechanism of the model. The guide notes do not present a complete description of the model. Thus, Butterworth has liaised with the well-known designer and creator of automata and semi-automata, Eric Williamson, to develop a conjectured version of the model that attempts to fill in missing details drawn from appropriate late-fifteenth-century English technological understanding.

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From Archive to Repertoire: The *Disguising at Hertford* and Performance Practices

Claire Sponsler

Here is what we know.

It happened during the long holiday season that stretched from late November through to January. It took place in Hertford Castle, some twenty miles north of London. It featured a performance before an unnamed king, whom we can deduce was the young heir to the English throne, Henry VI. It took the form of a disguising of countrymen complaining about their wives and the wives' response, followed by the king's decision. It was staged at the request of John Brice, the royal household's deputy controller, who would die in battle a few years later in France. It was devised by John Lydgate, monk of the great Benedictine monastery of Bury St Edmunds and England's most famous living poet.

So we know who was (partially) involved in it, what it was (sort of), when it occurred (more or less), where it took place, and why (as part of the tradition of holiday entertainments in the royal household) it took place.

But consider what we do not know. We do not know who else helped plan the disguising beyond Brice and Lydgate, who else in addition to the king was in the audience, or who played the roles of the countryfolk husbands and wives. We do not know what this disguising (if that is what it was) looked or sounded like, what costumes were used or what actions performed. We also do not know exactly when it took place, although 1427 seems the best guess.[1] And we do not know why a performance on this specific subject matter was chosen for the amusement of the king, who, after all, was only six years old.

That is quite a lot that we do not know, and many of those unknowns fall under a category that I left out of my list of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*. The missing category is of course *how* the performance watched by the king

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[1] On the date, see *John Lydgate: Mummings and Entertainments*, ed. by Claire Sponsler (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), pp. 85–86.