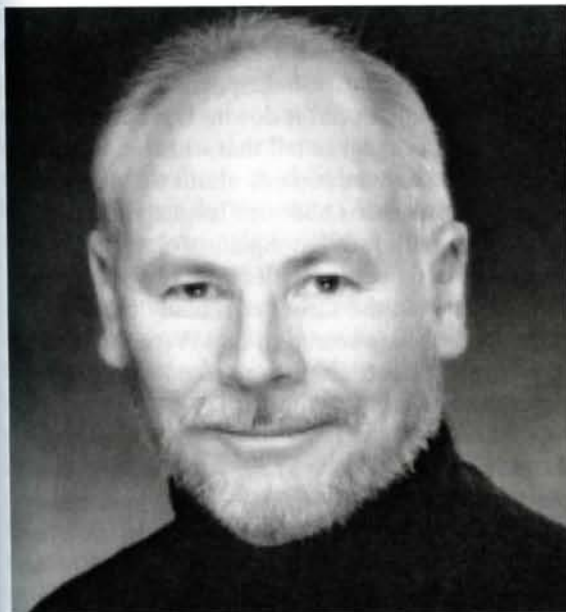


A Midsummer Night's Dream: An Original Pronunciation Production



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Part One: Before

David Crystal, author of *Pronouncing Shakespeare*, *Shakespeare's Words*, and over 100 other titles, is the foremost champion of the use of Early Modern English, or Original Pronunciation (OP), as he calls it, in the production of Shakespeare's plays.

When Meier was planning his month-long masterclass at the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon in June 2007, David Crystal was the first guest speaker he invited. Meier had recently read Crystal's Pronouncing Shakespeare, the account of the groundbreaking experiment with an Original Pronunciation Romeo and Juliet at Shakespeare's Globe in 2004 under David's guidance and design. Meier had been instantly intrigued: He says, "David's book set me on fire! He was the bit of the class, and I was determined to someday direct or coach a Shakespeare production in OP myself, with David's collaboration, if possible."

After further conversation with Crystal, Meier chose Early Modern English and Shakespeare's Original Pronunciation as the research topic for his 2009 sabbatical leave. This was in preparation for a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, which

Meier would direct in the fall of 2010. Crystal would provide pre-production advice and be in residence with the company in Kansas for a short time in the first days of rehearsal.

The interview published here, the "before" of a before-and-after pair of interviews, took place over twelve days in December 2009 as the two planned their collaboration on A Midsummer Night's Dream and Meier was deepening his own understanding of the way English was spoken in Shakespeare's lifetime. The interview was conducted by e-mail, later edited by Paul and subsequently recorded in a conversation via Skype.

To help readers, the recording may be heard at: http://www.paulmeier.com/Crystal_Interview1.mp3, which is especially important when Crystal is demonstrating OP.

The production script, containing a phonetic transcription and embedded recordings of Crystal reading the text in OP, may be freely downloaded from <http://paulmeier.com/DREAM/script.pdf>, while other documents and production details are available at <http://paulmeier.com/shakespeare.html>.

MEIER: David, you are a rare treasure, an academic linguist with a deep interest in and a long history of involvement in the theatre. How did those two strands get entwined in your career?

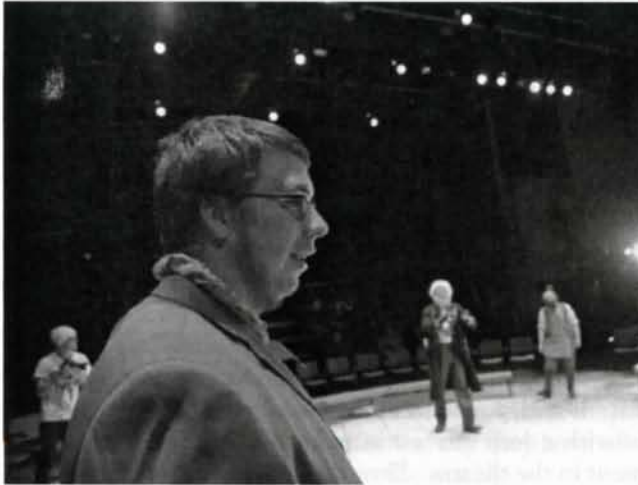
CRYSTAL: I can't remember a time when I wasn't fascinated by theatre. My mum used to produce plays for a repertory company in Holyhead [Wales, where Crystal grew up], and I'd be brought along to rehearsals. That was before I even went to school. Then as a teenager she took me to Stratford, and I saw my first Shakespeare play—I still have vivid memories of Paul Robeson's Othello, in his flowing white robes, with Sam Wanamaker darting about as Iago. I've kept up the theatre connection since. I did some acting and playwriting at university, I've had dozens of roles in various reps, from panto villains to Shylock, and I've toured a couple of solo shows. I've done a little bit of directing too—a production of *Under Milk Wood* a few years ago—and written a play about endangered languages. So there's definitely a theatre gene somewhere—which has been passed on, as a matter of fact, for son Ben is an actor who's also done some directing and producing; and keeping up with what he's doing has added a fresh dimension to the theatrical side of my life.

My fascination with language has run in parallel to all this. I can trace it back to growing up in a bilingual community in Wales, and then being exposed to several languages in school. It came to the boil when I went to university, where there were courses on the history of English, comparative philology, phonetics, and all sorts of other goodies. I was reading English, and the beauty of that course—which was

Pronunciation, Phonetics, Linguistics, Dialect/Accent Studies

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at University College London—was the nicely balanced language and literature syllabus. So, it was Shakespeare in the morning, linguistics in the afternoon, sort of thing, for three years. I had great teachers on both sides—Hilda Hulme on Shakespeare, Randolph Quirk on language—and learned from them my basic principle, that language and literature are two sides of a single coin; they inform each other so marvelously. When I started teaching linguistics myself, much of my early work was on stylistics, and that's been a major theme in my writing ever since.



Sam Voelker as Robin Starveling

Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

Shakespeare has always been the great unifying factor for me, so I suppose it was only a matter of time before I started researching and writing about his language myself. But this didn't happen until the 1990s. Three things happened then to bring him into center-stage, as it were. A new repertory company was formed in Holyhead, and I found myself acting in several of his plays, along with Hilary [David's wife and business partner] and Ben. Then Ben decided to go into the theatre professionally, and eventually we collaborated on various projects, such as *Shakespeare's Words* and *The Shakespeare Miscellany*. And then, thirdly, the editor of the magazine at Shakespeare's Globe asked me to write regular pieces on Shakespeare's use of language for *Around the Globe*. And I found myself being sucked in to the professional Shakespeare world, adding a linguistic perspective to various projects, such as the Wells and Taylor edition of the collected works [*The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*]. Once Shakespeare gets hold of you, he doesn't let you go, it seems.

The links with the Globe grew. I went to see most of their productions and gave various talks for their education department. I was their Sam Wanamaker Fellow in 2003. So when the Globe called with a new idea, in 2004, I was well primed!

MEIER: The story of that “new idea” is thrillingly told in *Pronouncing Shakespeare*, of course, which I picked up at the little bookstore across from the Shakespeare birthplace in Stratford in 2005. I couldn't put it down. Devoured it in a single sitting. I won't ask you to tell that whole story again here, but I would love to hear you talk about the different relationship that Elizabethans had with language from the relationship we have with it today. Spelling closer to pronunciation, no standard prestige dialect yet, or was there? They certainly seemed in the throes of actually creating language, something we are scared to do. Were the poets deliberately trying to elevate English to stand alongside the classical languages of Greek and Latin?

CRYSTAL: Not just the poets (to take your last question first). Scholars too were anxious to show that English had “come of age.” There's a splendid statement from William Camden in 1605—he was Ben Jonson's tutor. “Our English tongue,” he says, “is (I will not say as sacred as the Hebrew, or as learned as the Greek) but as fluent as the Latin, as courteous as the Spanish, as courtlike as the French, and as sonorous as the Italian.” Nobody would have been able to write this a century before, but during the 16th century a huge amount of linguistic development took place, with tens of thousands of new words of classical origin entering the language, offering fresh opportunities for stylistic expression. The rapid pace of development worried some, of course. Poets wondered if their words would be understood by later generations: “We write in sand,” said one, sadly. And it was this sense of unchecked progress, chaos even, which led to later writers wanting to fix the language—[Jonathan] Swift with his notion of an Academy, [Samuel] Johnson with his Dictionary, and so on.

Actually creating language? Certainly. I've said in several places that the main linguistic lesson we can learn from Shakespeare (and others of the time) is how to be daring with language. There was an instinct to be creative, and no institutional mindset to counter it, no dictionaries yet. (The first, Cawdrey's alphabetical table of hard words, didn't get published until 1604.) And there were no influential grammars and only the first primitive attempts at fixing spelling, such as Richard Mulcaster's spelling lists. Now Mulcaster is one of the pedants who may have been the model for Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*. And it's interesting to see, in the way Holofernes treats spelling, the beginnings of a prestige usage. You're right: there was no standard pronunciation yet (Received Pronunciation didn't develop in Britain until the end of the 18th century), but there was an emerging sense of the special status of the written language. You should pronounce debt as d-e-b-t, says Holofernes, and he's horrified to hear Don Armado leave out the “b.” This privileging of writing over speech we still have today (e.g., pronouncing the “t” in often because it's there in the spelling). It was the only

way educated people in Elizabethan England could show in their pronunciation that they were educated. There was no expectation that an upper-class person on stage would have a “posh” non-regional accent, for there was no such accent at that time. Regional accents weren’t a barrier to social advancement, as they would be later. Raleigh and Drake had strong Devonshire accents. And after 1603 the sound of the court was strongly Scottish.

Spelling was indeed closer to pronunciation, and this is an important source of evidence for OP. When Mercutio talks about Queen Mab’s whip having a lash of film, and both Folio and Quarto spell *film* as *philome*, we can deduce a two-syllable pronunciation. It’s natural enough, as we know from Modern Irish English, where we hear exactly that: *fillum*. Or, to take another example: In Sonnet 67, we find *live* at the end of line 1 and *achieve* at the end of line 3. Is there evidence to justify that rhyme? Yes, because there are spellings elsewhere in Shakespeare of *achieve* as a-t-c-h-i-v-e. This sort of thing is gold dust when we start focusing on the detail of OP.



Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

“The fairy kingdom buys not the child of me.” Titania (Leslie Bennett), Oberon (John Staniunas), Puck (J.T. Nagle), and Fairies (Mary McNulty, Sara Kennedy, Hailey Lapin), Musical Director/Composer (Ryan McCall)

MEIER: Perhaps we should spend a little time on the evidence question—always the biggest question, right? You told me you had some new thoughts about the evidence for OP that you didn’t write about in *Pronouncing Shakespeare*. Are you going to break new ground here?

CRYSTAL: It’s certainly the question that leaps into the mind of an audience whenever they hear OP. “How do you know?” It’s not so much that I’ve had new thoughts about the process, just a wider range of examples. As I say in the book, there are three kinds of evidence. The spelling evidence we’ve just mentioned. The second kind is what we can deduce from the puns and rhymes which don’t work in Modern English. Each new transcription of a play

or poem into OP brings to light fresh examples—and I expect the process to continue for quite some time, as so far only two plays have been done in their entirety, *Romeo and Troilus* (three, of course, when your *Dream* is produced), and the Sonnets. But the most important kind of evidence comes from the comments of contemporaries—especially the orthoepists, writing about the spelling system and telling us, often in considerable phonetic detail, how words were pronounced, where the main stress was, whether they rhymed, and so on. I’ve read more of these sources than when I worked on *Romeo*, and the evidence for particular OP decisions has built up as a result. For example, the Sonnets rhyme *love* with such words as *prove* and *move* several times. Which way should the rhyme go? Should we lengthen the vowel of *love* to make it like *move* or shorten the vowel of *move* to make it like *love*? Ben Jonson, in his *English Grammar*, gives us the answer. This is what he says about letter O. “It naturally soundeth ... in the short time more flat, and akin to ‘u’; as *cosen, dosen, mother, brother, love, prove*.” And in another section, he brings together *love, glove*, and *move*. This doesn’t exclude the possibility that in other accents there might have been a long-vowel version of *love*, of course, but it does provide clear support for the choice I made in my transcription.

MEIER: When I told you I wanted to direct an OP Shakespeare, I asked you if there was one that deserved this treatment or begged for it. Your immediate answer was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. And that’s the one you and I are working on together. Why *Dream*?

CRYSTAL: Chiefly because it’s got lots of rhyming couplets, many of which don’t work in Modern English. One of the big things about OP is that it makes the rhymes work. Here are a couple of examples from *Dream*. *One* and *alone* don’t rhyme today in this couplet from Puck, but they do in OP:

Then will two at one woo one—
[ðen wɪt tu: at wns wu: o:n]
That must needs be sport alone
[ðat mvs ne:dz bɪ spɔ:t əlo:n]

And here’s an example from Oberon, where in Modern English there’s a phonaesthetic clash between the ee endings of *archery*, *gloriously*, and *remedy* and the eye endings of *die*, *eye*, *sky*, and *by*. In OP, the repeated /əi/ endings produce a dreamy hypnotic effect, highly appropriate to what he’s doing at this point, to my mind:

Flower of this purple dye,
[fləʊ əv ðɪs pɜ:pəl daɪ]
Hit with Cupid’s archery,
[ɪt wɪð kjʊpɪdɪz əˈtʃəri]
Sink in apple of his eye.

Pronunciation, Phonetics, Linguistics, Dialect/Accent Studies

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[sɪnk ɪn ʌp t̪ əv ɪz əɪ]
When his love he doth espy,
[mɛn ɪz lʌv ɪ dʌθ ɪspəɪ]
Let her shine as gloriously
[lɛt ɚ ʃəɪn əz glɔːrɪəsli]
As the Venus of the sky.
[az ðə vɛ:nəs əv ðə skəɪ]
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
[mɛn ðəʊ wɛ:kst ɪf ʃeː bɪ bəɪ]
Beg of her for remedy.
[bɛg əv ɚ fɚ ɪɛmədəɪ]

But making the rhymes work isn't the only reason. I'm also expecting OP to reveal some interesting puns. I can't say what these are right now—they'll become apparent only as the transcription proceeds. But to take an example from *Romeo*, I had no idea (nor, it would seem from editors' notes, had anyone else) that there was a possible wordplay in the Prologue:

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
[fɪəm fɔːθ ðə fɛ:təl ləɪnz əv ðɛːz tuː fɔːz]

In OP, *loins* and *lines* would sound the same. There are bound to be examples like this in *Dream*.

And finally, there's the novel auditory experience that arises simply from hearing this kind of pronunciation for the first time—an accent that hasn't been heard on stage for 400 years. People generally find it exhilarating, especially when (as routinely happened in the Globe productions) the OP made the actors reinterpret their relationship with their characters. I recall the actor playing Mercutio saying that he found his Queen Mab speech much more meaningful in the “earthy” tones of OP than in the “posh” tones of RP [Received Pronunciation, Standard British English]. So I'm expecting to hear some interesting effects when the *Dream* fairies and mechanicals start to use it. The tongue-tripping rate of OP also affects the actors' movement, and that too is likely to be important in this play.

MEIER: I'm glad you brought up “earthy” and “posh.” Modern Shakespeare productions, certainly British ones, have a ready-made device in today's accents for revealing

the social status of the characters. As a dialect coach, I gravitate toward the use of accents and dialects as a way to sharpen the narrative and reveal character differences. I worry rather that with everyone speaking OP in *Dream*, I won't have the same scope. The mechanicals, obviously, beg for OP, but what about the fairy kingdom and the courtly characters? Will you be recommending dramatically different shades of OP for our production?

CRYSTAL: Indeed, though the decision as to what counts as “dramatic” is yours (as director), not mine. One has first to appreciate the difference between phonetics (the study of human-produced sound) and phonology (the study of the sound system of a language). OP is (my attempt to establish) the phonological system of Early Modern English, and it allows the same kind of phonetic variations as happen in Modern English. No two people have exactly the same accent, because of their voice-quality differences. And people from different parts of the English-speaking world have more or less the same phonological system, despite their many regional differences. (One has to say “more or less” because some accents are more different than others.) It would have been the same in Early Mod-

ern English. London would have contained dozens of accents, with its multicultural population, and a huge inward movement of people from the Midlands and East Anglia. We know which parts of the country many of the actors on the Globe stage came from, and they would have ended up with an accent that was a mix of their home region and London. So there would never have been phonetic uniformity on the Globe stage, and we would have heard many shades of OP. It's perfectly possible to rhyme

one and *alone*, for example, in a Norfolk way, or a Cockney way, or a Scots way, and so on. Or again: Everyone in the 1580s would have pronounced *musician* as mu-zi-see-an, and this would have been pronounced in various regional ways. Also, OP has nothing to say about regional variations in intonation and tone of voice, which can be as varied as people want. So it's a mistake to think of OP as if it were a single accent.

When we did *Romeo and Troilus*, we maintained this principle. The actors were told not to lose their natural accents, but to speak the OP speech as trippingly as they could in their natural voices. So, we had a Juliet who sounded Scot-



“I am your spaniel!” Helena (Lynsey Becher), Lysander (Austin Robinson), Oberon (John Staniunas)

Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

ish, a Nurse from the East End of London, a Peter from Northern Ireland, as well as some RP speakers. But they all modified their accents to rhyme one with alone, and so on. Some of these accents were closer to OP than others, of course. Those who already had a postvocalic /-r/ in their accents found OP easier to acquire than those who didn't. And there were different phonetic qualities of postvocalic /-r/, from a fricative to a trill. At least some speakers in Jacobean England trilled their /-r/, for Ben Jonson tells us that the sound hurreth (that is, vibrates).

It's important to appreciate that none of these accents had a ready-made association with poshness. That kind of association came in much later, in the late 1700s, with the emergence of Received Pronunciation. There were, of course, accents associated with the court—notably, the Scots accents would have been everywhere after 1603. But there was no “upper-class accent.” Drake and Raleigh, as I've already mentioned, are famous examples of people who kept their strong Devonshire accents. If one wanted to show one was really educated, then one might pronounce words as they were spelled—as satirized in *Holofernes*—but this was a new trend, which is presumably why Shakespeare homed in on it in this way. My *Romeo* actors were at first a bit nonplussed by this information. “How are we to show poshness (e.g., in the Prince) if there's no RP?” they asked. The director, Tim Carroll, had an answer for them: “Act,” he said. And indeed, through their posture, clothing, facial expressions, movement, and so on, they had no trouble.

Having said that, there are some variations which can help to suggest character differences, and any director has some choices to make. The fact of the matter is that OP was changing throughout the period Shakespeare was writing. “Mu-si-see-an” in 1580 was becoming “mu-zi-shee-an.” Gone was pronounced sometimes to rhyme with John and sometimes with Joan. It's no different today, of course; many words have alternative pronunciations. But a director can make use of these variations in interesting ways. So, for example, in *Romeo*, we gave the more conservative pronunciations (like “mu-zi-see-an”) to the older characters, and the trendier ones to the young bloods. It was the director who decided who said what (who would Juliet identify with?). Tim generally felt that, as the audience was coming to the play to hear OP, they should get their money's worth, as it were; so whenever there was a choice, he would go for the older variants. Another example of this choice was the use of initial /h-/ , which could be present or dropped (again, without any suggestion of lack of education or carelessness). Since the 18th century, h-dropping has had a bad image, so it's possible for an OP director to capitalize on this, by having some characters keep their h's and some not. It wouldn't be doing harm to OP to have the courtly characters in *Dream* keep their h's and the mechanicals

not. It would of course be reading in some modern values into OP, but I doubt if it's possible to avoid that completely anyway, given that our audience experience can never be an authentic duplication of the Elizabethan setting.

MEIER: That distinction between the phonological and the phonetic is tremendously helpful, David. In the notes to accompany your transcription of *Troilus and Cressida* for Shakespeare's Globe in 2005, you wrote:

The pronunciation represented is (my interpretation of) an underlying system for Early Modern English. Its aim is to show the major differences between then and now. It is not an attempt to show the phonetic detail of each sound. Any one of the sounds shown could have been articulated in a variety of subtly different ways—just as today, the sound in, say, two can be said with slightly more or slightly less lip rounding, slightly higher or slightly lower in the mouth, and so on. Doubtless, at the time, the actors (who came from different parts of the country) brought their individual accents to their parts. The same can happen with this production. There should be no effort made to make everyone sound exactly the same.



“Let me come to her!” Hermia (Hannah Roark), Lysander (Austin Robinson), Demetrius (Ben Sullivan)

Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

But in the absence of a standard, prestige pronunciation system, and given that there were differences between regional pronunciations as noticeable as today's, what led you to advocate mouth [əʊ], price [əi], strut [ʌ], and trap [a] with those specific phonetic values when offering your interpretation of OP? I can't help wondering if the Lancashire and Sussex sounds of 1600 were as different from each other as they are today. After all, today's strut [ʊ] and strut [ʌ] are not just shades of the same vowel but live in rather different regions of the vowel space.

CRYSTAL: There certainly were regional differences comparable to those we hear today. We know this because occasionally orthoepists remark on it or sometimes make an unusual recommendation that could reflect the part of the country they come from (e.g., the writer John Hart came from Devon, and he permits long vowels in such words as above). And the dramatists sometimes help, e.g., Shakespeare's use of /z/ in the representation of rural speech in *King Lear*. But these observations are rare. We know next to nothing really about Early Modern English regional-accent variation.

I've done nothing original in choosing phonetic values for the various vowels. A huge amount of research into the phonology of the period (by such scholars as Dobson and Kökeritz) has led to conclusions about which areas of the vowel space are involved in the articulation of each phoneme, and I've stood on their shoulders and made my own decisions when they disagree. This isn't the place to explain how historical phonology works, but it should be obvious that deductions about the values of the Elizabethan period have to mesh with deductions about Old, Middle, and Modern English. We have a system in continuous development from the days when the English alphabet was first devised down to the present day. We know the end-point, which is how we speak now. And we assume system in the beginning-point: If a vowel sound is represented by one letter, we assume it was a pure vowel; if with two identical letters, a long vowel; if with two dif-



"Churl! On thy eyes I throw/All the power this charm doth owe."
Puck (J.T. Nagle), Lysander (Austin Robinson)

Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

ferent letters, a diphthong, with the letters representing sounds similar to the vowels as shown in isolation; and so on. The evidence of rhymes and orthoepist descriptions helps to sharpen the analysis for the Early Modern period. The results are that, for some vowels, we can be quite precise about the area of vowel space involved - /u:/, for instance; for others, such as the strut vowel, there is less certainty. You have to make a judgment, and this is where other linguists might—almost certainly, would—reach different conclusions from mine. The best one can say is that my version is plausible—one of several possible plausible versions.

One also reflects one's upbringing, in such matters. No one is an intellectual island. I learned my historical phonology from A. C. Gimson—see, for instance, the representation of Early Modern English in his *Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*—and I remain influenced by that. When I was preparing for my encounter with *Romeo*, I went to see John Barton at his London flat to compare our two versions—for John had supervised an OP production of *Julius Caesar* in Cambridge many years before and had retained his interest in it. He did some; I did some. The two versions were almost identical. But then I reflected: Who had taught him his OP? It was Daniel Jones. And Daniel Jones was Gimson's teacher too. So there was an inevitable family resemblance.

What this means in production, of course, is that there are no grounds for being phonetically pedantic about actors' versions of these sounds. When I worked at the Globe, if someone tried to do a strut vowel and didn't get it exactly like mine—say, by fronting it a bit more or rounding it slightly—I wouldn't bother to correct them. On the other hand, if they went too far away from it, so that there was a danger of confusion with another sound, or of missing a rhyme or a pun, then I would. Actors are actors, not phoneticians. But they do have to be reasonably competent phonologists.

MEIER: This is sharpening my vision of our production immensely! Also my enthusiasm for it. Incidentally, as an actor who got deeply into phonetics, my heritage is also through Gimson, who came to Rose Bruford's [Rose Bruford College of Speech of Drama], where I trained, to administer the IPA proficiency test. We'd practiced for it listening to the old 78rpm Daniel Jones cardinal vowel LPs! I haven't gone into historical phonology, though, other than briefly in Gimson's book, and *Accents of English* by J.C. Wells, who took over the phonetics chair at University College, right? I must come to grips with Kökeritz. But switching topic a little, other than your productions at the Globe, and John Barton's at Cambridge, have there been other professional OP productions you know about? Other "academic" theatre productions? You must be approached all the time by people like me whom you've inspired. And how would you sum up audience reactions to OP productions? They're scared enough that they won't understand, so why on earth am I trying to intimidate them further, I ask myself? Even my own department had misgivings when I proposed the production.

persuade them that they should have a go by using a clever stratagem. He said, "If you don't do it first, Stratford will!" So the Globe management agreed—but cautiously, because the *Romeo* production was only to be for a weekend in the middle of a season in Modern English.

Of course, it only takes a few moments to realize that the belief that "people won't understand it" is absolute nonsense. All you have to do is listen to it. But of course, at the time, there were no easily available recordings to get rid of the panic. There are now. There are downloadable files from my own site, www.pronouncingshakespeare.com. The Globe has produced a CD of words and music, called *This World's Globe*, which has some dialogue in OP. And I'm sure more audio material will become available as more productions take place. Unfortunately, the Globe has never gone in for marketing its productions in the way that the RSC [Royal Shakespeare Company] has. Every production at the Globe is filmed, and both of my OP productions are there in the archive, accessible upon request, but they're not on sale at all, which is a shame. So I hope your production, Paul, will be made available in some way.



"Oh Wall. Oh sweet, oh lovely Wall." Bottom (Scott Cox) and company

Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

The fact of the matter is that OP is no more different from the accents we hear on the BBC or NPR than most other regional accents in the UK, USA, or anywhere else. In fact, some regional accents in Modern English are much more difficult! I went around the audiences in both the *Romeo* and *Troilus* productions and asked people how they were finding it. Most said they were quite used to the accent by the end of Act 1, Scene 1! None said they had difficulty with it. All claimed to recognize it—in the sense that they heard echoes of their own regional background (if they had one) in OP. And this isn't surprising, as this accent was one that traveled. It interacted with other accents in the British Isles, and crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower. This might be the

point to hear a longer piece of OP, and listeners really then need to ask themselves the question: Was there any of that which I *didn't* understand? Here's Oberon's speech from *Dream*. It well illustrates the way in which the accent expresses a rural theme. And of course the rhymes now work, which didn't before.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
[əɪ nɔ: ə bɑŋk mə: ðə wəɪld θaɪm blɔ:z]
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
[mə ɔkslɪps ən ðə nɒdɪŋ vaɪələt gɔ:z]

CRYSTAL: To take your last point first: I'm not surprised. There's a huge ignorance about OP out there—which the Globe had too. That was the main reason they hadn't done this before. They'd done "original" everything else—movement, costumes, music... but not pronunciation. And that was because they thought like this: "We're open only half of the year. We don't get a government subsidy of any kind. So to survive, we have to fill the place for every performance. If we put on an OP production, people won't understand it, the news will get around, and audiences will drop. We can't take the risk." Tim Carroll managed to

Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
 [kʷaɪt o:və kənəpəɪd wɪ lʌsɪəs wʊdbəɪn]
 With sweet muskroses and with eglantine.
 [wɪð swe:t mʌskrɔ:zɪz ən wɪð eɡlæntəɪn]
 There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
 [ðe: sle:ps tɪtənɪə sʌmtəɪm əv ðə naɪt]
 Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
 [lʌlɪd ɪn ðe:z fləʊ:z wɪð dɑnsɪz ən dɪləɪt]
 And there the snake throws her enamelled skin,
 [ən ðe: ðə sne:k θrɔ:z ə ɪnəmɪld skɪn]
 Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
 [we:d wəɪd ɪnʌf tə wɹap ə feɪrɪ ɪn]
 And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes
 [ən wɪ ðə dʒu:s ə ðɪs əɪt stɹe:k ə əɪz]
 And make her full of hateful fantasies.
 [ən me:k ə fʊl əv ɛ:ftf fəntəsəɪz]
 Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.
 [te:k ðəʊ sʌm əv ɪt ən se:k θru: ðɪs grʌv]
 A sweet Athenian lady is in love
 [ə swe:t əte:njən le:dəɪ ɪz ɪn lʌv]
 With a disdainful youth—anoint his eyes;
 [wɪð ə dɪsdeɪnfl ju:θ ənaɪnt ɪz əɪz]
 But do it when the next thing he espies
 [bət du: ɪt wɛn ðə nek θɪŋ ɪ: ɪspəɪz]
 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
 [me: bɪ ðə le:dəɪ ðəʊ ʃəlt no: ðə mæn]
 By the Athenian garments he hath on
 [bɪ ðɪ əte:njən gɑ:mənts ɪ: əθ ən]
 Effect it with some care, that he may prove
 [ɪfekt ɪt wɪð sʌm ke: ðæt ɪ: me: pɹʌv]
 More fond on her than she upon her love.
 [mɔ: fænd ən ə ðən ʃe: əpən ə lʌv]

Now when I say that such a speech is understandable, what I mean, of course, is that it's just as understandable as it would be if it were spoken in a modern accent. I'm not saying that OP makes all Shakespeare immediately understandable! If you don't know what *eglantine* is, for example, then that's a problem for you, but it's a totally different issue, nothing to do with OP at all. All I'm saying is that anyone who knows what [eglantine] is will know what [e:glæntəɪn] is. The accent won't stop them.

I'm not sure how you get rid of the imagined fear of OP in advance. One has to form a climate, I suppose, and this takes time. Maybe in the advance marketing for a production one should illustrate the accent in some way. That's so much easier now, with iPhone downloads and such-like. There haven't been many attempts at it, though, and that's part of the problem. The Globe hasn't repeated the experience since 2005, mainly because it had a change in artistic direction the following year. The RSC showed interest; indeed, at one point I went over and talked to the company, but then a couple of minor things got in the way, such as rebuilding their theatre! Maybe they'll take up the



"Now you and I are new in amity" Oberon (John Staniunas), Titania (Leslie Bennett)

idea again one day. I know of a couple of theatrical productions of fragments in OP. Mary Key, who visited the Globe during the *Romeo* production, did something in connection with the Blackfriars project in Virginia. And Alex Torra put on an evening of OP in 2007 called *As I Pronounced It To You* in New York. This was his account to me by e-mail of how the evening went:

We presented thirteen scenes from eleven different plays performed by seven actors. The event happened at a tavern in Times Square called The Playwright, and right outside the window there was a giant billboard that read "Speechless." It was perfect. We invited folks to come and have some food and drinks, and about sixty people came and we had some great responses. The most popular responses of the evening were: how the sound changes allowed the language to move faster and how incredibly enjoyable that was; how the OP actually clarifies rhetoric and word play; how many particularly enjoyed the comedies. (We had a very successful scene from *Taming of the Shrew*, when Petruchio and Katherine meet for the first time...the scene had absolutely no physical life [they were sitting at music stands], and it was as enjoyable as ever.) At the end of the evening, I kept being asked what the next step is. It's encouraging to know that others know that this exploration does not stop here.

That sums up the audience-reaction question very well. I got exactly the same reactions at the Globe in 2004 and 2005. And you will too, Paul.

MEIER: I am looking forward so much to working on the production with you. There is great excitement as well as trepidation about it here. And I look forward to our pub-

lishing a second conversation, after *A Midsummer Night's Dream* closes. Many thanks indeed, David.

Shakespeare in OP

This is an extract from Meier's eBook,
The Original Pronunciation of Shakespeare's English,
a free download from
<http://paulmeier.com/shakespeare.html>.

Edmund, *King Lear*, Act 1, Scene 2

Go to <http://www.paulmeier.com/OPtrack5.mp3>
to listen to Meier speak this speech in Original
Pronunciation as you read along.

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
ðəʊ nɛ:tʰə ɑ:t mɪ gədəs tʰə ðəɪ lɑ:

My services are bound. Wherefore should I
mɪ sɜ:vɪsɪz ə bəʊnd mɛ fɔː ʃʊd əɪ

Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
stænd ɪ ðə pʰlɛ:g ə kʰɪstəm ən pʰɛ mɪtʰ

The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
ðə kʰjʊɹɪəsɪtʰɪ ə nɛ:sjənz tʰə dɪpʰrɪv mɪ

For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-
shines
fɔː ðætʰ əɪ əm sʊm tʰmɛlʋ ə fɔː tʰe:n mʊnʃəɪnz

Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
ləg əv ə brʌðə məɪ bɑstə d mɛ fɔː bɛ:s

When my dimensions are as well compact,
mɛn mɪ dɛmɛnsjənz ə əz wɛl kʰəmpʰaktʰ

My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
mɪ məɪnd əz dʒɛnɪərəs ən d mɪ ʃe:p əz tɹu:

As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
əz ənɪst mədəmz ɪsjə məɪ brænd ðe ɹs

With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
wɪ bɛ:s wɪ bɛ:snəs bɑstʰɛ dɪ bɛ:s bɛ:s

Part Two: After

This interview, the “after” of a before-and-after pair of interviews, took place in December 2010, after David Crystal's September residence in Kansas at the beginning of rehearsals, and after *Dream* had closed in late November. The interview was conducted by e-mail, later edited by Meier, and subsequently recorded in a conversation via Skype.

To help readers, the recording may be heard at http://www.paulmeier.com/Crystal_Interview2.mp3, especially important when the two discuss the dialect.

The production script of the University of Kansas production, as cut by Meier, and containing a phonetic transcription and Crystal's embedded recordings, is available freely online from <http://paulmeier.com/shakespeare.html>, where details of the DVD of one of the performances are also available, along with airdates for the radio drama production, the OP dialect instruction eBook, and Meier's eBook, *Voicing Shakespeare*. Details of David Crystal's book, *Pronouncing Shakespeare*, plus extensive recordings of Crystal reading Shakespeare in OP are to be found at his Website: <http://www.pronouncingshakespeare.com/>

MEIER: David, your visit was a triumph. The production was extremely well received (glowing reviews), with the public's evident curiosity about OP reflected in box office receipts—triple what was projected! So the University of Kansas is very grateful to you. As we recall our work from early September to the present (December 2010), I should begin by asking for your recollections of your residency, particularly your work with the cast.

CRYSTAL: I think a good first move was to get the whole cast to come to a general talk on OP, before we began rehearsals. In it I was able to explain the background to OP, to illustrate it in detail, to answer the inevitable question “How do you know?” and to present some of the issues we discussed in the first part of this interview. It was an open lecture, so the cast found themselves sitting in an audience of other academics, theatre people, and the general public. The audience response, you'll recall, was very enthusiastic, and I think this would have been sensed by the cast, some of whom may well have been feeling a bit tentative about this experiment. Certainly everyone was very upbeat in the reception which followed, and I got the impression that they couldn't wait to get started. And when we did, the next day, the fact that I could rely on this background saved a lot of time, as otherwise much of the first rehearsal would have been devoted to general issues. In that first hour, we were able to get them talking in fragments of OP, individually and in unison, and even joking in it a bit (saying good night with a centralized diphthong, for instance). From

Pronunciation, Phonetics, Linguistics, Dialect/Accent Studies

A Midsummer Night's Dream: An Original Pronunciation Production by Paul Meier

that moment, I had no doubts that they would be on target by the time of the production.

What was really good was to see the production moving in parallel with the OP learning. The play's the thing, after all. And it was important that they started to develop some of their blocking and characterization while still getting to grips with the accent. This is certainly what I would recommend, for future productions. Otherwise what happens is that a cast learns their OP while sitting down calmly, and then, when they have to add emotion and pace, they lose the plot, and revert to their native accents. This happened a bit in any case, but it would have been a far greater problem if you hadn't got them moving around from the very beginning.

I haven't yet heard the recording of the final production (I did so miss not being there!), so I can't yet give the OP a grade, as it were. But based on what they had achieved by the time I left, after only an hour a day with the group as a whole, plus a session with each of them individually, I think I will need to have a marking scale that goes higher than A. Certainly the reviews suggested a performance of real excellence. Part of their rapid progress, I suspect, must be put down to the preparation they put in before I arrived, using my audio recording and the parallel transcription. I don't think any of them expected that they would be so fluent after only a dozen hours of rehearsal. A couple of them did find the accent more of a problem, but that's normal—it happened with my Globe casts too. And there were a few sounds that seemed to present more of a difficulty than I think you were expecting. But what was so rewarding was to see how, despite the initial glitches, they were so quickly able to assimilate the OP and make it part of their character.

MEIER: You're right. Any lingering fears among the cast about the dialect vanished rapidly during your ten days with them, to be replaced only by enthusiasm. All your predictions were spot on: The cast quickly fell in love with the dialect's swiftness, its earthiness, its lower point of resonance in the body, its way of guiding us in metrical considerations, its restoration of rhymes and puns. And audiences



"Here comes my messenger" Oberon (John Staniunas), Puck (J.T. Nagle)

Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

were genuinely intrigued too. So many expressed delight with how the dialect enriched their listening experience and surprise at its clarity. You will see the DVD shortly; that and the radio-drama production we made of the show will allow you to give us an OP grade in due course.

And you're right about the couple of surprises too. You had wanted us to phonetically transcribe THOUGHT words, indicating [ɑ]; I had insisted that because [ɑ] is the dominant Midwestern American sound, we could safely leave the cast to their default vowel (not possible with your Globe casts who might have defaulted to [ɔ] if they were RP speakers). But you were right; fall, thought, daughter, etc., should have been indicated in our transcription, as many of my rehearsal notes were reminders of this lexical set.

I think they left their Midwestern English tendencies behind when moving into OP, and THOUGHT words were a casualty of this tendency. That's my theory, anyhow.

I was also surprised by the tight jaw that the dialect seemed to induce at first, when actors were trying to correctly seat PRICE and CHOICE vowels and achieve the prescribed [əi] sound for these two sets. I think the extra close onset for this diphthong is the culprit. And some actors experienced a strong urge to render MOUTH words Irish style [ɛʊ] instead of [əʊ]. That needed reining in.

CRYSTAL: Yes, that effect was notable—and natural, as they left behind their familiar [a] onset, aimed for the [ə] and overshoot. There was an Irish-style lip-rounding sometimes on [əi] too, resulting in the characteristic moi for my sound in that accent. I think it's the closeness of these OP diphthongs to Irish which gives people an initial impression that OP is Irish (a theme of an online forum recently). "Enriching the listener experience," you say. That's critical. With *Dream*, the primary surprise must be to hear all the rhymes working. There are so many that fail in modern English, such as stars and wars, or one and alone. To hear

them all fall into place was, for me, one of the most striking effects, especially when associated with a magical moment in the play, such as Oberon's juice-inducing lines.

And you say, "surprise at its clarity." Yes, but I recall we had to work hard at that. A very useful strategy was the focus on the last content word in a line. Get that clear and a speech immediately becomes intelligible. Indeed, it was fascinating to see how you can often summarize the content of a speech by following the last word of each line. But there were some difficult phrases sometimes, weren't there, and I remember you had to get the actors to think very hard about what they were saying rather than how they were saying it, to get the meaning across—tell the story with their faces and bodies.

MEIER: Yes. One of my constant tasks in my rehearsal notes was to remind the actors of possible ambiguity and to ask them to take extra care to inflect the line so as to reveal the desired meaning. Since CHOICE and PRICE words share the same vowel in OP, [əɪ], voice could be misheard as vice. Voice occurs a dozen times in this play, and several instances are particularly tricky:

But in this kind, wanting your father's voice, The other must be held the worthier. (Theseus)

Yea and the best person too; and he is a very par-
amour for a sweet voice. (Quince)

Of course, actors have to anticipate possible confusion constantly in Modern English too (night/knight, due/Jew, do/dew, etc), but as the audience's sound palette is not attuned to the unfamiliar homonyms thrown up by OP, I knew the actors had to be more than usually vigilant.

Some actors feared that h-dropping would fatally wound a line—[ɜ̃ kle:z] for Hercules, for example. And in working on Hamlet's speech to the players in OP recently, I myself wondered whether I would be able to make a line like "it out- Herods Herod" actually work without h's. But after you explained that h-dropping was highly variable in OP, the cast felt they had the tools they needed for clarity. I did have to constantly remind my actors not replace a dropped "h" with a glottal stop; this North American actors' tendency makes for extra difficulty. When an elided "h" is smoothly replaced by a legato treatment of the adjacent sounds, however, everything works much better.

The realization that consonants carry the chief burden of intelligibility, and that they haven't significantly changed in English since 1600 (unlike the vowels), is very reassuring.

In our first interview, you anticipated that OP would reveal puns in *Dream* hitherto unremarked by editors, as it had

in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Did you find some?

CRYSTAL: There were three instances, and you've just mentioned one of them. But before I answer your question, I think it's important to appreciate what makes a pun. It isn't just a play on words: It's a play on words motivated by context. For example, in Modern English, bear and bare are homophones, so there could in principle always be a pun when one or the other is used. But when someone talks about "the sun harming their bare arms" or "I visited a bear park," the other meaning doesn't even arise. You have to set up a pun. The context has to allow both meanings. And it must be a context that the listener is going to understand. So, the pun works in "Why do the Grenadier Guards always get sunburnt? Because they have bearskins" because the notions of bear and bare are both applicable to these soldiers—but to be effective, you have to know who the Grenadier Guards are and what a bearskin is.

The same principle applies in Early Modern English. There's always a potential pun between voice and vice (both pronounced [vɔis] in OP, or whore and hour (both pronounced [ɔ:] in OP), but to activate it, we need to have a relevant context in which both words could operate. The



Photo by Luke Jordan for The University Theatre

John Staniunas as Oberon

Theseus quotation doesn't provide it, nor do most of the other uses of voice, but the Quince one certainly does, as paramour sets it up. The pun works because paramours have both voices and vices, but to be effective you have to know what a paramour is.

The other two I noticed were Lysander's "And all my powers, address your love and might" in 2.2, where powers and pores would be a possibility (both pronounced [pɔːz]), and Demetrius' "No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one" in 5.1, where the OP makes ace a homophone of ass ([no dəi bət ən əs fə him fə hi ɪz bət ɔːn]). I haven't looked at all the editions, but the note to this line in Arden, for example, tries to explain it solely in terms of the number of spots on a die, which is only part of the pun.

However, as I said before, I think in *Dream* the main novelty was to hear the rhymes working so well, rather than the discovery of new readings. And I'm sure in the final production some parts of the play would have been thrilling to hear, as a result. Which bits of the play do you think were most affected?

MEIER: My favorite example is the one you quoted in our first interview—the antidote spell Oberon casts on Demetrius:

Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

In Modern English, the fact that dye/archery, gloriously/sky, and by/remedy all fail as rhymes fatally wounds the speech, casting the actor into nebulous blank-verse territory. Clearly Shakespeare intended the drivingly insistent eight-fold [əi] rhyme (eye-rhyme if you will permit the pun) to heighten the magic.

Since all the play's rhymes are restored by the use of OP, the various uses or effects conjured up by rhyme become impossible to ignore, and so the switch from blank verse to prose, from couplets to alternating rhyme scheme, from pentameter to tetrameter, challenges us more directly to confront rhyme as an important part of the play. Some modern actors are faintly embarrassed by rhyme anyway and do their best to evade it, but they are doomed to failure if they attempt this in an OP *Dream*. The duelling wit of the lovers, the incantations of the fairy spells, the sly mischief of Puck—all are aided by rhymes, and the play is infinitely richer when they are restored. And to make the

rhymes potent, the actor must crescendo toward the line-final word, always, as you have pointed out, a wonderfully clarifying tactic in itself.

CRYSTAL: One of the interesting things about *Dream* is that some of the actors need to adopt different voices—Puck mimicking Lysander and Demetrius, and of course the mechanicals in the Pyramus play. I tried to reflect this in my transcription, having Puck (who, like all the fairies, normally drops his h's) put them in, and giving the mechanicals a more careful style of speech (reflecting the spelling, Holofernes-like). Did this work or did you/they change it?

MEIER: Puck did mimic Lysander and Demetrius' more courtly diction, yes, as you will hear in due course. And the mechanicals, particularly Bottom, of course, used a more histrionic speaking style, restoring normally dropped h's and so forth. Your transcription and recording were very helpful in prompting that kind of work. I must mention something that Scott Cox (Bottom) reported. His skill with RP gave him an immediate strategy when playing Pyramus: just heighten the dialect. But, deprived of RP, he had to employ other strategies. Scott couldn't parody early 20th century British stage speech: "Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me" had to be [khɜːst be: ðəi sto:nz fə ðɜːs dɪs:viŋ me:] instead of [khɜːt bɪ ðəi steʊnz fɔ ðəs dɪs:viŋ mi], which is what he might have done in another production; but did very well instead by hilariously mouth-ing his diction like Hamlet's town crier.

Since OP has such rich rewards to confer, clearly pleasing audiences; and since our Kansas production attracted so much attention internationally, I remain puzzled by the fact that this experiment has been attempted only four or five times in living memory. Some of my VASTA [Voice and Speech Trainers Association] colleagues are now itching to give it a go, they tell me. What's your sense of the future of this fascinating but almost completely neglected aspect of Shakespeare performance research?

CRYSTAL: I think the reasons for the neglect are clear. Fear of the unknown, chiefly. That was the reason the Globe didn't do it: They were scared that audiences wouldn't understand it. Once they realized how intelligible and enticing it was, they went for it. And I imagine you had colleagues who felt the same way at first.

The second reason is that it needs linguistic expertise, to provide advice, and this is rare. When the Globe approached me in 2004, my first thought was: Go find someone who's already done this. And, after digging around, I realized that nobody had—at least, not for fifty years (because both John Barton in the UK and Helge Kokeritz in the US had had a go in the 1950s)—and a great deal of linguistic research had taken place since then anyway,

helping us develop a sharper sense of what Early Modern English phonology was like. So I had to become an expert myself, and this meant reading up on the linguistics of the period and thinking about how to apply it and teach it, in a way I hadn't had to do before. What I hope, more than anything else, is that other specialists will contribute to this emerging field of applied historical linguistics, as—apart from anything else—I'm well aware that there is room for difference of opinion. You'll recall that there were several occasions when you asked me how a word should be pronounced and my answer was, "We don't know for sure" or "There are alternatives." Proper names are a good example. How exactly was Theseus pronounced: with a "th" sound or with a "t"? We know that classical words like *apothecary* had a medial "t" [ə'pɒθəkɪəri] (from the many cases where such words are spelled in that way), but would *Theseus* have had a "t" (as in Modern Irish ['tʰe:sɪəs])? I kept it as [θ], but someone else might reach a different conclusion.

Anyway, in the last five years or so, expertise has become available, and is increasing in quantity (through your good self, for example). And as a result, more information about OP is readily accessible. The biggest problem hitherto has been *How do we get to hear it?* That was a real battle, which for a while I repeatedly lost. I wanted Cambridge University Press to issue a CD along with my book *Pronouncing Shakespeare*, but they wouldn't. I wanted the Globe to release the videos of the two productions we made, but they wouldn't. I asked for an audio recording of the actors, and eventually they let me make just a 20-minute CD using three of the *Troilus* cast, but a restricted number of copies for educational distribution only (I still have a few of these left, by the way) and not for general release. Well, better than nothing! It's so important to illustrate the accent with a variety of speakers, not just me, to get across the point that it is a phonology we are talking about. One of the commonest misconceptions is that *everyone in OP will speak the same*. On the contrary: On top of Early Modern English phonology, we hear the regional resonance of the speakers—the OP you hear from me is audibly slightly Welsh/Liverpudlian, reflecting my regional background, and your OP reflects features of your accent and voice quality.

All this is rapidly changing. My Website (<http://www.pronouncingshakespeare.com>) now has several downloadable recordings. You've put a tutorial up on your Paul Meier Dialect Services site (<http://www.paulmeier.com/OP.pdf>). And thanks to your production, we will have a good-quality video and audio recording of the *Dream* event, which will be enormously useful in showing people what can be achieved. A full transcription of the play (including the lines you cut) will be available in due course, along with my recording. And given enough notice, I am very happy to

repeat our recent experience and make an initial transcription and recording of a play, in collaboration with a director. Depending on what you recognize as Shakespeare, there are 39 plays in the canon. *Romeo*, *Troilus*, and *Dream* have been done, along with a few fragments from other plays. So that leaves 36 still to do. The first-time excitement you have experienced is there for anyone who wants to have it. OP is always waiting, beckoning, in the wings.

MEIER: Working with you on this project was a glorious experience. Thank you, David.



Shakespeare in OP

This is an extract from Meier's eBook, *The Original Pronunciation of Shakespeare's English*, a free download from <http://paulmeier.com/shakespeare.html>.

SIGNATURE SOUNDS

1. Use of /r/. What surprises many is that Early Modern English (EME) was a *rhotic* dialect, with heavy *r-coloration* of vowels that are followed by /r/. The silent /r/ of today's Received Pronunciation (Standard British English) is a more recent development.

EXAMPLES: nurse, start, north, force, letter, air, flower, Orsino, Ferdinand

2. The *mouth* lexical set. This diphthong had a centered onset and started with the schwa, or neutral vowel, [ə], resulting in [əʊ].

EXAMPLES: out, loud, noun, count, crowd, bough

3. The *price* and *choice* lexical sets. This *diphthong*, too, had a centered onset and started with the *schwa*, or neutral vowel, [ə], resulting in [əɪ].

EXAMPLES: price, tribe, time, Friday, isle, eider, fight, Viola; AND choice, point, boil, toy, ahoy, royal

4. The *goat*, *near*, *square*, *face*, and *cure* sets. These vowels, diphthongs (two-stage vowels) in RP and GenAm, were more *monophthongal* in EME. We would

have heard [go:t, fi:, skme:, fe:s, kçu:].

EXAMPLES: goat, home, near, beer, square, bare, bear, face, stay, fatal, cure, tour, poor

5. The happY lexical set. Crystal tells us that this unstressed syllable also had a neutral onset, like *price*, *choice*, and *mouth*. The result: [ə]

EXAMPLES: happy, lovely, city, baby, money, Feste, valley

6. The *strut* lexical set. Crystal suggests that the close-mid, back, unrounded vowel [ɹ] captures the likely quality of this vowel.

EXAMPLES: cup, rub, butter, love, monk, blood, hum, summer

7. The *trap* lexical set. Crystal suggests a more open, front vowel than today's [æ], similar to the [a] vowel we hear in the dialects of Northern England. He includes any and many in this, although they fall into the RP *dress* set today. *Any* and *many* are still pronounced today in much Irish English as they were in OP.

EXAMPLES: trap, ham, scalp, arrow, Capulet, Malvolio, Andrew, battery, action

8. Since the *lot* and *thought* lexical sets were pronounced without the lip-rounding of today's RP, Crystal directs us to the less rounded version spoken in mainstream American English. [ɑ] is the vowel he suggests.

EXAMPLES: lot, stop, rob, profit, honest, swan, knowledge, want, watch AND daughter, awkward, ought, call, stalk

9. Crystal cautions us to retain the lip-rounding of conservative RP [ʊ] in the *goose* lexical set, though he lists several words like *fool*, *conclude*, *tooth*, *proof* (today part of the *goose* set) for which he recommends [u], which allows puns such as that in *thou full dish of fool* [ðəu fuʃ diʃ əv fuʃ]. This creates some difficulty over words like *blood* and other double-o words that are today part of *strut*. Confusion with words in the *foot* set (like *put*, *full*, *cuckoo*, *good*, *woman*, *could*) is also possible. Proceed with caution! It is probable that both pronunciations would have been current in Shakespeare's time.

EXAMPLES: loop, mood, dupe, Juliet, funeral,

duty, fruit, beauty

10. Crystal addresses the *bath* and *start* sets together, telling us that [a] is the target (though r-colored [ɑ] in the case of *start* words, of course). Interestingly, words like *warm*, *war*, *quarter*, and *warn* – today members of the *north/force* set – were pronounced in EME identically to *start* words, which are all spelled with the letter /a/. He also lists *daughter* (now a *thought*-set word, and suggests [da:tə].

EXAMPLES: staff, path, brass, blast, ask, master, basket, AND start, heart, barn, sergeant

11. Although we covered the heavy r-coloration of this dialect in signature sound #1, Crystal additionally asks for a slightly different vowel shape for the *nurse* set – slightly more open. [ɛ] is his suggested target.

EXAMPLES: usurp, turn, mercy, shirt, assert, earth, worst, scourge

12. The *fleece* lexical set (whose spelling nearly always involves the letter /e/) calls for the slightly more open vowel [e] or one even closer [ɛ].

EXAMPLES: see, field, be, people, breathe, complete, Caesar, Phoenix
Additional Features

a. Crystal encourages us to be more casual in our diction than is the fashion in today's British stage speech, using lots of *elision*, *weak forms*, etc. For examples, the following words in unstressed positions should involve the weakest form possible (as indicated): *and* [ən], *as* [əz], *being* [bɪn, bən], *for* [fə], *he* [ə], *I* [a], *my* [mi], *mine* [mɪn], *thine* [ðɪn], *must* [məs], *of* [ə], *or* [ə], *them* [əm], *thou* [ðə], *thee* [ði], *thy* [ði], *to* [tə]. The speech is generally rapid – “trippingly upon the tongue,” as Hamlet counsels.

b. Initial /h/ on *he*, *he's*, *him*, *his*, *him*, *her*, *her's*, in unstressed positions will be dropped. Hence: *what's his name* [wʌts ɪz ne:m], *who's her best friend* [huz ə bɛs frɛn]. Crystal recommends /h/ dropping on more substantial words too, on occasion. He tells us that /h/ was very variable: It would be dropped by lower-class speakers generally, but upper-class speakers might drop it too without being penalized; everything would depend on the extent to which they had learned to pronounce following the spelling, as Holofernes¹ recommends.

c. Medial /v/ and voiced /th/ [ð] consonants in some common words will be *elided*. Hence: *heaven* [hɛən], *even* [iən], *seven* [sɛəm], *eleven* [ələɛm], *devil* [di:ʔ], *hither* [hiə], *thither* [ðiə].

d. Abundant *elision* of vowels. Crystal cites the following examples: the *unworthiest* [ʊnɹwɹθjəst], *delivery* [dəli:vri:ɹi], *leavening* [li:vni:n], *venomous* [vɛnməs], *everybody* [ɛvri:bdi]. Often scansion of the verse line will alert you to a likely *elision*.

e. *-ing* suffixes should be reduced to [ɪn]. No connotation of reduced social status attaches to this, as is often the case today. Hence: *calling* [kɑli:n], *singing* [siŋɪn], *praying* [pri:ɹi:n].

f. /wh/ should be aspirated in words like *which* [mɪtʃ], *when* [mɛn], *why* [mɛi], *whither* [miðə], *whence* [mɛns], etc., where today's dominant pronunciation is [w]. (*Who* [hu], *whom* [hum], *whole* [hoʊ], etc., today pronounced with [h] do not get this treatment, of course.)

g. Many polysyllabic words have a different stress pattern today than in EME. Particularly when these words are part of a verse line, the OP rhythm becomes important. Consider the three examples Crystal cites: *canonize*, *advertize*, *gallantry*. There's a very full list of such polysyllabic words in *Shakespeare's Pronunciation*².

h. Fuller soundings of *-sion* and *-tion* spellings [siən] instead of [ʃən].

Notes

1. Holofernes is the pedantic schoolmaster that Shakespeare satirizes so cleverly in *Love's Labour's Lost*.
2. Shakespeare's Pronunciation is the seminal work by Helge Kökeritz.

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