

Creating “Original” Shakespeare: the Work and Legacy of Patrick Tucker

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ABSTRACT

CREATING “ORIGINAL” SHAKESPEARE: THE WORK AND LEGACY OF PATRICK TUCKER

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In his 2001 book *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* Patrick Tucker outlines a methodology he claims is based on that of actors in Shakespeare’s time, where no collective rehearsals are held, and an actor is not allowed access to any of the script beyond their own lines. While Tucker’s method has found a following in the world of professional theatre, his practices as a historian are questionable, and his sources limited. Furthermore, the question of seventeenth-century rehearsal practices is addressed in Tiffany Stern’s 2000 book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, where she provides empirical evidence that actors did rehearse in the seventeenth century. This project seeks to explore the process by which Tucker arrives at his conclusion, the implications that Stern’s research has on his project, and to understand why and how Tucker has had a lasting influence despite the fact that his signature claim is in doubt

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1 Introduction

The works of William Shakespeare have been subjected to a great number of experimental interpretations; one of the most radical is one touted by its practitioners as the closest to the historical reality—a performance without collective rehearsals or complete scripts. The progenitor of this movement is Patrick Tucker, a prolific theatre and television director, and author of numerous books and articles, including *The Actor's Survival Handbook*, *Secrets of Screen Acting*, and the text that is the focus of this project, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*. Tucker has had a wide-ranging influence, and his ideas have been adapted by academics and theatre practitioners alike. He is perhaps best known for his work in reconstructing Renaissance theatre practices, and the methods he constructed remain popular nearly twenty years after they were first published.

Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach was published in 2001. In it, Tucker presents his methodology, based on historical research and a great deal of experimental work with the Original Shakespeare Company (OSC), which Tucker co-founded in 1991. The question Tucker seeks to answer is what rehearsal looked like in the early seventeenth century; based largely on schedules found in Henslowe's Diary and the existence of cue scripts, his conclusion is that Renaissance actors never held group rehearsals at all. This, in many ways, is the keystone of his methodology, though another significant facet is his rejection of modern Shakespeare editions and their apocryphal stage directions. Instead, Tucker argues for the use of

the First Folio text, provided to the actors in cue-script format so none of them have access to the entire play (as he argues would have been the case in Shakespeare's day). While the assertion that Elizabethan actors never rehearsed together appears somewhat dubious, Tucker's work has had significant influence in both academic and professional theatrical circles.

Tucker has had a prolific professional career. According to his biography on Friendly Folio, an online sourcebook for First Folio texts run by Tucker and his partner and co-founder of the OSC Christine Ozanne, Tucker "has directed over 200 theatre productions, many in repertory, and was an assistant director to John Barton at the Royal Shakespeare Company." Further, Tucker "has presented Folio Cue Script productions three times at *Shakespeare's Globe* in London, twice at the *du Maurier World Stage Festival* in Toronto, and four times at the *Jerash Festival* in Jordan" (Tucker and Ozanne "Our Biographies"). In 2008 he directed *Measure for Measure* at the American Shakespeare Center, based largely on his work with the OCS (Tucker "*Measure for Measure*"). Tucker has also had a demonstrable influence in academic spheres: in 1990 he published an article in *Shakespeare Bulletin* entitled "Teaching and Acting Shakespeare from Cue Scripts." He has directed *Loves (sic) Labour's Lost* for Saint Mary's University in Texas, and run workshops for various institutions throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Tucker and Ozanne "Our Biographies"). Tucker and his work have even featured in articles from news outlets such as *The New York Times* (Rockwell).

Secrets of Acting Shakespeare has also had widespread influence on the theatre community. The Salon Collective published an article in 2015 entitled "I read a book, my head

exploded,” which chronicled work with Tucker’s methodology, including its most controversial tenant: “Nobody is allowed to read the whole play or even their whole scene” (Hughes). They also produced a “cue script” production of *The Tempest* in 2016-2017, “drawn on the methods of cue script pioneer Patrick Tucker” (Salon “The Tempest”). *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* also features on a “Recommended reading” list from the website of the Shakespeare Tavern, a notable theatre company based in Atlanta (The Shakespeare Tavern “Recommended Reading”). In 2008 the New Perspective Theatre Company ran a “Shakespeare Bootcamp” which used both Tucker’s First Folio approach, as well as cue scripts (New Perspective “Shakespeare Bootcamp”).

Numerous academic institutions have used Tucker’s methodology as well. Since 2006 Western Illinois University has produced a number of plays “done traditionally in the Unrehearsed Shakespeare style (...) based on the theories of Patrick Tucker” (Western Illinois University “Annual WIU Shakespeare”). Ave Maria University also lists Tucker’s book in a further reading section for their Original Practice company, though their work is more heavily influenced by Tiffany Stern (Ave Maria “Our Training”). Stern is one of several prolific academics to publish monographs influenced by Tucker—in 2006 Don Weingust published *Acting from Shakespeare’s First Folio: Theory, Text, and Performance*, which examines Tucker’s work with the OCS.

Numerous academic articles and research projects draw influence from Tucker, including Freyja Cox Jensen and Emma Whipday’s 2017 article “‘Original Practices,’ Lost Plays, and Historical Imagination: Staging ‘The Tragedy of Merry’.”

The fact that Tucker is published in academic journals and has worked with a number of academic institutions speaks to his influence, while the fact that many institutions continue to offer workshops and produce shows influenced by his work is testament to a lasting impact. It should be noted that these examples are simply those that are overtly based on Tucker's work—given there is no agreed-upon name for his methodology—"Original Practice" or "First Folio Technique" or "Unrehearsed Shakespeare"—not to mention the fact that he is often not cited as a source makes it difficult to fully document the scope of his influence. Moreover, not all examples use the entirety of Tucker's methodology—his production of *Measure for Measure* at Blackfriars, for example, made use of the First Folio text and cue scripts, but featured Tucker as a director and appears to have been rehearsed (Tucker "Measure for Measure"). Many of these sources refer to his "First Folio technique," which appears to be Tucker's use of the First Folio text and rejection of modern editorial apparatus (as with the bulk of his work, Tucker does not give this particular technique a label), but do not necessarily include use of cue scripts or no rehearsal. In other instances, Tucker is one influence among many, in several cases taking a back seat to the work of Tiffany Stern, as seen in the case of Ave Maria University's Original Practice work, not to mention the work of Jensen and Whipday.

Nevertheless, Tucker has a significant following, and his work appears to be taken quite seriously by many theatre practitioners, and even some academics. The question this project seeks to answer, therefore, is simply: should it be? My purpose is to determine first the historical plausibility of Tucker's methodology, and second Tucker's role in the development of the

diverse practices and approaches generally referred to as “Original Practice,” among other labels listed above. Ultimately, I wish to arrive at a general understanding of Tucker’s methodology, and attempt to evaluate its validity as a historically-based approach. My first chapter will evaluate Tucker’s methodology in isolation, evaluating both his approach and his research practices as a historian. My second chapter will examine Tucker’s work in light of Tiffany Stern’s book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, which is in many ways a response to Tucker’s questions about Renaissance rehearsal techniques, and provides a thorough examination of the historical record. My third chapter will explore Tucker’s influence in the years following the publication of Stern’s book, in order to understand both how his work has been adapted and what influence Stern has had on the legacy of Tucker’s methodology.

Tucker’s first experiment with his methodology was in 1990 with a performance called *As He Liked It*, featuring a variety of scenes from Shakespeare prepared with cue scripts, which feature only an actor’s lines and the preceding cues, and no rehearsal time. In 1991 Tucker established the Original Shakespeare Company with Christine Ozanne, which he used as a testing ground for further development of his methodology (Tucker and Ozanne “Original Shakespeare Company”). The OSC would go on to produce a number of shows using Tucker’s method, serving as experimental research that contributed to the methodology. The OSC’s final show was in September of 2000.

According to Tucker, his work influenced Tiffany Stern, his niece, who completed a Master’s in 1994 and a PhD in 1997 on the subject of historical rehearsal techniques (University

of Birmingham “Tiffany Stern”). In 2000 Stern published a book, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, which attempted to answer the question of historical rehearsal techniques across several periods in early modern English history. A year later, in 2001, Tucker published *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, based on his work with the OSC. While Tucker’s work was published after Stern’s, I discuss *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* in my first chapter and *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* in my second, as he began his research before she began hers. Further, Stern’s research offers definitive historical evidence by which Tucker’s methodology may be evaluated. In addition, Tucker’s work is purely based on his time with the OSC, and for better or for worse, does not reflect any of Stern’s research due to the proximity of publication. Thus, despite being published later, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is in many ways a predecessor to *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, while the latter essentially serves (intentionally or not) to test Tucker’s claims about the past using primary source research.

However, it would be rather unfair to judge Tucker’s work in light of a text published only shortly before his own. More than a decade of work went into *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, so changing the method in light of new research would have been difficult less than a year before publication. The second edition was published in 2017, sixteen years after the first, which means Tucker has had plenty of time to update his methodology. This Tucker has certainly done; in response to my initial email, Tucker was adamant that the second edition be used: “you should be referring to the Second Edition of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, as I made some significant discoveries after the First Edition came out” (Tucker “Re: Questions”). Thus, I

will be working from the second edition, as we can be reasonably certain that Stern's work had an influence on that version of the text.

1.1 Nomenclature

Perhaps the most staunchly recurring theme in my study of what I have chosen to refer to as “reconstructive theatre” is one of nomenclature. There is no standardized set of terms, no typography of differing methodologies, no general consensus on much of anything in the field (even referring to it as a cohesive field is somewhat dodgy). The closest thing there is to a catch-all term is “Original Practice” or sometimes “Original Practices,” which is often used in this context. The term has long been associated with Patrick Tucker, exactly where and how it appears is difficult to determine, though it appears to have emerged from the early days of Shakespeare's Globe in London. It has been used to refer specifically to Tucker's methodology, as in the case of the Original Practice Shakespeare Festival (OPS), yet this is by no means standard. Tucker himself does not appear to use the term to refer to his work; indeed, in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* he eschews any terms for his methodology or various approaches, which is likely why there is no orthodox nomenclature for his methodology. In the course of my research for this project I contacted Tucker, and so naturally I asked if he had a name for his methodology. Tucker's response was “I always call them Cue Script Presentations or Cue Script Productions” (Tucker “Re: Answers”).

So, Tucker does not call his methodology “Original Practice;” in fact he states in a supplementary chapter on the subject added in the second edition of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* published in 2017 that “Original Practice” typically is used to mean “they were using original costume designs and dressmaking techniques, original music and musical instruments, and sometimes even original pronunciation—but never original rehearsal time (or lack of it) or the original text” (Tucker 172). This definition of Original Practice directly contradicts its usage in describing his work, and makes it difficult to use it as an umbrella term that includes his methodology. Not only does Tucker not refer to his methodology as Original Practice even in the second edition, but he does not offer an alternative a name for his methodology in either version of the text. To make matters even more confusing, in the preface to the second edition, Tucker writes “I have also included a new chapter on Original Practices, which started when we founded and ran the Original Shakespeare Company here in the United Kingdom but which have now expanded all over the globe with professional actors, students, and schoolchildren discovering the joys of acting from the (original) text and from Cue Scripts” (Tucker vii). Tucker seems to imply here that his method—at least the cue script portion of it—is the definition of “Original Practices,” in stark contrast to what he suggests in the chapter on the matter. Further, the majority of that chapter consists of letters written to Tucker by people who have used his methodology, rather than companies like Shakespeare’s Globe or the American Shakespeare Center. This, too, seems to imply that Tucker associates the term with his work. However, both instances are from the second edition, well after an association between Tucker’s work and the term “Original Practice” was established. This, combined with Tucker’s personal

term of “Cue Script Presentations,” and the fact that the term is absent from the first edition, suggests that it may not be original, and Tucker has perhaps simply accepted some association between the term and his work.

It seems plausible that “Original Practice” came to be associated with Tucker’s work due to his use of the word “original”—his company was the Original Shakespeare, and the subtitle of his book is “The Original Approach.” The OPS, whose work appears to be influenced by Tucker (based on their virtually identical methodology), had its tenth season in 2018, which means the association between “Original Practice” and Tucker’s methodology dates back to at least 2008 (Original Practice Shakespeare Festival “Home”). While the term is used by Stern in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, Stern does not provide a definition, so her interpretation of the term at that point is unclear. This does however indicate that the term predates any association with Tucker’s work, as *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* was published a year before *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, and several years before associations with his method appear to have been established.

It is perhaps because of these rather murky origins that nobody seems to agree on what the term “Original Practice” actually means—definitions are highly variable depending on the scholar or practitioner in question. There is not even a consensus on whether the term is “Original Practice” or “Original Practices,” or even if the term should be capitalized or not, or used only in quotation marks. As mentioned above, some scholars treat the term “Original

Practice” as synonymous with the entire field of what I have elected to refer to as “reconstructive theatre,” while others use it to refer exclusively to specific approaches.

Obviously, it is difficult to study something if nobody can agree what that something actually is, but there are some far more fundamental issues with the term. “Original Practice” is a problematic phrase, not only because scholars and practitioners have difficulty agreeing on what it means, but because it has a weight of authority that is by no means warranted. The word “original” has an inherent implication of historical authenticity, and suggests that these practices *are* original, rather than merely plausible, or reconstructed. Indeed, many who approach the subject of reconstructive theatre deliberately avoid the term “Original Practice,” and despite Tucker’s claim that this is what companies like the Globe or American Shakespeare Center do, the phrase is conspicuously absent from their respective websites. The subtitle of Tucker’s book is “The Original Approach,” rather than more nuanced language, such as a *plausible* original approach, or what the evidence *suggests* might be the original approach. The trouble is that historical fact is a rather murky subject at the best of times, and the question of rehearsal and performance in the seventeenth century is wracked with source problems. Further, Original Practice is a very vague term—without context it could refer to practically anything. Even within the discipline, it could reasonably be used to refer to the original practices from any historical theatre, rather than the specific theatre practices of professional theatre companies within a relatively small island nation over a period of less than a century. The term is misleading, vague, and ultimately has difficulty capturing the essence of what it represents.

Tucker's methodology is also referred to "Unrehearsed Shakespeare," the "Folio method," an assortment of other names, not to mention variations and in some cases combinations of the two. As with the term "Original Practice," there is no orthodoxy on either the terms or their usage, and the "Folio method" sometimes refers to use of the First Folio without eschewing rehearsal. For simplicity's sake I will be referring to the method Tucker outlines in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* as "Tucker's methodology" and will be adopting the term "Unrehearsed" to refer to specifically that aspect of the methodology, and the "Folio method" to refer to Tucker's use of the First Folio text. It is important to note that these terms are in no way standard in the greater discourse, but as Tucker does not provide labels and different practitioners and scholars refer to the different tenants of Tucker's method by different names, it is necessary to establish specific terms for use within this project.

Accordingly, I will avoid the term "Original Practice," using it only in the context of specific practices referred to by those who use them as "Original Practice." With regards to the field as a whole, that is to say, the business of attempting to recreate the practices of seventeenth-century English theatre for academic or entertainment purposes, I have chosen to refer to it as "reconstructive theatre," as this identifies the specific goal of this movement without implying success or accuracy on its part. The term is my own, and is intentionally vague in its purview, which is only appropriate for describing the wide spectrum of practices that might be considered reconstructive. I recently attended a production of *Julius Caesar*, for instance, where actors were dressed in Elizabethan garb, with Roman elements, such as legionnaire armour, added on top, as

the Peacham Drawing indicates was likely the practice in the late sixteenth century (Schlueter 175). While in every other sense the production was quite contemporary, there was clearly an attempt to recreate historical material elements of production, and so it can be labelled as reconstructive. Exactly where the line is drawn between reconstructive and non-reconstructive practices is rather nebulous, and thus a flexible term serves to represent that nuance. It would be reasonable, for instance, to argue that any modern production of a historical play is a form of reconstructive theatre. Similarly, the term “reconstructive theatre” might be applied to any historical theatre, such as that of antiquity or the Middle Ages; this, too, is quite reasonable, though my focus remains solely on the Renaissance in this context. Nomenclature is not my priority, but it is necessary to establish given the lack of any agreed-upon set of terms.

As if there are not enough problems with terminology, there is also the question of how to refer those who practice these methodologies. Because seventeenth-century theatre was entirely lacking in directors, stage managers, dramaturgs, and assorted other modern vocations, these roles are often appropriately missing from Tucker’s work. As a result, it is difficult to refer to those who practice these methodologies as “directors” or “actors.” Indeed, how should Tucker’s role in his own projects be defined? He is certainly not a director in the traditional sense, leaving not only acting and blocking up to the actors, but costume and props as well. His role is more that of a facilitator, or project leader—but these are not appropriately theatrical terms, further, because of the integral role of the actor in creative decisions, any individual in a leadership role is not a director in the modern sense. Neither, however, can said figure be

removed from the equation, as decisions of practice and methodology are in their hands. Further, many of those working on such a project may typically have distinct roles in the normal line of their work—the prompter may be professionally a stage manager, while the project lead may be, as Tucker was, a director. Thus, they cannot be reduced to their *in situ* role, nor referred to specifically as directors or stage managers, as these specifics likely do not exist in such a context. Thus, I have chosen to refer to those pursuing reconstructive theatre with the catch-all term of “theatre practitioners,” and in some cases more fancifully as “thespians.” Many of these projects are headed by individuals with vague, facilitator-type roles, much like Tucker’s, so it seems prudent to use a more general term.

1.2 Approach

The primary justification for using Tucker’s method seems to be that it is in some way authentic—that what he has created is a reasonable reconstruction of rehearsal and performance methods from Renaissance England. Therefore, the central question in determining the value of Tucker’s methodology is how historically accurate it is. If Tucker’s hypothesis about seventeenth-century rehearsal practices are correct, then his work has a great deal of value; if it is not, then its significance as a methodology is limited. Tucker’s claim that there were no collective rehearsals in Shakespeare’s time is the keystone of his methodology, and so it is the veracity of this claim that must be tested in order to evaluate his methodology. However, in my first chapter it is not accuracy that concerns me, but plausibility. It is essential first to regard

Tucker's work in isolation from later research, and confine my examination largely to his research practices. How does Tucker conduct himself as a *de facto* historian? Is his methodology a reasonable means to arrive at his conclusions about historical rehearsal? If Tucker's practices are sound, then his method may be historically plausible, even if it turns out to be inaccurate, which leaves it in a very different place than if it is demonstrated to be both inaccurate and based on questionable research practices.

My second chapter will seek to address the accuracy of Tucker's claims, as the question of Renaissance rehearsal practices is that which Tiffany Stern seeks to answer in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. Understanding the accuracy or inaccuracy of Tucker's methodology also informs the accuracy or inaccuracy of those who use it. My third chapter will address Tucker's legacy, both in terms of the complicated relationship between his work and that of his successors, as well as evaluating their work in light of Stern's. That is to say, if Tucker's hypotheses are proven incorrect, have practices based on his work been altered to reflect this? I wish to understand how Tucker's work has been used and adapted in the nearly two decades since *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* was first published, and discuss this legacy in light of the conclusions about his practices drawn in my first and second chapters.

So, the main question I wish to address in my first chapter is "Are Tucker's theories plausible?" while the second chapter will ask "Are Tucker's theories supported by the historical record?" and the third asks "Is the continued use of Tucker's method justified?" Ultimately, I wish to arrive at an understanding of both the validity of Tucker's method and that of the legacy

it has produced. History is not my only concern, however—while I believe that the historicity of Tucker’s work is central to answering the question of its legitimacy, I also wish to understand Tucker’s influence and legacy irrespective of this. For that reason I am also interested in the effectiveness of his methodology, and attempting to understand why it has had such a lasting impact.

1.3 Context

Tucker’s methodology is somewhat unique among reconstructive approaches in its general claim to accuracy, with exceptions for elements like his “Burbage Time” and “verse nursing” which he is clear to indicate are plausibilities, rather than fact. Most other approaches, however, either take on labels of cautious plausibility, or else stick to reproducing well-documented aspects of the theatre, like costuming, universal lighting, or other entirely noncontroversial minutia of Renaissance theatre.

The American Shakespeare Centre, based in Staunton, Virginia, uses what they call “Shakespeare’s Staging Conditions,” a much more specific term than “Original Practice” (American Shakespeare Center “Mission”). The ASC’s use of history is notably different from Tucker’s, as instead of a focus on rehearsal techniques, the focus is far more aesthetic. Performances are held in the ASC’s reconstructed Blackfriars Playhouse, and feature staging conditions such as universal lighting, where the audience and actors are both lit, and thus the actors can see their spectators (American Shakespeare Center “Mission”). Cross-casting is also

used, something that, like universal lighting, has overwhelming historical evidence to support it, and thus can safely be considered factual. The ASC makes no attempts to pretend that their rehearsal and performance techniques are historical, however, and it is clear that their methodology is *inspired* by the historical reality rather than an attempt to recreate it verbatim. To be historically accurate, the company would feature an all-male company, with the women played by boys. Instead, they employ actors of both genders, and regularly cross-cast in both directions (American Shakespeare Center “Mission”). While clearly influenced by the historical reality, there is no pretense of accuracy associated with the ASC, and quite deliberately so. This approach is fairly typical of the more mainstream reconstructive theatres. Like the ASC, Shakespeare’s Globe in London is primarily concerned with recreating material elements of production, getting the “look” of the past perfect, with less emphasis on rehearsal. Many of Tucker’s adherents, on the other hand, are typically less concerned with venue and costume—these, they argue, can be substituted with modern equivalents, which will resonate more with the audience the way seventeenth-century clothing would have resonated with a seventeenth-century audience. There is a tangible difference between an “accurate” experience, where all elements are as historical as possible, and one, where substitutions are made for the sake of recreating an experience.

It is difficult to argue that either approach is objectively superior to the other; both offer different expressions of the historical reality, and each is somewhat incomplete. Tucker’s adherents often eschew the material culture reconstructed as material elements of production

(such as set, costume, lighting, staging, and stage), while companies like the ASC and Shakespeare's Globe do not attempt to reconstruct historical acting and rehearsal techniques. This latter point is a little surprising—some of Tucker's early work was at the Globe, and it seems to be where the term "Original Practice" was conceived, yet I can find no reference to "Original Practice" on their website, nor any mention of Tucker. The Globe does, however, produce a series called *Read not Dead*, in which "(a)ctors rehearse the play on a Sunday morning and present it, script in hand, to an audience later that afternoon" (Shakespeare's Globe "Read Not Dead"). This is decidedly not Tucker's method, since there is a single rehearsal, but revives at least the spirit of the more minimalist rehearsal timelines of the seventeenth century. While *Read not Dead* does seem to be at least inspired by historical practices, it is not specifically a reconstructive theatre, and does not attempt to function as a plausible reconstruction of seventeenth-century practices. Nevertheless, it provides an interesting alternative (or perhaps a response) to Tucker's method.

It is curious that there does not appear to be much in the way of scholarly attempts to analyze the historicity of Tucker's work. Surely the question of whether or not Tucker is right is the most important one to answer when examining his methodology, but if anyone else has done this, I have not come across their work. Certainly there appear to be some responses to Tucker's work that address this in a roundabout way, most notably Tiffany Stern's work, and the careful way in which historicity is addressed by the ASC, not to mention projects like Shakespeare and the Queen's Men, may be in response to Tucker. Yet, despite the relative popularity of Tucker

and his method, nobody seems willing to take a definitive stance on the historicity of his work. Hence this project.

Ultimately, my contribution is something of a historiography of Tucker's method, focusing primarily on *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* and *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. I wish to understand what I have come to think of as the genealogy of Tucker's methodology, from his early experimentation to more recent projects that adapt Tucker's method based on Stern's research, such as the aforementioned article by Jensen and Whipday. Regardless of the method's historical veracity, there is no denying the considerable impact it has had on reconstructive theatre.

2 Chapter One: Tucker's Method

According to Tucker, his exploration of Shakespearean rehearsal methods was prompted by a meeting sometime in the 1980s, during the construction of the Globe in London. Tucker asked a theatre historian present how long actors rehearsed in Shakespeare's time; apparently this stumped the historian, and thus began Tucker's inquest into the matter (Tucker 22). The historian suggested perhaps ten days, Tucker did some research and eventually came to the rather radical conclusion that actors did not rehearse at all. In this chapter my purpose is to examine Tucker's claim, not through supporting or contradictory evidence, but by evaluating his research practices, examining both Tucker's selection of source and his interpretation of them. It is not my goal in this chapter to evaluate the historical accuracy of Tucker's methodology, as this question is largely answered by Tiffany Stern's book, discussed in my second chapter. Instead, I wish to assess it as a self-contained entity, evaluating the plausibility of Tucker's hypotheses about the past by examining the process by which he arrives at them. As my focus is on Tucker's use of history, my focus will be on his historical practices; I am not interested in those aspects of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* that do not relate to the central question of historical plausibility. While Tucker offers a great deal of material on how to act Shakespeare (the "secrets" referred to in his title), such as the respectively formal and informal connotations of *you* and *thee*, I consider

this material less relevant to my research as it is both available elsewhere and not limited to the purview of reconstructive theatre. Understanding language and iambic pentameter is important, but it is not the focus of Tucker's book, and appears to serve as more of a preface for those who may be inexperienced with Shakespeare. Interestingly, the book's title and subtitle appear to refer to distinct parts of his methodology—the "secrets of acting Shakespeare" that he discusses early in the text have very little to do with Tucker's hypotheses that he claims are the "Original Approach," yet the fact that book is called *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: the Original Approach* seems to imply that the secrets are the approach, when they seem to be largely unrelated.

Tucker's methodology has two primary components: use of the First Folio text, and an absence of collective rehearsal. Each element consists of both a claim—that stage directions and general editing found in most Shakespeare editions is apocryphal, and actors in Shakespeare's time did not hold collective rehearsal—and strategies to effectively use these principles on stage. The first is what various sources have referred to as the "First Folio Technique," "Folio Method," or other variations, wherein actors use only the First Folio edition of the text, without later editorial apparatus, and take their performative cues from the text. Tucker argues that dialogue itself often provides staging directions, making apocryphal stage directions inauthentic. The second is what is commonly referred to as "Unrehearsed Shakespeare" or "Unrehearsed Shakespeare Style," wherein actors use cue scripts and do not hold any collective rehearsals. Both methods are often used in tandem, though the Folio Technique can also be used without avoiding rehearsals. In some cases it is difficult to tell, given the problems of nomenclature that

is a recurring theme—the term “Folio Technique” is sometimes used in a context that clearly indicates there were no rehearsals, but in many instances the term is used without sufficient context to infer whether or not rehearsals took place. As mentioned above, Tucker does not draw a distinction between these two points; to him both are essential to an authentic Shakespearean experience. As a result, some facets of his methodology do not fall comfortably under one or the other. Cue scripts, for instance, are an integral part of the Unrehearsed method, as, according to Tucker, actors would not have had access to the entire play. While cue scripts are essential to Tucker’s approach, I consider this part of the unrehearsed method, as it is possible to use the First Folio without cue scripts, as was the case for several of the productions mentioned in my introduction. Further, it is essential to the unrehearsed method as actors are not supposed to have access to the entire play, and thus using any version of the full text rather defeats the purpose. Interestingly, Tucker’s name for his methodology, “Cue Script Presentations” (Tucker “Re: Answers”), which seems appropriate given that these appear to overlap both major aspects of his methodology.

One of the problems with dissecting Tucker’s book is its organization: *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is presented more of a narrative of his exploration of hypothesized Renaissance techniques, rather than a more organized methodology, which likely contributes to its often-praised readability. There are, of course, other facets to the text, like the 30 “secrets” alluded to in the title, which are actually a rather minor point, taking up only seventeen pages of the book’s 383 (though further discussion was added in the second edition). The separation of his

methodology into two components has instead been done by Tucker's disciples, some of whom embrace the Folio Method while rejecting the Unrehearsed approach, though Tucker also appears to have used the Folio and cue scripts alongside rehearsal.

2.1 The “Folio Method”

The most significant component of Tucker's “Folio Method” is essentially a close reading of the text. Since there are few original stage directions, Tucker argues that what the characters are saying is sufficient for the inference of stage directions. Indeed, he suggests that many of the stage directions provided by later editors may be incorrect—for instance, when the First Watch finds Paris dead in the final scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, Tucker argues that the actor should check Paris' body for vitals before speaking his line and declaring Paris dead, otherwise he might not know (Tucker 38). With the benefit of hindsight, this seems rather obvious, but Tucker's method argues for a more active, more tactile production than the more traditional Shakespeare tradition. The reasoning, however, is not airtight—it would be perfectly reasonable, for example, for the First Watch to assume that a man lying unmoving in a pool of his own blood is dead, as opposed to merely drunk or sleeping. Tucker suggests that due to the nocturnal setting of the scene it would be difficult for the characters to notice the blood; however on a fully lit stage it might seem to audience members a bit odd for actors not to notice, regardless of when the scene is supposed to take place. My point is not that Tucker is wrong; indeed, this approach seems quite reasonable. Tucker does not claim that his personal interpretation is correct, only

that the apocryphal stage directions are problematic. The staging is simply open to wider interpretation than the more cut-and-dry directions offered in modern editions, and this serves to give broader agency to the actor. Tucker's method favours giving the actor a great deal of control over their character, so it follows that if the actor playing the First Watch thinks it reasonable to check Paris' pulse, then he should do just that.

Use of the First Folio text in Shakespeare productions is quite rare, and even the close reading component of his approach also may not be as common as some might expect—many productions miss even reasonably obvious textual details, like the fact that Prospero is only forty five, rather than closer to Lear's eighty as the character is typically cast. Ultimately, Tucker's argument for deeper analysis of the text for performances is a rather good idea, and his criticism of later editions appears to be well founded. There is little to critique here; while my stated goal in this chapter is to test the plausibility of Tucker's methods, in this Tucker is not stating a hypothesis, but rather restating an established fact. More recent edits and editorial devices in Shakespeare, most notably stage directions, are not contemporary, and thus do not necessarily reflect authorial intent. While this is fairly obvious, Tucker's primary contribution here is to suggest that these additions should not be considered canon, and thus the First Folio edition should be used instead. This seems a perfectly reasonable suggestion, and based on the instruction Tucker provides in performing a close reading of the text, one that it is perfectly possible to replicate. What also must be appreciated is that Tucker provides his reader not with

answers—his take on the First Watch’s actions is not suggested as canonical, but merely a case-study for how dialogue may dictate direction.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that this approach appears to have been the more successful of Tucker’s approaches; as my introduction details, a significant number of productions have been based on the Folio Method. It is easy to see why; the case for the First Folio version is fairly obvious in hindsight. There are, however, other minor problems with Tucker’s reasoning; the most obvious being that the First Folio is also somewhat apocryphal, as it was composed by two actors from Shakespeare’s company seven years after his death. While the authors of the Folio certainly claimed the text is “as he conceived them” (Weingust 5), this does not constitute proof. Further, the Folio was published not for performance, but for private reading, so it may not be the ideal text Tucker suggests that it is. It is certainly true that the First Folio is far more authoritative than later editions, and undeniable that apocryphal stage directions are non-canonical, but the First Folio is by no means the only surviving edition, nor is it the most original. The First Folio version does perhaps provide a sense of uniformity, and for many of the plays it is the only source, but surely if later editions are not accurate enough for Tucker, the Quartos deserve at least some attention. It is difficult to tell why Tucker eschews later editions but is happy using a copy of the text composed after the author’s death, even when there are contemporary copies of numerous plays. In some cases, the differences between Quarto and Folio editions are negligible, but in some cases the differences can be more significant. This is especially true of the “bad” quartos, traditionally identified as bootleg copies of an in-production

play (exactly the sort of thing Tucker claims that cue scripts and no rehearsals were meant to combat) (Stern, 5). To my mind, the “bad” quartos seem like prime material for Tucker’s methodology, despite their flaws, as they represent a show as it would have been in-production, rather than polished for publication. Yet Tucker barely mentions any version of the text beyond the Folio. All of the OSC’s productions used the Folio text, as have examples of his work outside of the OSC. Tucker’s website is called “Friendly Folio,” which sells digital copies of the Folio texts, but neither good nor bad quartos appear.

I found this a bit odd, so I decided to ask Tucker directly why his work focuses on the First Folio and not the quartos. He had this to say:

We KNOW that the First Folio was produced by two actors from his company, who had actually PERFORMED in most of the plays. The Quartos have a different history, and even if they were produced by the actors (no evidence of this), I find that the Folio version is always a better theatrical version than the Quarto - it always ACTS better. Just as modern authors will revise a play when it is to be produced again, in the light of actually seeing it acted and directed, I feel this was also true in those days. My example of the start of *Romeo and Juliet*, where the Quarto has the Introduction but it is left out of the Folio, spurs me to believe that the actors of the time had found that the play worked better without telling everyone that it would all end in death. (Tucker Re: Answers)

On the subject of the “bad” quartos, Tucker states:

My niece Tiffany Stern has come up with a simple yet profound observation: that often a “bad” Quarto was the result of a team of shorthand writers taking down what the actors were saying in a production, and then selling a pirated copy of the play to make a profit. She got this from comparing Sermons that were subsequently re-published by the speaker, who was obviously upset by the inaccuracies in the reportage. She also found that the quality of the shorthand takers varied wildly - some bits of a sermon were very accurate, some a bit off, and some complete rubbish - and this could account for the differing qualities in any particular “bad” Quarto. (Tucker Re: Answers)

This is a rather simplistic interpretation of the “bad” quartos, and one that is not entirely orthodox. The “bad” *Hamlet*, for instance, is generally (though not entirely) agreed by scholars to be a bootleg copy of the play, as Tucker claims, but it is also generally understood to be an earlier version, and the plot differs significantly from later versions of the text. To my mind, this would be a very valuable approach for Tucker’s method, as the “bad” *Hamlet* is a snapshot of a play in production; as mentioned above, one important feature of the First Folio Tucker does not address is that it was produced for publication, not for performance. Therefore, I would maintain that the “bad” quartos are indeed a valuable resource for anyone attempting an historical, actor-focused approach to the text. This is reinforced by the surviving cue script from *Orlando Furioso*, which is notably quite different from the later quarto version (Foakes). In both cases, the differences extend well beyond simply poor transcription. Another point here is that the generally-held view that the “bad” quartos are bootleg copies significantly predates Tiffany

Stern; I'm not sure why Tucker gives her credit for something scholars have been agreeing upon for the better part of a century. If nothing else, this, along with Tucker's oversimplification of the "bad" quartos, may give us some insight into his relationship with academia.

Another example of the rather limited textual scope of Tucker's work is his apparently exclusive focus on Shakespeare, both within *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* and in his work as a director. My initial assumption was that Tucker focused on Shakespeare simply because Shakespeare is considerably more popular and better known than his contemporaries, but this turned out to be incorrect. When I asked Tucker why he focused exclusively with Shakespeare, he had a very interesting response:

Take the gear change between "thee" and "you." Shakespeare uses this as a neat way of communicating to his (busy) actors where thought and mood changes occur. None of the other Elizabethan writers used these and other tricks of his (none of the other writers were also working actors). Oh - except for Nathan Field. He was a boy actor for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and went on to join the company (he is listed with other actors in the First Folio). He also wrote plays and - yes - he also used the thee/you gear change as a theatrical device. So a working actor understood and used the very practical techniques that are not available to non-actors and/or non-theatrical commentators - who always consider what THEY would need were they to be acting a role, rather than what real actors actually DO.

I have directed other playwrights of the period (Edward III; Edward II; Woodstock) but none of them contained the large mosaic of acting instructions that I find in the works of Shakespeare, and since these were at a Drama School, eventually they asked me not to do any more, as the plays were not as challenging and instructional as those of the Bard, and as the students were only getting one bash at such dramas, surely it was better to give them the best? (Tucker Re: Answers)

While I find it difficult to accept that Shakespeare is unilaterally “the best” of the Renaissance English playwrights, Tucker’s primary reasoning, the absence of textual acting cues, along with the fact that Shakespeare was an actor and member of the company, seems perfectly reasonable. I find this assertion difficult to verify, however, as I am not as adept at picking out the “tricks” that Tucker claims Shakespeare used; furthermore, many of the instances that Tucker picks out in his book (such as the example of the First Watch in *Romeo and Juliette* discussed earlier) are quite subjective. Furthermore, the assertion that other playwrights were not actors is incorrect—William Rowley, for instance, was known to regularly play characters in his plays. So, while Tucker’s assertion here is quite reasonable (and rather intelligent), I nevertheless feel that, once again, the limited scope of his work is something of a fault. Further, this raises a rather interesting question. If Shakespeare is the only mainstream playwright to use these “tricks,” then how valuable are they? Apparently the majority of English drama produced during the Renaissance did not feature these apparently significant “tricks;” so why not? And if the “tricks” are so important, then how did actors in other companies get by? This is not to say that Tucker is

wrong, merely that there are unanswered questions, and that this approach has not been explored to its full potential.

2.2 “Unrehearsed Shakespeare”

While the Folio Method is more of an approach based on established facts, Tucker’s more sensational claim, the absence of a collective rehearsal period in Renaissance English theatre, is a hypothesis based on Tucker’s own historical research. The first source Tucker presents is the diary of Philip Henslowe, manager of the Rose theatre. According to the diary, the Admiral’s Men performed a different play six days a week, with significant gaps between each repeat performances (Tucker 26). Obviously, time for rehearsal would have been extremely limited, but Tucker argues that it would not have existed at all.

As Tucker quite correctly observes, the diary does indicate that a different show six times a week was normal for the Admiral’s Men, and Tucker is helpful enough to include the frequency (or, more accurately, the infrequency) with which plays were repeated. Tucker’s initial observations are quite correct—within the schedule provided, there would have been no time for the lengthy rehearsal periods of twentieth-century theatre. Tucker goes further, however, arguing that there could not have been any rehearsals at all. His evidence for this is simply that actors “did not seem to have time for ‘rehearsal.’” (Tucker 29). In other words, since the interval between productions was a single day (excluding Sundays), and the diary does not mention the existence of rehearsals, they must not have existed. This seems a tremendous logical leap—yes,

clearly rehearsing a play for several weeks in the modern tradition would not have been an option, but with a full twenty-odd hours between each show, there is plenty of time in which some form of collective rehearsal could take place, not to mention periods in which the company performed no plays at all, something Tucker largely ignores.

Tucker's other piece of evidence is the existence of cue scripts, which feature only an actor's lines and preceding cues, and also the well-established problem of plagiarism. Tucker alleges, not incorrectly, that cue scripts existed in order to prevent the theft of intellectual property, in addition to saving the money and time requisite for copying out an entire play enough times for each member of the company. Tucker writes: "The hired actor (a hireling), therefore, would never read the entire play and even the shareholders would have had the complete play read to them only once by the playwright some time before" (Tucker 29). While contextual evidence supports Tucker's assertion that these scripts were intended to prevent actors from acquiring the entirety of the play and selling unlicensed copies (Foakes), the sheer expense of copying out the entire play would have been prohibitive enough on its own, as writing out a complete script for each actor when there was a different play every night would have been expensive, not to mention time consuming, and ultimately unnecessary.

Tucker suggests that cue scripts were used because companies were afraid of the actors selling bootleg copies of the play, and uses this conclusion to argue that actors therefore could not have been trusted to rehearse together for fear of them learning enough of the play to sell it, but there are problems with this reasoning. While the issue of script was certainly an issue in

Renaissance England, it is a tremendous leap to arrive at the notion that there were no rehearsals as a result. Tucker states that actors' schedule consisted of "learning or relearning lines in the mornings and performing in the afternoons" (Tucker 29), which directly undermines his conclusion. If actors were learning their parts in the morning, then they would not have time to copy down the play from a hypothetical group rehearsal in order to sell it before the performance, and at the performance anyone in the audience would be perfectly capable of copying the thing down, if they had a pot of ink and a few folios, or simply a good memory. Thus, the issue of plagiarism, while still a reality, would be rather less urgent than in the months before performance. "Relearning" here refers to plays actors had performed before—often plays would be repeated every few weeks, according to Henslowe—in which case the play would already have been performed. Once the play is performed, there is no longer an ability to protect copyright, so it would not be quite so worthwhile for actors to sell. Arguably, rehearsing as a group is easier than not doing so, so why would actors not spend the morning rehearsing together if there was not a compelling reason not to? Furthermore, Tucker notes that one of the two surviving cue scripts from the period is from a University production (Tucker 30). The universities typically held numerous rehearsals, were not expected to make a profit, and frequently produced Classical works, thus negating the need for any sort of copyright protection. Thus, the use of cue scripts in and of itself is not directly tied to a need to protect intellectual property, nor does it suggest the nonexistence of rehearsals. Tucker briefly examines the other surviving cue script, from *Orlando Furioso*, but does not discuss the play or its context, which is surprising given the pivotal role cue scripts play in his methodology. Frustratingly, while Tucker

mentions the surviving University cue script from the 1620s (Tucker 30), he does not discuss it beyond this offhand mention.

Tucker states that “the evidence in our case is that the actors in those far-off days did not read the play as a whole and did not have time for more than minimal group rehearsals” (Tucker 54). Aha, one might think, so Tucker does indeed admit that there may have been rehearsals! On the contrary, however, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is quite firm on the fact that rehearsals are against the rules. Furthermore, in his emails Tucker was adamant on the nonexistence of rehearsals, referring to my suggestion of even a single rehearsal as “wrong” (Tucker Re: Answers). The “minimal group rehearsal” Tucker mentions is what he refers to as “Burbage Time,” something he “invented” in order to discuss such niceties as props and blocking, rather than a true rehearsal (Tucker 55). Tucker writes:

From [Henslowe’s] schedule, it looked as if an actor’s life would consist of learning or relearning lines in the mornings and performing in the afternoons, with no time left for what we would call rehearsal—which made putting on a play very puzzling. At most, they would have had time for a quick technical rather than a textual get-together, just like the one *Peter Quince* puts his actors through in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. (Tucker 29)

To support this, Tucker claims that an unnamed academic found evidence of two one-hour rehearsals in a similarly anonymous historical source, which Tucker took to match his

“Burbage Time” (Tucker 56). Unfortunately, there is no way to verify this piece of evidence without an understanding of where it came from and how this historian arrived at their conclusions. So, it seems there is evidence for at least preparation, if not outright rehearsal, which presumably makes the line between non-rehearsal and rehearsal somewhat blurry. Tucker is adamant, however, that rehearsal is not only unnecessary in his methodology, but that it can be downright counterproductive:

Two of my actors rather shamefacedly came to me afterward and confessed that just before the show they had run their scene through, because they were so worried about forgetting their lines, but they wished they had not. They had enjoyed the discovery of the scene backstage, and had the choice on stage of either repeating what they had just discovered or trying to rediscover it. Neither solution worked well, and it explained to me why the scene had not gone as well as I had hoped. (Tucker 69-70)

Tucker uses this as an example of how effective actors found his unrehearsed method, which in turn supports the plausibility of the method as a whole. If modern actors found the practice of non-rehearsal worked better than a single or limited rehearsals, it is conceivable that seventeenth-century actors might have had a similar experience. The potential for bias, of course, hardly needs stating—as with the earlier case of the unnamed historian, the reader has to take Tucker at his word.

In short, Tucker's hypothesis that actors in Renaissance England did not hold collective rehearsals is not particularly plausible. His evidence to support this hypothesis is quite weak, largely based upon Henslowe's Diary, the existence of cue scripts, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His reasoning is questionable, and the conclusion he has arrived at is not borne out by the sources. There is no direct evidence in support of his claim; all of it is circumstantial at best. Actors had little time and incomplete scripts, but this in no way indicates that they did not hold group rehearsals. Tucker simply does not marshal sufficient historical evidence to support his claim; this is a significant problem because the validity of his methodology is based upon the premise that his practices are in some way "original" as the title claims. While Tucker is quite correct that the schedule in Henslowe's Diary indicates that the available time for rehearsals would have been extremely limited, there is still a substantial difference between limited rehearsal time and no rehearsal at all. There is no source that directly indicates actors did not rehearse, nothing at all that states rehearsals were not allowed. We know rehearsals existed in concept; both university productions and the work of boy companies featured it, not to mention the theatre of continental Europe, so the concept was not alien to the Elizabethan mind.

If rehearsals were banned, then one would expect to see evidence of this—actors being fined (or fired) for holding clandestine rehearsals, yet there is nothing of the sort in the historical record. Tucker notes that the mornings would (apparently) be spent learning lines; whatever in the world suggests that each actor was doing it alone? Many would have lodged together, and it seems reasonable that they might run their lines together if they shared a scene. To be clear, I

make no claims that Renaissance actors definitely did rehearse, only that Tucker has failed to provide sufficient evidence for his claim.

2.3 Other Hypotheses

Another nominally historical element Tucker uses in his approach is something he calls “verse nursing,” a process where each actor would work with him one-on-one on their lines (Tucker 56). While there is some historical precedent for this (Stern 67), it is decidedly at odds with the notion that actors would not have had time to rehearse. If rehearsal is off the table for not being “original,” then how can Tucker justify the time spent going over lines one-on-one? Given that the majority of the company would be actors, and actors should not rehearse together, then there are a limited number of individuals who could have historically filled this role, and thus the “verse nursing” would have taken longer than the schedule Henslowe provides.

Henslowe’s schedule is, at least nominally, the primary evidence for Tucker’s claims, yet he appears to overlook it in this instance. It is possible that this is simply because Tucker believes (and quite fairly so) that modern actors are not conditioned for the minimalist approach to rehearsal of the early seventeenth century, and so the “verse nursing” is necessary in order to help them function. But, by that logic, wouldn’t allowing a rehearsal or two be just as useful? The logic here is not entirely clear; group rehearsal is cheating, but studying the text with the supervision of the director is not, or, perhaps merely a necessary evil.

There appears to be some inconsistency to what historical elements actually matter. In some cases, Tucker reports, actors actually met for the first time on the night of the performance—another odd deviance from the historical reality (Tucker 74). Surely having actors get to know one another and develop some level of working chemistry would be as useful in producing a viable output as “verse nursing?” After all, companies in Shakespeare’s time would have worked together for years, and if Henslowe’s Diary is any indication, they spent the large part of each day together. Admittedly, Tucker accepts that these instances where actors had not met were unintentional, and to his credit he is quite open about the extremely experimental nature of the OSC’s work. There is, however, something of a discrepancy there—much of Tucker’s work is experimental, yet the methodology he has created is extremely firm, lacking the nuance and flexibility demonstrated in the historical reality.

2.4 Conclusions

Are Tucker’s claims about the reality of seventeenth-century theatre plausible? The Folio Method is certainly historicist, though it begs the question of using the “bad” quartos. Tucker is correct in his assertion that modern editing and stage directions are apocryphal, and he is correct about the existence and use of cue scripts. None of this is really debatable, nor is it entirely new, merely rarely seen in professional Shakespeare productions. Tucker is not offering a hypothesis with these points, but instead offering an approach, and it is one that I am happy to admit is both historicist and has inherent value to anyone studying or performing the text.

The main question of historical plausibility in Tucker's work, however, is whether or not actors in the seventeenth century would have rehearsed. Tucker argues that they would not have, but as my colleague Paul Hopkins so eloquently pointed out, "Why wouldn't they?" Tucker argues that there would have been no time, but this is based on a single primary source, and Henslowe's Diary is not the only document to provide information on the subject. Primary source evidence suggests the presence of at least one rehearsal (Stern 77), a topic that is discussed in far more depth in my second chapter. Even without delving into the material presented in that volume, however, there is enough cause to question the historical plausibility of Tucker's methodology. The evidence Tucker provides is insufficient to back up his claim, and his conclusions are not entirely logical. While there is a great deal of excellent material in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, Tucker's questionable research practices and questionable assumptions in many ways undermine the useful parts of his methodology.

There are, however, other factors to consider when assessing *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*. While Tucker's method may not be historicist, it is apparently a functional methodology, if the popularity of his work is any indication (not to mention an entire chapter in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* largely dedicated to letters sent to Tucker by his fans). The fact that Tucker's methodology is popular despite its fragile relationship to historical data is enough to demonstrate that people find Tucker's ideas compelling. Why is this the case? I suspect the answer lies in the radical nature of Tucker's methodology—specifically, the radical simplicity of performance without rehearsal. Even if the idea was not based on seventeenth-century practices,

it is still a unique (and apparently effective) new form of theatre. Tucker has, in a sense, reinvented Shakespeare. Further, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is a compelling book, and Tucker's style is both enthusiastic and engaging. Its readability is one of the more easily underestimated of its virtues; Tucker's points are clear, consistent, and, in theory, easy to replicate.

If Tucker's methodology works, and people enjoy watching the results, does it matter if Tucker's methodology is historical or not? It would be prudent here to return to the matter of Tucker's nomenclature. He refers to his methodology as "the original approach," not "historically-inspired," or any other more nuanced terms. Since the methodology claims to have captured some sort of historical "originality," if that can be demonstrated to be otherwise, the method falls apart. In other words, if Tucker's method is proven to be not original—even by a simple matter of historical companies actually rehearsing—then his method no longer fulfils its stated purpose. If it were "historically inspired" (similar to the careful way the practices of Shakespeare's Globe or the American Shakespeare Association are framed), rather than "original," then the methodology would be in a safer position.

In judging the merit of this book, it would perhaps be helpful to understand what the book's intended purpose is, but this is not entirely clear. The book's title, and, indeed, its marketing, seems to present it as more of a helpful guide rather than a methodological text. The back cover states that the book "is a passionate, yes-you-can guide designed to prove that anybody can act Shakespeare" (Tucker back cover). Yet, this does not seem a fair representation

of the book; Tucker does not try to disguise the fact that his method is difficult, and that actors need training and practice in order to use the methodology. It took over a decade for Tucker to develop his approach, and a great deal of practice with his methodology before he felt comfortable tackling a full production. I have experimented with Tucker's method. I am certainly by no means a professional actor, but I am well-versed in Shakespeare, and I could not manage it, even with the help of Tucker's handy guide. Contrary to what the title suggests, the book, by and large, is not about acting Shakespeare, but using Tucker's specific method of acting Shakespeare. More general hints, like the "secrets" are by and large a minor facet of the text compared to the methodology.

So, how then can Tucker's intent be determined? In many ways, the text appears to be a narrative. It is the story of the Original Shakespeare Company, in many ways serving as a capstone to an endeavour that dominated more than a decade of Tucker's life. Given Tucker's relationship with Tiffany Stern, and the comments he offers about her in various publications, it seems that Tucker's purpose with this book was to open up a discussion on the subject more than anything else. There are some points that cast doubt on this hypothesis, however—Tucker's unwavering certainty that seventeenth-century thespians never rehearsed, for instance—which leaves the matter uncertain. Indeed, the exact purpose of the text is difficult to determine when reading it—much of it is methodological, but facets like the "secrets," or an entire chapter in the second edition that largely consists of letters people have written to him about how great his methodology is, do not match with this hypothesis.

In order to address this issue, I asked Tucker directly if he views *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* as a methodological text. He replied “I just consider my book a record of what actually happened, as opposed to what people (academics, of which surely you are one?) think ought to have happened” (Tucker Re: Answers). While this does not explain some of the book’s contents, it does offer some insight into why the text is somewhat flawed from a methodological standpoint—this was not Tucker’s intent. Of course, Tucker’s comment also raises an immediate problem—Tucker here rejects the work of academics outright, touting his text as the truth. This echoes a recurring problem in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*—Tucker completely rejects the notion of rehearsal, claiming his hypothesis as fact, rather than the more cautious, nuanced view of the academic, who would be more likely to make careful claims about what the evidence suggests, rather than objective truths.

Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach is a landmark book, and arguably one of the more important in the historiography of reconstructive theatre, in the same way that the work of Sigmund Freud is important to the field of psychotherapy. Like Freud, however, Tucker’s book should be understood and appreciated for what it is—a historical artefact, an early attempt to explore something that has developed considerably in the intervening time. While there is still a great deal of valuable material in the book, it should not be treated as authoritative, nor should it be forgotten that Tucker has no formal training in the disciplines of History or English. This is a book to approach with caution, to draw inspiration from, but not to treat as an authoritative text. There is a great deal of excellent material within *Secrets of Acting*

Shakespeare, and even if the prospect of the zero-rehearsal Shakespeare play is historically dubious, it is a fascinating methodology nonetheless. As a theatrical methodology, Tucker's notion of a company that does not rehearse, that may not even have met, is both viable and intriguing. However, evidence supporting it as the historical reality is thin, and it seems unlikely that actors would avoid rehearsing if given the option to rehearse. The idea of non-rehearsal acting is radical, and perhaps this is part of why it has gained such a following. While many of Tucker's points, such as his case for the First Folio, "verse nursing" and "Burbage Time" may be quite historicist, these points are overshadowed by the more sensationalist claim that actors in Shakespeare's time did not rehearse, and unfortunately it is this which may be many readers' takeaway from the book.

3 Chapter Two: Stern's Research

In my first chapter I dissect Tucker's practices as a historian, and determine that both his reasoning and use of sources are flawed. However, while this may invalidate some of his conclusions, it does not necessarily make them incorrect, and it is this latter point that this chapter seeks to address. One thing that Tucker deserves credit for is, though not satisfactorily

answering the question of historical rehearsal practices, at least raising the question of what these would have looked like, thereby prompting other, perhaps more qualified individuals to address the issue. The most notable of these individuals is Tiffany Stern, an Oxford academic who happens to be Tucker's niece, and whose book *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* seeks to understand what historical rehearsal techniques would have been like.

A relationship between their respective works is clearly established by both parties. In the acknowledgements of *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* Stern writes: "My first and profoundest debt is to my uncle Patrick Tucker whose questions about Shakespearian rehearsal led me to write a thesis on the subject, and whose Original Shakespeare Company has been a constant source of inspiration" (Stern v). While the connection between Stern and Tucker's respective works is indirect, especially given the close proximity of their initial publication, Stern is quite clear that it was Tucker who first raised some of the questions that she seeks to answer.

Stern is, in turn, frequently mentioned by Tucker in his work. In the acknowledgements of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* he writes that Stern "was fascinated by her Uncle Patrick's ideas and went on to do the proper scholastic work on it all (...), thus ruining my claim that no one has done any research on how they rehearsed in Shakespeare's day" (Tucker ix). Tucker also points out his connection to Stern on his website: "He is immensely proud that his niece Dr Tiffany Stern has found his work of value for her books and research, and that she is now a full Professor at University College, Oxford" (Tucker and Ozanne "Our Biographies").

Yet, if Stern's research is so relevant to Tucker's work, where is it? Even in the second edition, published seventeen years after *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, references to Stern's work are conspicuously absent. This is curious, as one would assume that the work of an Oxford academic whose research happens to focus on the same subject would be extremely useful. Indeed, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* directly addresses the primary question raised by Tucker's book: what did rehearsals look like in Shakespeare's time? Yet whatever Stern's conclusion, Tucker does not discuss it.

Stern's work is invaluable in understanding Tucker's, not only because she addresses the same problem (and, more importantly, it addresses the problem with the knowledge and training in historical research of an academic which Tucker lacks), but because of the relationship to Tucker's work. *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* is to some extent inspired by Tucker's work, but more importantly it functions as a *de facto* evaluation of that work, even if it was published before *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*. As the first scholar to conduct major research on the subject of rehearsal practices in Renaissance England, Stern is also a significant figure to the field of reconstructive theatre, arguably much more significant than Tucker himself.

As in my previous chapter, it seems prudent to outline which of Tucker's claims I will be examining. The most significant, obviously, is his claim that actors in Renaissance England did not rehearse before performance, for this is in many ways the keystone claim of Tucker's methodology. There are other elements of Tucker's methodology that he claims are historical, including "verse nursing" and "Burbage Time;" while Tucker certainly implies that he

discovered this information through experimentation, it must be noted that the publication of his work after Stern's, not to mention their familial and personal relationship, means these may to some extent be informed by Stern's research. Further, these two hypotheses essentially serve as alternatives to rehearsal, and are therefore attached to the "unrehearsed" approach. Tucker does not claim that "verse nursing" is historical fact, as he does with the absence of rehearsal, but he implies strongly that his "Burbage Time" is historicist, borne out by research he does not discuss by a historian he does not name (Tucker 56).

3.1 Chronology and Context

Before delving into the content of *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, we must return to the issue of chronology. While Tucker's use of sources is admittedly quite poor, it is important to consider the context in which much of his work was conducted. According to an article on Tucker in *The New York Times*, "He first put his ideas into practice at a Royal Shakespeare workshop performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' at the University of Western Kentucky in 1975, and has been refining them ever since" (Rockwell). The first performance listed on Tucker's website is *As He Liked It* in 1990, with the Original Shakespeare Company founded in 1991, first performing in December of that year. The company's last performances were in September of 2000 (Tucker and Ozanne "Original Shakespeare Company"). Thus, much of Tucker's method was established before Stern had researched and published her findings; given that she received her PhD in 1997. The 1990s was also a significant time for scholars of

Renaissance English theatre. REED (Records of Early English Drama, a massive collection of documents referencing or relating to medieval and early modern theatre in England) saw the publication of six volumes published during that time. Eight volumes already existed at the time of the Original Shakespeare Company's inception, meaning that a total of fourteen volumes were available to Stern when she conducted her research. While the first REED volume, *York*, was published in 1979, the volume on Ecclesiastical London, a significant volume for understanding the world of London theatre in which Shakespeare wrote, was not released until 2008 (Erler Front Matter). Thus, Tucker did not have the same access to historical sources in the 1990s that are available today, while Stern, as an academic, would have had the skills to access the source documents. The still-nascent internet would likely also have provided Stern with access to further resources for researching seventeenth-century England, many of which would have been unavailable to Tucker nearly a decade earlier.

In addition to the time disparity between when Tucker began his work with the Original Shakespeare Company and when Stern began writing *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, we must also take into account a disparity in tools and resources. Stern, as an academic, would have both the skills to research historical documents, as well as access to the various archives, databases, and journals that Tucker would not. This, coupled with peer review, gives Stern's work a rather different context than that of Tucker. Tucker's method, and in particular his signature claim about the absence of rehearsal appears to have largely developed in 1990-91, and, based on what he says in his book, appears to have changed little over the following years.

This also goes some way towards explaining why Tucker does not draw on Stern's research, and why many of the primary sources Stern examines are not considered by Tucker.

3.2 The Text

Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan is divided into five sections, covering rehearsal techniques from sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Unlike Tucker, Stern focuses neither solely on the Renaissance, nor solely on Shakespeare. Where Tucker only examines relatively Shakespeare-adjacent sources (like Henslowe's Diary), and the Original Shakespeare Company only produced the works of Shakespeare, Stern focuses on the entirety of English drama, though her interest is primarily in the public theatre of London. Other forms of theatre, like the works produced by boy companies, is largely used as contrast to the "professional" theatre of Shakespeare of his contemporaries.

The book's purpose is straightforward—to address the question of what rehearsal would have looked like, a question that it addressed almost immediately. "Many," Stern writes in her introduction, "—if not most—editors, theatre historians, and literary critics impose on the past a mythical period of regular group rehearsal that is very much in the twentieth-century style" (Stern 3). This is echoed in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*—Tucker's anecdote about the historian who assumed there was a two week rehearsal period. However, unlike Tucker, Stern does not appear to be discounting the existence of rehearsal, only a "period of regular group rehearsal" which, based on Henslowe's Diary, obviously could not have existed. Stern starts in a

similar place to Tucker—rejecting traditional, potentially unfounded assumptions about the past, but unlike Tucker Stern does not make any assumptions based on this conclusion. Stern proceeds to discuss how the modern rehearsal process typically unfolds; this, too, is mirrored by Tucker’s description of the same in the earlier pages of his book. However, despite discussing similar concepts, the material itself is actually quite different; Tucker is more interested in the differences in schedule, while Stern is more interested in the *experience* of rehearsal. It is quite fascinating to see how these two texts on similar topics diverge, as one is for actors written by a director, while the other is intended as an academic text written by a literature scholar. Indeed, Stern actually takes the time to delve into what, exactly, rehearsal is, as well as what a director does, and how these modern realities are not necessarily true of the past.

When it comes to discussing how rehearsal worked in the Renaissance, Stern initially presents something quite similar to Tucker, even outlining a very similar schedule:

From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, different plays were put on every few days, sometimes every day, during the theatrical season, meaning that often an actor had to learn or relearn a part during the day for the evening's performance. For this reason, the stages of rehearsal were skewed quite differently: the emphasis of preparation was on ‘private’ or ‘individual’ rehearsal (also called ‘study’), during which the actor worked on his or her own ‘part’ for performance. (Stern 10)

Of course, one reason for the similarity is simply that both are working from the same document in this case—Henslowe’s Diary. However, Stern does not apply the text as broadly as Tucker, nor is it her only source. Tucker largely focuses on select portions of the diary, and his no-rehearsal hypothesis is based on actors performing six days a week. The schedule Henslowe provides fluctuates, however, and it also only represents the life of a single theatre company, and thus is not as universal as Tucker interprets it to be. One issue I find with this is that as far as I am aware there is no evidence as to what time of day an actor learned his lines (for all we know actors learned them in the evening after the previous nights’ performance and slept in late). The assumption that an actor learned his lines in the morning is, I feel, quite plausible, but specific evidence for this remains unclear.

When discussing what individual rehearsals would have looked like Stern describes something very similar to Tucker’s “verse nursing” sessions, which is presented as his own innovation rather than a historical phenomenon (Tucker 56). Interestingly, Stern is able to provide evidence that this practice is historical, particularly in university productions (Stern 37), and takes some pains not only to indicate that this was likely common practice, but explains why it was the case. Stern provides significant depth and context, going so far as to explain where the word “rehearsal” came from—it meant “to recite,” according to sixteenth century definitions (Stern 24). Recitation and memorization were a significant part of Renaissance education, which may help to account for how actors were seemingly much better at memorization than their modern counterparts (Stern 24-25). Of course, the term “rehearsal” had other connotations as

well; both Tucker and Stern acknowledge that typically the only “rehearsals” mentioned in the historical record actually means preview performances for either to the Master of the Revels in London, or to mayors or other officials if on tour (Stern 48). These were intended to make certain that the play in question was suitable for public performance, and were not rehearsals in the modern sense, a point Tucker is quick to use to justify his no-rehearsal method (Tucker 24).

Of course, the topic of the book is rehearsal, and if Stern agreed with Tucker that rehearsals were nonexistent in Shakespeare’s day, then the chapter on Shakespeare would be a very short one. The book’s title is in some ways a bit of a giveaway—it is, after all, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, not *The Absence of Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, or *Actor Preparation from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. And, indeed, as one might expect, Tucker’s central claim is not borne out by a thorough examination of the historical record. Ultimately, Stern concludes that “group rehearsal(s) ideally capped the preparation period, though the question remains open as to how many preceded a new play” (Stern 76). One rehearsal, Stern suggests, was the bare minimum, and she brings a great deal of documentary evidence to bear in support of it, such as actors’ contracts—one drawn up by Henslowe indicates that actors could be fined for not attending rehearsal (Stern 76). A similar practice of fining actors for arriving late to rehearsal appears in fiction of the time (Stern 76), and there are other references to multiple rehearsals, suggesting that full run-throughs of a play occurred beyond those for the Master of the Revels. While multiple instances of a play-within-a-play do not depict rehearsals, other

notable examples do, including Marston's *Histomastix* and Middleton's *Your Five Gallants* (Stern 77). The historical evidence is quite clear that at least one rehearsal was common practice.

Stern also makes it clear rehearsals may not always have happened: “[A] play thus did not necessarily receive a fixed amount of group rehearsal, but as much as was appropriate (or possible) (...) the appropriate number of collective rehearsals necessary could occasionally be as little as none” (Stern 77). Stern not only debunks Tucker's claim about the nonexistence of rehearsals, but goes further, suggesting that plays would be rehearsed as much as they could, which is both supported by evidence and, fortuitously, is compatible with the conventions of modern theatre. Stern also concludes that actors would have a relatively generous amount of time in which to learn new material:

Renaissance companies had to balance a heavy performance schedule against their need to rehearse. Their preference for saving full group rehearsals for weeks in which they were not playing is evident; this means there were probably less rehearsals during playing time (...) Though three weeks seems to have been the usual length of time for preparing a play, there is no evidence to suggest that more than the traditional single group rehearsal was held. (Stern 121)

Stern also discusses the existence of partial rehearsals—more technical scenes (such as stage combat) would naturally require more work, much as is the case today (Stern 77). This, too, is in contrast to Tucker, who suggests stage combat would be improvised, seems rather

unlikely, not to mention dangerously unsuitable for modern reconstruction. Tucker also implies that rehearsal could actively be detrimental to performance, in apparent contrast to what the evidence suggests Renaissance actors may have felt. The partial rehearsal, however, appears similar to Tucker's "Burbage Time," which thus may be authentic. It is conceivable that Stern is the anonymous historian Tucker refers to, but if so, why not cite her? It may be simply due to the fact that Tucker invented—or claims to have invented—the practice, and perhaps feels that citing the historian, whoever it is, may detract from his innovation.

3.3 Evidence

It is difficult to cover the sheer scope of Stern's sources suffice to say that she uses a great many. While Stern naturally refers to some secondary sources, the vast majority of her information is drawn directly from primary sources, thereby avoiding the assumptions she denounces in the introduction. While Stern does rely on Henslowe's Diary, she neither assumes it to be the rule for all London theatres, nor treats it as the only source on the subject.

Stern offers a great deal of transparency with her sources by providing footnotes with the source, as well as any further context or information. While the majority of these sources are historical, Stern does draw on literature as well, drawing on such examples as *Lady Alimony* where reference is made to the actors being disturbed as they prepare, apparently all together in a common space (Stern 79). Stern does examine cue scripts from various plays, but these appear to be modern versions adapted from the First Folio, much like the ones Tucker uses; indeed, the

format is exactly the same as in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, so this is an instance in which Tucker appears to be a direct influence.

The sheer range of sources Stern uses is impressive—not only does she examine rehearsal itself, but the context that may have contributed to the relatively low number of rehearsals by professional companies. Tucker seems to imply that professional actors, being professionals, didn't need to rehearse, that in the Renaissance rehearsal was seen as something for amateurs. Stern suggests quite the opposite—the work of professional actors was likely seen as inferior to those doing theatre for academic reasons, like university players or boy companies, both of whom regularly rehearsed (Stern 43). Indeed, the professional theatre was not necessarily seen as a finished product. “Legally,” Stern writes, “public performances were practice for eventual private performances in front of the Queen” (Stern 92). This was not to say each play was intended for such a performance, but (nominally) as a means to hone the actor's skill. This, too, indicates that collective preparation was seen as essential in the seventeenth century, and reinforces Stern's suggestion that actors desired rehearsal, but were limited by the bounds of their schedule.

Stern even discusses rehearsal practices on the Continent, which had a rather different theatrical culture (in many countries it was common for women to be actors, for instance); apparently Spanish actors rehearsed quite frequently, which, again, confirms that rehearsals were a known innovation in the seventeenth century (Stern 56). Stern's sources are very diverse, and the image she presents of theatre in Renaissance London is quite complex. The lines between

“studying” and “rehearsing” are blurred, as are the lines between a “rehearsal” before the Master of Revels, or other authority and more modern interpretations of the world. While Tucker’s presentation of the historical reality is quite cut-and-dry, Stern’s is much more nuanced.

In my first chapter I describe Tucker’s approach as very limited; Stern is quite the opposite. Indeed, having looked at the amount of evidence Stern is able to present in support of her hypotheses, I would argue that Tucker is in fact extremely selective in his use of sources, and since he must be aware of Stern’s sources by the time of the second edition, seemingly rejects any evidence that contradicts his conclusions. While Stern takes pains to explore the complexity and nuance of rehearsal in Renaissance England, she is very clear on the fact that it existed. While some ambiguity exists—the number of rehearsals prior to a production does not receive a clear answer beyond a typical minimum of one—Stern’s conclusions on the existence and general preference for rehearsal is quite clear.

3.4 Tucker’s Response

While Stern offers many points that seemingly refute the central tenants of Tucker’s methodology, it is still very much alive and well. Tucker’s book has recently received a second edition, yet it has not been updated to reflect Stern’s findings. Further, as discussed in my introduction, Tucker’s approach remains influential nearly two decades after the publication of *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. If Tucker’s central claim is not only based on questionable logic, but demonstrably false, then why is it still around? Why does Tucker

maintain his position in the second edition of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* without even mentioning Stern's substantial evidence to the contrary? I found no answer immediately apparent, so I decided to ask Tucker what he thought about Stern's suggestion that at least one rehearsal was commonplace:

Tiffany can indeed come to this conclusion, but as I have (frequently) pointed out to her, her observations do not match any practical theatrical situation. The academic world often comes up with thoughts that cannot be reconciled with the reality of putting on a different play every day, not repeating them for ages. My work directing television dramas with no rehearsal time, and actors having to memorise (sic) and regurgitate large amounts of text in a very short time has informed me better (I feel) than sitting at a desk thinking it could not have been done without rehearsal, even if they cannot come up with a time schedule that would fit this (wrong) assumption. I was often employed as a television director because I could shoot faster than most of my contemporaries - so this is a field of which I have positive experience—but again as Tiffany points out to me, practical experience is not academically acceptable proof of anything. (Tucker Re: Answers)

There is a great deal to unpack here. Exactly what Tucker means by “practical theatrical situation” is difficult to tell; surely the historical documents Stern examines are indicative of the “reality” they record? Or is the notion of holding a rehearsal or two in the morning before a show somehow not “practical?” He also suggests here that academics “cannot come up with a time

schedule that would fit this” but Stern does precisely that. Ultimately, Tucker is unable to justify his position—Stern’s minimum of one rehearsal is not impossible to reconcile with Henslowe’s Diary; Stern is able to do so quite comfortably.

Further, just because something can be done does not necessarily mean it was—Tucker appears to claim here that his “practical” experiences working without rehearsal is evidence that it was the historical reality, but all this really proves is that it is possible to do. The fact that Tucker does not accept the existence of even single rehearsals, despite the evidence this was the historical reality, makes it clear he is unwilling to re-evaluate a conclusion drawn thirty years ago based on limited evidence and questionable reasoning.

Tucker’s claims raise other questions—if the historical evidence Stern musters in support of her claim is less valid than practical experience, then how is the (significantly less) evidence that Tucker uses valid in support of his methodology? If “observations” based on historical documents are unreliable, then Tucker’s own “observations” must therefore be unreliable. So, if historical evidence cannot be relied upon, where is Tucker getting his information? Based on his comment, it sounds as though it is from his experience in the television industry. This is, of course, inherently problematic; while it is true that actors in the television industry do not rehearse the way actors in modern theatre do, they are not required to memorize several hours of dialogue each day. Indeed, according to Stern, actors had weeks to prepare, and even Tucker acknowledges the gap of several weeks between new shows according to Henslowe’s Diary. The existence of multiple takes, not to mention editing further makes this comparison unsuitable. In

short, not only is Tucker's evidence for his no-rehearsal claim quite poor, but he is unable to provide any evidence that Stern's conclusions are wrong. If practical experience is king, then would contemporary actors' general preference for rehearsal trump any historical evidence to the contrary? And why is directing for television valid evidence for the practices of a society that had invented neither television nor directing?

While Tucker may be somewhat justified in his assertion that academics cannot understand theatre the way an experienced practitioner can (though this discounts the work of the artist-scholar), the same is true about practicing history. Tucker does not use suitable research practices, nor proper deductive reasoning to arrive at his conclusions. He disparages academics for thinking they know theatre better than he does, yet at the same time presumes to be a better historian than scholars like Stern. Tucker presents himself as an authority on the subject, but he has no relevant degree, nor a great deal of relevant experience, and his practices are not those of a competent historian. It is also worth pointing out that Tucker labels the "assumption" of historical rehearsals as "wrong," rather than the more nuanced language most academics would use, such as "unlikely." This, along with Tucker's inability to adjust his thinking in light of new evidence demonstrates that his approach is quite unscientific in method.

In light of all of this, therefore, I find it difficult to find much validity to Tucker's practices. His "research" is flimsy, his evidence is poorly interpreted, he ignores academics, and does not adapt his methodology based on more recent research. In the end it is not simply Tucker's conclusions that are problematic, but also his process and reasoning. Many of Tucker's claims are supported

by historical data; “Burbage Time,” “verse nursing,” and the Folio Method all appear to be supported by historical evidence. It therefore does not seem terribly difficult to adapt Tucker’s methodology in light of Stern’s research, yet Tucker remains steadfast in the belief that his conclusions are correct and Stern’s are wrong. Because his methodology hinges on his no-rehearsal hypothesis, the contrary evidence raises significant problems for his entire method.

So, if Tucker’s method is—at best—highly questionable, is it still relevant? A recent new edition and the continuing, if quiet success of his unrehearsed method suggests it is quite relevant, even if it happens to be wrong. While the influence of Tucker’s work is the focus of my third chapter, it is certainly more significant than one might expect given the evidence offered by *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. Arguably, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* is a far more significant book than *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*—it is among the only scholarly sources that deal with the question of historical rehearsal techniques, and offers a great deal of useful data without leaping to conclusions. In my first chapter I raised the question of how plausible Tucker’s theories are; Stern has answered this question rather well. Her text establishes that rehearsal did occur, and was an integral part of the preparation process.

While the distinction between one rehearsal and no rehearsal may seem minimal, it is important to note that Tucker’s method hinges on this absence of collective rehearsal—even two actors running a scene is considered heterodoxy. This attitude is strictly adhered to by Tucker’s disciples—the Original Practice Shakespeare Festival, for instance, states very clearly on their website that they “never rehearse” (Original Practice Shakespeare Festival, “Home”). A

colleague of mine, Shaun McComb, mentioned to me that he once taught a course at Toronto's Humber College on Original Practice. "We found out that some students had rehearsed," he informed me, "and we failed them" (McComb).

The difference in methodology between one rehearsal (as Stern suggests was the minimum) and no rehearsals, some might argue, is quite minimal, even negligible. I disagree; the matter is simply night and day. Tucker proposes a methodology where there is no rehearsal—he is adamant that his "Burbage Time" is not rehearsal, but serves more of an administrative function, and suggests that this may reflect the historical reality. If, as Stern suggests, a single rehearsal was the minimum, even if it were the normal amount, the difference between this historical reality and Tucker's methodology is not a countable difference, with the record indicating a single rehearsal *more* than Tucker, but rather the difference between existence and non-existence. To dismiss the difference between one rehearsal and no rehearsals as negligible would be quite preposterous. Tucker, for his part, does not attempt to defend his methodology in this fashion, but instead describes any academics who disagree with his conclusions as "wrong."

Of more philosophical consideration is Stern's assertion that seventeenth-century actors wanted to rehearse as much as possible. This, too, raises an interesting question—which is a more faithful way of preparing Shakespeare? As it was done historically, or under ideal conditions? I make no claim that there is a definitive answer; instead I would simply make the case that producing a show under ideal conditions is not necessarily a disservice to the playwright's intent.

Stern has, as mentioned above, provided evidence that reinforces parts of Tucker's method—his “Burbage Time” has some basis in the historical record, just as he asserts, and his “verse nursing” sessions, which seem to be his own innovation, also appear to have been a historical phenomenon. This latter point I find quite interesting, as, if true, it reinforces the value of experimental methodologies. Tucker has, whether by luck or historical research, wound up plausibly recreating a piece of historical methodology. Tucker maintains that the stage directions and other editorial device are worthless, and I am inclined to agree, as none of this material is historical. Clearly Tucker's method is not rendered entirely obsolete by Stern's book. Nevertheless, the matter of rehearsal vs. non-rehearsal is a significant one, and because of it, the methodology as a whole cannot be considered historically plausible. In contrast, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* is an excellent treatise, at least as far as seventeenth-century theatre is concerned, and it has been quite well-received by the academic community. Stern's further work indicates that she is pushing forward in the field; her work has significantly advanced the study of Renaissance theatre practices. In many ways, Stern provides all the tools needed to develop one's own methodology, which multiple companies appear to have done, and because it represents the complexity of the historical reality, readers are able to arrive at their own conclusions, rather than presenting the matter in black and white.

Is *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* still worth reading today, even if it is incorrect? I believe it is, for while Tucker may not be particularly adept with historical documents, there can be no doubt that *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is itself a significant document in the

historiography of reconstructive theatre. In many ways this project is a historiographical examination of reconstructive theatre, and Tucker has provided a rather useful account. By recording a narrative of his pioneering work with cue scripts and historical rehearsal techniques, Tucker has secured his legacy, not to mention inspired other, perhaps more qualified individuals to research the subject. While I am ultimately disappointed by Tucker's work, I believe that in its context—as a reporting of the work done by the Original Shakespeare Company—it is a worthwhile read, but should not be taken without consideration of either context or the historical record.

4 Chapter Three: Tucker's Influence and Legacy

While Tucker's work has been reasonably influential in the field of reconstructive theatre, his signature claim, that actors in Renaissance England did not hold collective rehearsals, is also contradicted by the historical record, as Tiffany Stern demonstrates in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*. So, the question remains—why does Tucker have such a following if he also happens to be wrong? In this chapter, my purpose is to explore Tucker's legacy in an attempt to understand this phenomenon. Given that Stern's conclusions are at least broadly similar to Tucker's, I am also interested in examining the impact she has had and whether or not theatre practitioners have altered their use of Tucker's method based on Stern's research, as I suggest might be possible in the previous chapter. My focus is largely on examples of Tucker's methodology (or adaptations of his methodology) in practice, though I also discuss some

instances of responses to his work, such as Don Weingust's *Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio: Theory, Text and Performance*. I divide these cases into three categories—the first (and most common) is use or discussion of Tucker's method in the professional theatre or by other non-academics; the second is what I have labelled as “semi-academic” instances, which is to say, productions and programs run by universities that are not themselves based on primary source research; and finally fully academic work influenced by Tucker's methods, typically in the form of Practice-based Research.

While I do not expect a clear answer on why Tucker's work remains popular, it is my hope to identify some patterns in the phenomenon that may provide insight into the spread of Tucker's methodology. Further, understanding the method of transmission may also help in clarifying the matter of the unrehearsed method's success, as despite the clear popularity of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, it can by no means be taken as a given that it is the source for each and every instance of Tucker's method. Tucker has run workshops on his method at a variety of theatre companies and universities. Further, it is quite possible that actors with whom he has worked, or those who have read his book, may have taken it upon themselves to teach the method. Indeed, since Tucker does not provide a name for his method within *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, many of the examples discussed here use their own nomenclature for the subject, so it is difficult to determine relationships.

As a result, I focus my attentions on instances that are very clearly tied to Tucker's methodology. Each of the cases I discuss are demonstrably connected to Tucker based on two

possible factors: either they mention Tucker, or Tucker mentions them. There are certainly many more examples than the ones cited here, but because there is no orthodox term for Tucker's method, it is difficult to discover them without a direct reference to his work. I also identify these projects based on their closeness to Tucker; some of the examples Tucker references do not refer to him on their websites, but because of the closeness in methodology (and Tucker's mention) it is reasonable to conclude that the methodologies are closely related. While some of Tucker's practices, such as his "Burbage Time" and "verse nursing" have historical precedent, and thus do not necessarily originate with Tucker (as these are discussed in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, and likely other texts as well), his signature non-rehearsal claim is, as far as I can tell, uniquely his, and thus serves as a reliable metric for his influence on a particular project. Due to his dubious reasoning and the contrary historical evidence, it seems unlikely anybody else would come to this conclusion on their own.

I am also interested in adaptation—that is to say, if and how Tucker's method has been altered. Significant deviations from Tucker's method, combined with direct references to his work may indicate that the practitioners in question are regarding his work critically rather than simply accepting his claims. On the other hand, instances where practices are similar to or indistinguishable from Tucker's likely indicates that he is viewed as an authoritative figure or that his methodology is sound and does not require questioning.

Ultimately, while my primary purpose is to address the question of Tucker's relative popularity, I am also interested in understanding the consequences of his work on reconstructive

theatre. While I have already established the scope of Tucker's influence, the nature of that influence merits further scrutiny. The issues with Tucker's methodology are less significant if his book is largely disregarded, or, for that matter, if his primary influence has been the Folio Method or other more historical facets. It is also worth considering the pretext of each case; Tucker is adamant that his methodology is historicist, but other practitioners using his method may view it as more of a hypothesis.

4.1 Non-academic

It is likely unsurprising that Tucker's method has had the greatest success among non-academic theatre practitioners, both because they are less likely to subject Tucker's method to scholarly analysis, and because there are rather more of them. Perhaps the most archetypal of these is the Original Practice Shakespeare Festival (OPS) based in Portland, Oregon. Their name does not align with Tucker's definition of the term "Original Practice," as I have discussed, but that definition only appears in the second edition of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, and thus post-dates their existence by nearly a decade. Tucker names them on a list of companies in the "Original Practices" chapter of his book (while discussing Don Weingust's book *Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio: Theory, Text and Performance*, discussed below), but it is very unclear whether he considers these companies to fit his definition of Original Practice, his methodology, or some combination thereof. Regardless, their methodology, as described on their website, appears nearly identical to Tucker's:

First Folio editions of Shakespeare's plays include all the cues an actor needs to perform his or her role without rehearsal. This allows the truest reaction to the story as it progresses. OPS Fest performs using the same techniques as they did in Shakespeare's own time, which means limited rehearsal; an onstage prompter; fast paced, energetic acting; and lots of audience interaction. (...) We know that, in Shakespeare's day, plays were not performed for weeks at a time. (...) When in the world could they have rehearsed all these plays? The answer is that they did not. They prepared their "roles" (rolled cue scripts) on their own time, met together on the morning of a show, choreographed fights and music and dance, and performed that afternoon. (Original Practice Shakespeare Festival "Format")

This is virtually identical to Tucker's method; the morning "meeting" before a show appears to be "Burbage Time," and of course the central premise is an absence of rehearsal. They also use cue scripts, the First Folio, and an onstage prompter. Interestingly, in addition to not mentioning Tucker on their website, they also avoid his terminology—they use a "prompter," not a "Book Keeper," for instance, and practices analogous to "Burbage Time" and "verse nursing" are referred to by different terms. Oddly, the first part of the above paragraph (which appears in multiple locations on their website) refers to a "limited rehearsal period" which seems to imply that they do in fact rehearse. Yet, one page where this paragraph appears also lists the key parts of their methodology: "1) We do not rehearse. 2) We prepare our roles alone. 3) We only see our own cues and lines. 4) We never read the full play" (Original Practice Shakespeare Festival,

“Home”). While their website does mention a “limited” rehearsal period, every other mention of rehearsal on their website is in the negative, so this likely refers to the morning meeting that appears to be based on Tucker’s “Burbage Time.”

One regard in which the OPS diverges from Tucker is with regards to material elements of production. Tucker, by and large, appears to use authentic costuming whenever possible, though he is adamant that each actor choose their own costume (Tucker 66). This latter point appears to be the case with the OPS; a production of *Hamlet* by OPS I watched featured the titular character wearing skinny jeans and a tank top, while other actors wore dresses, and one a suit (Original Practice Shakespeare Festival “Hamlet”). Costumes lacked cohesion, suggesting that they may not have been chosen by a single designer. Furthermore, actors typically wore the same costume for the entire play, even when playing different characters, and so the question of whether these are costumes or simply clothes is difficult to determine. Given that the company seems to closely follow Tucker’s methodology, it seems likely they have adopted his practice of making each actor responsible for their own costuming, while eschewing historical material elements of production. In principle, this is quite fitting, as they also lack a historically-informed performance space. Photographs of other performances on their website show costumes that are certainly more overtly costumes; these vary from modern clothing to vintage clothing to more fantasy-style costumes (Original Practice Shakespeare Festival “Home”). There is certainly a case to be made for the use of modern costume in reconstructive theatre, and Tucker does not mandate historical costumes in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*. Indeed, while Tucker does seem

to have used authentic costuming and reconstructed facilities whenever possible, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* gives the sense that this is far less important than using “original” rehearsal and staging techniques. While it is debatable how effective some of these costuming choices might be, the philosophy remains close to Tucker’s methodology.

Another company on the list Tucker provides in his chapter on “Original Practices” is the Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project, produced by The New Renaissance Shakespeare Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. According to their website, “The Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project (...) specializes in the performance of William Shakespeare's plays using the Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique (also known as an Historically Informed Practice)” (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project “Welcome”). As with OPS and virtually every other instance of Tucker’s method in practice, the nomenclature is different from other examples—in this case, their term “the Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique” appears to combine two of the more common names for Tucker’s method the “Unrehearsed Shakespeare” and “Cue Script” methods. The term “Historically Informed Practice” is not one I have encountered previously, though it echoes an idea offered in some academic articles on the subject. It also gives their work a stronger pretext to historicity than the OPS, though both present their method as fact. Their technique, according to their website, is quite familiar: “Shakespeare’s company presented a different play every day of the week (Sundays excluded) and never presented the same play more than twice in two weeks. So when did the company have time to rehearse? Short answer: They didn’t” (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project “The Method”). This schedule of twelve different plays in two

weeks is exactly what Tucker bases his no-rehearsal theory on, though of course it is not Shakespeare's company Henslowe records, as the site states, but the Admiral's Men. "[T]o keep the scripts secure actors were only given scrolls –or rolls (the origin of an actor's 'role')—that contained the last few words of their cues, their own lines, entrances, exits and only essential stage directions that could not be conveyed through the lines of the other actors" (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project "The Method"). Like the OPS, they use cue scripts and the First Folio, do not rehearse, and take instruction from the text: "Playwrights of the time understood the environment and constraints of commercial theatre and wrote clues to the characters and stage directions into the text of a script" (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project "The Method"). Of course, according to my correspondence with Tucker, Shakespeare was supposedly the only Renaissance playwright to do this, but it is a relatively minor point, and this fact is not something he includes in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*.

In contrast to the OPS, the USP appears to use historical (or at least historically-informed) costuming (The New Renaissance Theatre Company "Production Photos"). It is difficult to guess if each actor has chosen their own costume, but there certainly appears to be a level of coherence that suggests either a single designer, or that actors are restricted in their costume choices to period-appropriate clothing. Regardless, it is an interesting contrast to the OPS, as both appear to be faithful to Tucker's technique, but have decidedly different interpretations regarding material elements of production.

Tucker is mentioned on their website only on a list of other theatre companies with which the USP “have relationships” (the OPS also appears on this list); in this case something called “Bard in the Barn,” described in a quote of uncertain origin as ““a festival that showcases 'unrehearsed Shakespeare' performance techniques, based on the theories of Patrick Tucker as published in his *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* and strongly influenced by the work of the New England Shakespeare Festival”” (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project “Links”). Bard in the Barn was a festival at Western Illinois University, discussed below, which appears to have run from 2005 to 2011 (Western Illinois University “Bard in the Barn Oct. 8 at Flack Barn”). However, according to the same list, the USP’s technique does not originate with Tucker, but with somebody named Demitra Papadinis:

For anyone who has "some interest in the theatre, Shakespeare, early texts such as the First Folio and quartos, the early modern playhouse, and/or staging Renaissance plays using original practices" Ms. Papadinis taught us (and others on this page) the Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique. (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project “Links”)

So, who is Demitra Papadinis? She is founder and Artistic Director of the New England Shakespeare Festival (Unrehearsed Shakespeare Festival “Home”). She has produced “frankly annotated” copies of various First Folio plays, and I have found references to something she produced called “The Ten Commandments For Staging Unrehearsed Shakespeare,” though the text, whatever it is, remains elusive (Kirtland 4). While there is no direct evidence that Papadinis, the USP, or OPS are directly based on Tucker, the virtually identical nature of their respective

techniques cannot be ignored. Tucker, for his part, is certainly aware of these companies. Papadinis may have adapted Tucker's method in some way; one article describes her alongside Tucker and Stern as having conducted "research" on the subject, though what that research was and what form it took remains unclear (Kirtland 31).

Tucker also mentions Grassroots Shakespeare Company, which has companies in Utah, Arizona, Alabama, and London, England (Grassroots Shakespeare Co. "Find the Company"). Their description of Renaissance practices is quite similar to Tucker's, and makes clear reference to the no-rehearsal hypothesis:

For starters, none of them had a complete copy of the script. Instead, they used "cue scripts," consisting only of their cues and their lines. This meant they had to listen extremely carefully to each other in order to perform their parts. On top of that, their rehearsal process was unbelievably short—in fact, some people believe they didn't rehearse at all! (Grassroots Shakespeare Co. "About")

Their website clarifies their methodology further: "No Director: Actors stage the show themselves. No Costumer: Actors bring their own costumes. No Lighting Designer: Actors play to a visible audience. No Tech Week: Only a few days for rehearsal" (Grassroots Shakespeare Co. "About"). It is quite clear that actors do rehearse, albeit only within a limited timeframe. So, is this an example of Tucker's method adapted in light of historical data?

Certainly, the use of cue scripts and absence of both director and costumer is in line with Tucker's method, but it is also the reality suggested by historical evidence.

The "some people" who believe in the non-rehearsal claim appears to be a reference to Tucker and his disciples, so Grassroots is at least aware of this movement, but according to their website, their primary influences lie elsewhere. "Inspired by the American Shakespeare Center, and by UVU's Kate McPherson and Chris Clark, Mark Oram and Alex Ungerman co-founded the Grassroots Shakespeare Company in the spring of 2009" (Grassroots Shakespeare Co. "History"). Furthermore, Grassroots held an "education retreat" in 2012 with Tiffany Stern (Grassroots Shakespeare Co. "History") indicating that they are acquainted with her work. Given that this is the only such event listed on their website, it seems likely that Stern has been a significant influence on Grassroots, which makes sense with their apparently more historicist-minded method.

Indeed, aside from Tucker's mention of them, it is difficult to find any direct connection to his work. The apparent reference to Tucker seems to suggest that Grassroots has taken his basic idea—of producing a play using historical rehearsal and staging techniques—but conducted their own research on the subject and come up with a somewhat different methodology. The language used on their website is also very different from both Tucker and companies like the OPS and USP, only stating as fact information that the historical record is quite clear on, like short rehearsal period. There are no reference to Grassroots practicing

anything analogous to “Burbage Time” or “verse nursing,” and it is unclear whether they use the First Folio.

Like the OPS and USP, Grassroots appears to perform largely in outdoor spaces, without a fixed abode. Unlike the others, however, they explain why:

When Shakespeare’s acting company kicked off, the Globe Theatre hadn’t been built yet. Instead, the actors travelled from town to town performing their repertoire. (...) In some ways, our summer tour approximates this Elizabethan touring company—we use a lightweight portable set, a small group of actors playing multiple roles, and public open-air venues where all are welcome. (Grassroots Shakespeare Co. “About”)

It is perfectly possible that the OPS and USP have used the same logic, but what is fascinating about Grassroots is that they have documentation of their thought process on their website, allowing anyone to understand why many of their decisions have been made. Unlike the others, Grassroots is very clear about where their inspiration came from—primarily the ASC (who, incidentally, also have a travelling troupe), but also the works of academics at Utah Valley University. In the case of the OPS their influences are unclear, beyond obvious connections to Tucker. It is perhaps because of the influence of academics, the ASC, and Tiffany Stern that Grassroots appears to be far more historicist than the others, both in documentation and in appreciating the complexity of historical data. The OPS chain of influence is unclear, but seems

to lead back to Tucker, while the USP learned their method from Demitra Papadinis, like Tucker a theatre practitioner, not an academic.

One example I wish to examine is not on Tucker's list—in fact, they openly reject Tucker's methodology. The Shakespeare Tavern in Atlanta, Georgia, has a fairly straightforward mission: “ASC productions feature hand-made period costumes, all live music and sound effects, thrilling sword fights, and abundant “direct address” to the audience” (The Shakespeare Tavern “About Us”). Like Grassroots, there is no reference to anything analogous to “Burbage Time,” no “verse nursing,” no performance without rehearsal. While the goal is similar to Tucker—they use direct address, and other “historical” acting techniques—they also have a great deal in common with Tucker's definition of “Original Practices.” Unlike the OPS and USP, which appear to replicate Tucker's method without any real indications of independent research or verification, the process behind the Shakespeare Tavern's method clearly has a great deal of consideration behind it. In a statement on their website Artistic Director Jeff Watkins writes:

We can disagree on how many hours [Shakespeare] rehearsed but I'll say he rehearsed less than 20 hours for a new play. Patrick Tucker of the Original Shakespeare Company in London posits zero hours. I say 20 hours. Some people say 12 hours. The point is, that whatever the Elizabethans did in those <20 hours was determined by what was required of them by the performance event. (The Shakespeare Tavern “About Original Practice”)

The Shakespeare Tavern acknowledges the limited rehearsal indicated by the historical record, but does not agree with Tucker's claim that there were no rehearsals at all. Indeed, this is very close to the historical reality suggested by Tiffany Stern, and in many ways represents the variable rehearsal times indicated by the historical record. Furthermore, Watkins does not dismiss Tucker as unilaterally "wrong" the way Tucker does those who disagree with his claims, neither does he claim that his hypothesis is accurate, only that it is an estimation. There is a level of nuance here that more fairly represents the complexity and ambiguity of the historical record that is absent from Tucker, and seemingly from many of those influenced by his work.

The Shakespeare Tavern also is not limited to Shakespeare the way the OPS, USP, and Tucker himself are; apparently they also perform "American classic[s]" and original pieces. "In all cases, each production is a process that begins with the way each play was originally staged in its own time and ends with a modern audience experiencing the play in a manner consistent with its creator's original intent" (The Shakespeare Tavern "Mission"). This is the only example I have encountered where reconstructive techniques are applied outside of a Renaissance context, adapted to fit the requisite historical context. This suggests that research is an active part of the artistic process, in contrast to companies like the OPS and USP.

The reason I include this example is because it appears Tucker has been examined, the historical data considered, and his methodology thus rejected. This, too, is very much like Grassroots, except here Tucker is specifically referenced, where Grassroots alludes vaguely to his claims. The other companies I examine do not appear to evaluate Tucker's methodology for

its plausibility; indeed in some cases their information is outright wrong, such as the confusion between the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the Admiral's Men by the USP. The Shakespeare Tavern serves a point of contrast—it is more than Tucker's definition of "Original Practice", for though it uses period costumes and setting, they do not eschew historical rehearsal and staging practices as Shakespeare's Globe and the American Shakespeare Center (for the most part) do. Clearly their goal is the same as Tucker's—to recreate the experience of theatre in Renaissance England as closely as possible—but it is clear that a great deal of thought has gone into this, as opposed to the OPS and USP which seem to use Tucker's method without visible alteration. While the twenty-hour rehearsal approach may not necessarily be accurate, it is certainly closer to the historical reality than modern rehearsal schedules, and, I would argue, more faithful to the evidence than having no rehearsal at all.

Another notable commonality between both Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern is the influence of the ASC, which deliberately eschews such black-and-white thinking. Indeed, like both Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern, their language is quite nuanced: "If we have evidence to believe that Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights did things in certain ways, we are in favor of trying those ways or the closest approximation to them" (American Shakespeare Center "Mission"). Evidence is very much part of the ASC's process, which appears to contrast the OPS and USP, while aligning with the approach of Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern.

While Tucker does mention the ASC's Actors' Renaissance Season, which, while largely sticking to their usual mandate of "Shakespeare's Staging Conditions," also features a short

production season and sometimes cue scripts. Actors also choose their own costumes “with the help of our designers” (American Shakespeare Center “Actors’ Renaissance Season”). It is quite clear, however, that they rehearse, and, like Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern, there is nothing akin to “Burbage Time,” “verse nursing,” or other more recognizable bits of Tucker’s method. It is also unclear whether or not they are using the First Folio, and again there is no visible connection to Tucker beyond the basic premise of reconstructing historical acting and staging techniques.

It is curious that Tucker, who is adamant that rehearsals did not happen, and who implies they may actually be detrimental, connects his work to a number of productions that clearly defy his central premise, and do not make visible use of his methodology. His inclusion of both examples like the OPS and USP with the ASC and Grassroots is interesting, as the first two examples are virtually identical to Tucker’s method, while the latter two are based on more academic conclusions about the past, the ones Tucker decries as “wrong.”

Regardless, an interesting pattern emerges. The companies that diverge from Tucker, like the ASC, Shakespeare Tavern, and Grassroots, all have clear academic connections and influence, which the OPS and USP do not appear to have. It seems that while Tucker’s methodology has indeed found some success, it has been largely rejected by larger, more mainstream companies. Though both the Globe and ASC hosted Tucker’s productions nearly twenty years ago, he and his work are largely absent from their websites today. In his chapter on “Original Practices” Tucker laments that “after I had done my productions at Shakespeare’s

Globe, when their regular company later on did ‘Original Practices’, they meant that they were using original costume designs, dressmaking techniques, original music (...) but never original rehearsal time (or lack of it) or the original text” (Tucker 173). The ASC appears to have gone down a similar path—for the most part, they follow a more modern rehearsal schedule. Even Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern are surely not historical by Tucker’s standards, since in his correspondence with me he clearly dismisses even Stern’s suggested minimum of a single rehearsal. Perhaps the success of these companies is part of the reason—they may think that the public will not enjoy unrehearsed Shakespeare, and this is why the primary carriers of Tucker’s banner are much smaller companies. Perhaps investors and boards of directors are simply reluctant to fund theatre without rehearsal because they think it is a daft idea. It is interesting, however, to note that the companies with academic connections, and that feature reconstructed (or in the case of the Shakespeare Tavern, historically-inspired) performance spaces, are also the ones who do not use Tucker’s methodology. Obviously, the data is too limited to provide any obvious answers, but there are certainly patterns. Many other instances of Tucker’s method in practice I have discovered (or whose letters Tucker includes in the “Original Practices” chapter of his book) are in high schools and community theatres. These are difficult to study as they have a limited online presence. Nevertheless, it appears that Tucker is most popular among less formal companies and projects, with few, if any, academic attachments.

4.2 Semi-academic

While the majority of practitioners who follow Tucker's method are either professional companies or amateurs, he has also had some success in what I have come to consider "semi-academic" settings. Universities are also one of the primary clients for Tucker's workshops, according to his website. While it may be not entirely surprising that some professional actors and directors are persuaded by Tucker's claims, his influence in a university context is rather unexpected. I consider these examples "semi-academic" as they are produced at universities, often overseen by academics, but are typically part of acting programs, rather than based on faculty research, or serving as practice-based research. The nature of these projects is such that there is relatively little information about them by comparison to the other cases I examine. As financial success is not the primary goal behind these projects there is less publicity; as there is no research output, similarly, there are no academic articles written about them.

Bard in the Barn has already been mentioned, albeit in passing. The USP lists this project as one they have a "relationship" with, which is unsurprising given the similarity of their work. Bard in the Barn has run since 2006, though the name has since changed to simply "Unrehearsed Shakespeare" (Western Illinois University "Unrehearsed Shakespeare"). A 2011 press release from the WIU website quotes theatre professor Bill Kincaid, who started the project and has since written a book on unrehearsed acting:

“Unrehearsed Shakespeare performance attempts to recreate what it may have been like for Elizabethan audiences and actors to experience the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The experience relies on a new understanding of the relationship between actors and audience, and a deep appreciation of the clues hidden in an acting text, which allow the plays to be performed without rehearsal.” (Western Illinois University “Bard in the Barn”)

The similarities to Tucker are obvious. Indeed, a press release for the 2012 productions states that they “showcase Unrehearsed Shakespeare performance techniques, which are based on the theories of Patrick Tucker and are influenced by the work of the New England Shakespeare Festival” (Western Illinois University “Annual WIU Shakespeare”). Tucker is the primary source for their method, though, interestingly, they also cite the New England Shakespeare Festival, which was founded by Demitra Papadinis.

While in many ways the project is faithful to Tucker—no rehearsal, clues from the text, independent study and use of cue scripts—there also appear to be some differences. There is no mention of a prompter, and each production appears to have a director. Another notable distinction from Tucker is the use of nuanced language—Kincaid specifies that the method “*attempts* to recreate what it may have been like,” clearly setting it apart from both Tucker, who is insistent on the reality of his claims, and companies like the OPS and USP. While there are clear connections to Tucker—Kincaid also cites him in his book *Performing Shakespeare Unrehearsed: A Practical Guide to Acting and Producing Spontaneous Shakespeare*,—there are

enough differences that I would consider this an adaptation or evolution of Tucker's method, rather than something more or less identical like the OPS or USP.

Kincaid also develops some of Tucker's ideas further; in particular, his book focuses on textual analysis on a much deeper level than Tucker's, exploring iambic pentameter and the meaning and context of *this* and *that*. While it does not appear Stern's research has been taken into account, nor independent historical research done to verify the "unrehearsed" hypothesis, the topic is certainly being treated in a much more scholarly fashion than other examples of Tucker's method, both in the nuance with which the hypothesis is treated, and with the absence of bold declarations about historical practices made by companies like the OPS. Presumably there are other instances of university programs that deal with Tucker's method, but these are again difficult to locate due to the nomenclature problem and the fact that unless it is a festival, as it is at WIU, there is unlikely to be similar publicity. Ave Maria University in Florida has done at least some work with Original Practice, but according to their website their method is largely informed by Tiffany Stern's research, and they use methods such as direct address much in the vein of the ASC and Shakespeare Tavern. While they do use cue scripts ("sides" as they call them), the hallmarks of Tucker's method appear to be missing (Ave Maria "Our Training"). *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* appears only on a list for further reading, as it does on a similar list on the Shakespeare Tavern website. It is difficult to tell if the workshops Tucker has run at various institutions have led to courses and projects utilizing the methodology, like those at WIU, or if these schools have simply returned to their usual practices afterwards, as appears to

have been the case with the Globe and ASC. It is interesting to note, however, that these examples parallel the two versions of reconstructive practices in the professional theatre—one follows Tucker with few changes, the other is more in line with Stern's research.

Tucker's work has also seen use in acting conservatory programs. His method was first brought to my attention by my colleague Shaun McComb, who had taught the method at Humber College in Toronto. Interestingly, the course was referred to as "The Original Shakespeare Project", which bears a marked similarity to both Tucker's Original Shakespeare Company and the Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project. There is a clear connection to Tucker's work—Cue scripts were purchased from FriendlyFolio, Tucker's website, and many of the familiar elements of his method were present, including verse-nursing (referred to as "coaching sessions"), "Burbaging", and the presence of a "cue master". No rehearsals were held, and actors who rehearsed were ruthlessly failed. Apparently, there was a clear enough distinction between actors who had rehearsed and those who had not; "it was easy to bust them" (McComb). As with many such programs, there is little record of the program's existence. Indeed, all of the projects utilizing Tucker's method I have discovered that have an online presence are ones that are currently operating. There appears to have been little in the way of historicist evaluation of Tucker's work, though this is understandable given that the course was part of Humber's acting conservatory and thus the historicist value of Tucker's work was not a concern.

4.3 Academia

Among the more notable accounts of reconstructive theatre in academic practice is from an article entitled “‘Original Practices,’ Lost Plays, and Historical Imagination: Staging ‘The Tragedy of Merry’” published in 2017 by Emma Whipday and Freyja Jensen. The authors explain their core methodology quite succinctly:

Building on the research of Tiffany Stern, who shared her research with the London audience in an introductory talk prior to the performance, we used an “Original Practices” model of rehearsal and performance—including actors’ parts, a limited rehearsal period, shared lighting, costume contemporary to the performance, and a “book-keeper”—to interrogate how these methods illuminate genre, spatial dynamics and character development for both actors and audience. (Jensen and Whipday, 292)

So, it seems quite clear from the start that it is Stern’s research that is the primary inspiration for this project, rather than Tucker. However, it appears that Tucker had some measure of influence over the project as well, albeit by proxy: “In advance of the London rehearsal process, theater practitioner Philip Bird ran a two-hour workshop on cue-scripts, building on his work with Patrick Tucker and the Original Shakespeare Company” (Jensen and Whipday, 293). While the authors clearly incorporate Stern’s research—notably the existence of a rehearsal period—they also appear to incorporate some of Tucker’s actor training techniques via Bird’s workshop. Furthermore, the “book-keeper” is something missing from some of the

examples not based on Tucker discussed earlier, and, interestingly, this is also Tucker's term for the role (as opposed to "prompter"). With the exception of rehearsal (and the supposed difficulty of the Folio Method, as the text is not by Shakespeare), their process sounds remarkably similar to Tucker's:

They received their parts—comprising only their own lines and short cues—thirteen days before the production, at the initial read-through; they then met individually with the "book-keeper" (rather than director) to discuss their character choices and work on their lines. A week later, we held a single "stage business" rehearsal, where we plotted the use of props, fights, and the closing jig, and a single dress rehearsal. Otherwise, the actors were left alone with their parts, developing their sense of "ownership" (Jensen and Whipday 293)

Meeting individually with the "book-keeper" sounds a great deal like Tucker's "verse nursing," and the "stage business" rehearsal sounds more or less exactly like "Burbage Time." The use of cue scripts, too, is very close to Tucker's methodology. Of course, the authors cite Stern, and, of course, all of this information also appears in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, so it is entirely possible that this is coincidental. While it is tempting to conclude that *The Tragedy of Merry* represents Tucker's work updated in light of Stern's, this is unlikely; though Tucker clearly had at least some indirect influence on the project, the far larger influence is undeniably Stern.

The article does not cite Tucker directly—the mention of Philip Bird’s workshop is the only direct reference—and when referring to Tucker and his Original Shakespeare Company, the article directs the reader to a different source, Don Weingust’s *Acting from Shakespeare’s First Folio: Theory, Text and Performance*. This is an interesting choice, as though Weingust discusses Tucker at length in his book, Tucker’s book is both more readily available and is a primary source for the methodology. The most notable difference between the two is, of course, that Weingust is an academic, and Patrick Tucker is not, and this may perhaps be why he is cited instead.

While there are a number of academic books and articles that discuss varying definitions of “Original Practice,” as well as reconstructive theatre as a whole, few mention Patrick Tucker, and besides Jensen and Whipday, there are few, if any instances of methodologies similar to Tucker’s in practice. As with every other instance, it is difficult to gauge the extent of Tucker’s influence in academia, as the methodology has no consistent nomenclature. Academics also appear reluctant to associate themselves with Tucker, though this also appears to be the case with many non-academic examples as well; both the OPS and USP do not credit Tucker for their methodologies, despite being virtually identical.

Weingust’s book is an exception, however. While the text is primarily theoretical rather than practical, it is notable for being a significant academic treatise that talks about Tucker and his methodology at length, which is more than enough to merit its discussion. Weingust admits that his book is “bound to be controversial” (Weingust viii). In his introduction he writes:

At least one of the proponents of these First Folio techniques has been branded as “the devil” by at least one important textual scholar. I will admit here that a disproportionate amount of the current study takes on the task of this First Folio proponent’s advocacy. Not unaware of the difficulties posed by theories of First Folio acting, I believe that this “devil” and his colleagues have earned an examination beyond questions simply regarding personally Shakespearean authority (...) My position is that, even absent some of the authority they may claim, their contributions are quite useful. (Weingust ix)

Is this “devil” Tucker? Neither he nor the “textual scholar” in question are identified in the text. It seems perhaps more likely that the “devil” is Richard Flatterer, a translator who explored textual details of the First Folio in a similar manner to Tucker’s Folio Method, albeit several decades earlier, and who features somewhat more prominently than Tucker in the text. Flatterer was widely rejected by scholars at the time, while the reaction to Tucker has been rather muted by comparison.

Weingust is very careful to state, quite clearly, that he makes no claim that Tucker and Flatterer are correct in their respective conjecture, nor that academics are necessarily wrong for dismissing their work; his primary argument is that their work has some value, amongst other things, as “a technology that makes these early texts accessible to students and other consumers of Shakespearean literature, providing a “way in” to the texts” (Weingust ix). Weingust’s primary argument is not for the historicity of Unrehearsed Shakespeare, but, instead, for the value of the Folio Method as a textual tool, especially for those less experienced with the text.

Interestingly, Weingust's view on Tucker appears to be less absolute than Tucker's own apparent views—Weingust acknowledges “The OSC's minimal group rehearsal does not involve working through the entire text, but rather only entrance and exit lines and cues” (Weingust 118), which clearly refers to “Burbage Time.” Yet, Weingust uses the term “rehearsal” to describe something neither Tucker nor Stern consider a rehearsal. Weingust goes on to describe further “the company's relative lack of group rehearsal” (Weingust 119), which makes Tucker's work sound a great deal more in line with Stern's than either author would appear to agree with. Indeed, Weingust writes:

Tucker has met stony resistance to his notions of Elizabethan play preparation (and particularly his questioning of modern rehearsal practices). It remains to be seen whether attitudes toward Tucker's work will change in the wake of the favorable reception being gained by Stern's work on rehearsal. (Weingust 139)

Weingust appears to see Stern's research as confirming Tucker's claims, rather than contradicting them as I (and Tucker) understand her work to do. This is a little baffling; to my mind one of the best reasons for treating Tucker with “stony resistance” is Stern's research. Indeed, my primary problem with Tucker is that he does not simply question modern rehearsal practices, but flat-out states that they are inauthentic, in patient defiance of the historical data. Perhaps Weingust is simply willing to give Tucker the benefit of the doubt; it is also worth noting that Tucker's black-and-white thinking on the subject of rehearsal was revealed in our email correspondence, rather than in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*.

While I disagree with Weingust's interpretation, it is nevertheless quite interesting—one of the questions I asked Tucker when referring to Stern's research was whether or not he saw the difference between a single rehearsal and no rehearsals as unimportant; his response was, of course, that Stern was simply wrong. However, it appears that Weingust may consider Tucker's "Burbage Time" consistent with Stern's single rehearsal, writing that "Stern finds evidence for only a single group rehearsal as the norm in the professional theatre. What is less clear is the nature of that single group rehearsal" (Weingust 143). Weingust identifies Tucker's "Burbage Time" as rehearsal, and associates it with Stern's conclusion that at least one rehearsal was traditional. "Tucker is convinced that the rigors of the Elizabethan playing schedule would have allowed for only the most minimal rehearsal, if any at all" (Weingust 143). Again, this does not appear to align with Tucker's view on his own methodology, nor with Stern's examination of the historical data, but it is a fascinating interpretation nonetheless.

Weingust echoes Tucker's sentiment that modern editing of the Folio text is damaging to its integrity as a source, and suggests that even if the composers of the Folio were not as faithful to their source as some (such as Tucker) assume, it is still a product of the theatrical context for which Shakespeare was writing. That is to say, as Tucker suggested in our email correspondence, the fact that it was written by actors suggests that it contains the tools actors used in performance. While I disagree with this sentiment, at least in the case of Tucker's method (as he claims many of the "tricks" he identifies in the First Folio are absent from the work of virtually all contemporary playwrights, despite the fact many of them were written by actors), he is

nevertheless able to further buttress the case for the First Folio. Indeed, Weingust's focus is largely textual; discussion of the OSC's productions at the Globe serve more as a case study of how these literary analysis techniques can be used in practice, rather than an example of a historicist reconstruction of Renaissance theatre.

Due to Weingust's expertise, he is able to take Tucker's Folio Method and push it much further, engaging in far more complex textual analysis. When discussing Tucker's methodology, Weingust notes the "unrecoverable distances between any such early modern constructs and their later modern cognates" (Weingust 2), an appropriately academic acknowledgement that accurately reconstructing anything is fundamentally impossible. By and large, academics appear reluctant to discuss Tucker. Weingust is an exception, but he largely sticks to Tucker's textual work, which is a far more reliable part of his methodology.

4.4 Summary

From the examples I have examined within this chapter, it appears there are two dominant schools of reconstructive theatre, one largely influenced by Tucker, the other primarily by Stern. While more of the examples draw on Stern, this is not particularly significant, for the problem of nomenclature makes establishing the number of such projects and companies difficult. Further, a number of such projects are from high schools and community theatre projects, and thus have little available information. Projects that are defunct also are difficult to

locate, especially since Tucker's influence was at its height in the late 1990s and early 2000s. So, it is difficult to establish an accurate dataset for such companies.

There are, however, visible patterns. The projects influenced by Stern have demonstrably considered the historical evidence for themselves, and come to their own conclusions. They appear to have established their own methodologies based on the data, and thus there are discernable differences—Jensen and Whipday appear to use something analogous to “Burbage Time;” the Shakespeare Tavern and Grassroots do not. The practices that occur in virtually all examples are also the ones that are the least controversial; use of cue scripts and the First Folio text. Interestingly, with the exception of Jensen and Whipday, the majority of companies influenced by Stern do not use the “Burbage Time” analogue she establishes in the historical record, nor “verse nursing,” but seem to use more rehearsal instead. In the case of the Shakespeare Tavern, the reasoning is made quite clear—Jeff Watkins simply disagrees based on the historical data (which seems justifiable based on Stern's suggestion that Renaissance actors wanted to rehearse as much as they could). The examples that are closest to Tucker—the OPS, USP, and Bard in the Barn—do not stray as far from his points, and there is no evidence to indicate that the key claims of his methodology have been questioned or independently researched. While this in and of itself is not evidence, it is interesting to note that several of the Stern-influenced companies and projects record both their process and reasoning, while the Tucker-influenced examples do not. In some cases, like *The Tragedy of Merry*, this is necessary

as the article is an academic publication, but there is no similar reason for the level of transparency offered by the Shakespeare Tavern.

Another curious pattern is that each example discussed in this chapter seems disinclined to discuss Patrick Tucker. He is missing from the OPS and USP websites, is given the briefest of mentions by Jensen and Whipday, and only appears otherwise on further reading lists. This is quite curious; while it is understandable academics might want to avoid his work, as his historical practices are somewhat dubious, it seems odd that the OPS declines to mention his name at all, despite using a virtually identical methodology. With the USP there is some attribution, but, of course, it is not to Patrick Tucker.

While Tucker's influence has been widespread, it does not appear to be enduring. Most of the companies and universities Tucker has run workshops do not appear to continue using his methodology. Even Tucker's 2008 production of *Measure for Measure* at the ASC featured rehearsals, not to mention Tucker as a director, and thus did not follow his methodology. In many ways, the scholarship appears to have moved past Patrick Tucker; Stern has provided a far more in-depth analysis of historical data, while scholars like Weingust and Kincaid have taken Tucker's basic principle of close reading the First Folio for direction and developed it significantly. Other scholars, like Jensen and Whipday, develop their own methodology, and, while there is some overlap with Tucker, the same ideas are available based on historical data. In short, both sources of research in Tucker's methodology—literary analysis and historical research—have been developed further by scholars who specialize in those respective fields. The

parts of Tucker's method that have been proven valid by further research have, in many ways, been outstripped by it, and theatre practitioners are actively using that further research to inform their own theatrical choices and develop their own methodologies. While it is undeniable that Tucker is an important founding figure, it appears that it is now Stern and others who serve as primary influencers in the world of reconstructive theatre.

5 Conclusion

Patrick Tucker makes a number of claims, some of which appear to have historical merit. Both "Burbage Time" and "verse nursing" are analogous to phenomena Stern finds evidence for in the historical record, and the value Tucker finds in the First Folio is difficult to argue with from a historical standpoint. My primary interest, however, has been in Tucker's signature claim—that there were no rehearsals in the professional companies of Renaissance England. Tucker's historical evidence for this point is weak, being largely based on the existence of cue

scripts, the problem of plagiarism, and select parts of the production schedule provided by Philip Henslowe for the Admiral's Men, as well as a scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Tiffany Stern's research indicates that not only was there typically at least one rehearsal, but that actors often wished to rehearse as much as possible. Tucker rejects Stern's conclusions outright, suggesting even one rehearsal could not fit Henslowe's schedule based on his experiences with the OSC and as a television director. While some (such as Weingust) might interpret "Burbage Time" as this rehearsal, Tucker appears to disagree, and remains adamant that whatever historical evidence scholars like Stern muster is incorrect, outweighed by his practical experience. However, Tucker's limited sources and questionable interpretations do not stand up against Stern's research, so it is difficult to agree with his continuing arguments for the non-rehearsal method.

So, is there still value in Tucker's work? I find it difficult to come to a unilateral conclusion on the matter, for though Tucker does appear to be wrong about rehearsals, Stern confirms his other ideas. Tucker's dubious claim about historical rehearsals, however, is to my mind a less significant problem than how he conducts himself as a researcher (which he very much presents himself to be). Not only is Tucker very selective with his sources, not only does the no-rehearsal hypothesis rely on questionable logic, but Tucker remains adamant that historians are wrong and he is correct. Tucker has bemoaned the lack of research on the subject, and then, when further research has been conducted, rejected it. His practices as a historian are not sufficient for his claims to have much weight.

Ordinarily, I would be sympathetic, for Tucker does not have the training in historiography and scholarly practice that theatre scholars and English scholars do, yet neither do the people behind Grassroots, or the Shakespeare Tavern, and yet both produce show much more in-line with the reality suggested by the historical record. Indeed, the process described by the Shakespeare Tavern bears more similarity to the work of Jensen and Whipday than Tucker. So, it is clearly quite possible to have good research practices without years of academic training.

If theatre practitioners are developing their own methodologies, based on their own interpretation of the historical record (or based on reliable secondary sources), then the question must be raised—how relevant is Patrick Tucker today? I have examined numerous companies and projects that use minimal rehearsals, based largely on Stern’s research, not Tucker’s. Weingust and Kincaid have taken Tucker’s work with the First Folio and developed it further. Much of the material that appears in *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is available elsewhere, in many cases written by scholars whose focus lies in that aspect of historical drama. In short, many aspects of Tucker’s work have moved past *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*. Practices analogous to Tucker’s “verse nursing” and “Burbage Time” are described in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, and thus his text is unnecessary as a source for these practices as well. Even as a friendly, easy-to-read introduction to the topic *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is problematic, as it misrepresents both the historical record and the practice of historical research. Readers are likely to take Tucker at his word, and not investigate the matter further, as the OPS and USP appear to have done. Perhaps if Tucker was willing to update his methodology, was willing to incorporate

the excellent research that has been conducted over the past twenty years, or at least admit that his claims are less than absolute fact, this would not be the case, but this seems unlikely.

With that said, it would also be a grave mistake to simply dismiss Tucker. While his methodology may not be as influential as it was in the 1990s, it still maintains a following. Tucker's purpose is laudable enough, and he is undeniably a pioneer both in attempting to reconstruct historical rehearsal and staging techniques, and in his rejection of traditional rehearsal practices. Indeed, from a very broad perspective, Tucker's points are quite correct—the First Folio is indeed more “original” than edited versions, and actors in Renaissance England did indeed rehearse substantially less than their modern counterparts. Tucker raises questions that had not been considered previously, and while his answers may be problematic, they have prompted qualified scholars to research the matter in turn.

Perhaps the most appropriate way to consider Tucker is as a historical figure. *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* is, in many ways, a primary source for those (such as myself) studying the origins of reconstructive theatre. Tucker may be demonstrably incorrect, but he nevertheless is due a great deal of credit for his role in the evolution of reconstructive theatre. Yet, this does not seem to be the case; besides Weingust, few academics are willing to discuss Tucker's work beyond a passing mention. Jensen and Whipday used at least some of Tucker's method in the workshop run by Philip Bird, but no information about that workshop or Tucker's method is provided. Stephen Purcell's 2017 article “Practice-as-Research and Original Practices” attempts to reconcile experimental research in both the professional and academic theatres:

Since the 1990s, two related but distinct movements have influenced the way in which scholars of early modern drama have used performance practice in their research. On the one hand, emerging from practice-based theater studies departments, is the discourse of “practice-as-research” (hereafter “PaR”); on the other, coming largely from the professional theater, is the “Original Practices” movement exemplified by work of the reconstructed Shakespeare’s Globe and the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia. (Purcell 425).

Tucker, as a pioneer in experimenting with reconstructed performance practices, seems like an important figure for Purcell to discuss. Yet, there is no mention of Tucker or his work. In the article “Interactive, Immersive, Original Shakespeare,” also from 2017, author W. B. Worthen makes only a single reference to Tucker:

Patrick Tucker’s Original Shakespeare Company “always kept the house lights on;” Tucker notes that “the actors and audience share just one space, and together they explore and enjoy the discoveries and ideas of the play, and all our productions have been presented in this manner. As one of my actors excitedly told me after one of our performances: ‘It is just Us and Us out there, not Us and Them.’” (Worthen 415)

Worthen here refers to the rather common practice known as universal lighting, where the house lights are kept on, and thus actors can see their audience. He does not refer to Tucker’s role in the development of “Original” Shakespeare. Tucker is simply used as an example, and the

practice in question, universal lighting, is likely one of the least controversial practices in the discipline of reconstructive theatre. Virtually all of the theatre companies I have discussed use the practice, though, in many cases this is unavoidable due to an outdoor venue. On its own, this minimal reference would seem only a little odd, but it appears there is something of a pattern here.

There are a variety of reasons why this might be; perhaps discussing Tucker's work academically might risk offering him legitimacy that is by no means merited, but it is also a tremendous disservice to ignore his role in establishing modern reconstructive theatres. On the other hand, perhaps Tucker has been dismissed as irrelevant due to the unscientific nature of his practices and the defunct nature of the OSC; as I have discussed, the scholarship has moved on considerably from Tucker's day, so there are other, better sources for various facets of reconstructive theatre.

Tucker is also conspicuously absent from the websites of the OPS and USP. Those who use his methodology, directly or indirectly, appear to avoid mentioning him by name. Why? It is difficult to find an answer; on one hand, it is quite possible that this is largely coincidental; the USP makes clear from whom they learned their techniques, and it was not directly from Tucker, though the method is virtually identical. Perhaps they are unaware of Tucker, and perhaps the OPS simply felt there was no reason to discuss the history of their practices. While it is difficult to determine causation, there nevertheless appears to be a pattern.

Overall, I am unable to offer a positive judgement on Tucker's methodology. Even without *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, there are enough nails in the coffin to make it worth burying; Tucker uses limited sources, and bases some of his conclusions on faulty logic. With that said, Tucker's goals are admirable, and many of his ideas are definitely worthwhile. Indeed, even the zero-rehearsal methodology is far from worthless; it's a very intriguing idea, and by many accounts, quite an effective one. It is not historical, true, but if this were acknowledged and accepted, if his methodology were not treated as historical reality, then there would be little problem with its continued use. Tucker does not seem to have taken this view, but others are free to interpret his methodology as they see fit.

5.1 Problems in Reconstructive Theatre

Over the course of my investigation of Tucker's methodology, a number of problems have emerged. While these problems may be inconvenient for practitioners of reconstructive theatre, they present significant barriers for scholars of the subject. The first major problem is a lack of cohesive nomenclature—nobody seems able to agree on even a general term for the business of reconstructing the theatre of Renaissance England, let alone a cohesive terminology for specific practices. "Original Practice" is the closest there is to a general term, but what does it refer to? Sometimes it refers to the entire field, other times to specifically those interested in recreating historical rehearsal and staging techniques, other times to the more material culture-focused work of companies like Shakespeare's Globe. There is not even a consensus on whether

it is “Original Practice” or “Original Practices,” and, furthermore, use of the word “Original” implies a level of authenticity that most scholars would agree reconstructive theatre cannot claim. Many scholars have come up with their own label: Jensen and Whipday refer to their practices as “our historical imagining” (Jensen and Whipday 290), while Purcell uses the phrase “research-informed productions” (Purcell 431). Both of these are excellent terms, but neither has yet appeared elsewhere, and so any semblance of a consensus on appropriate terms for discussing reconstructive theatre remains elusive.

While there are vaguely similar terms for referring to elements of Tucker’s methodology, no two companies appear to use the same nomenclature, and Tucker has provided no terms for most of his practices. Even “Burbage Time” and “verse nursing,” the two terms Tucker does use, are not used by any of the practitioners who appear to follow Tucker’s method. Not only does this make it difficult to tell who is and is not using Tucker’s methodology, but it makes it difficult to actually find examples of Tucker’s method to begin with. When coupled with what appears to be a recurring reluctance to discuss Tucker, this makes it very challenging indeed to discover further instances of his methodology in practice.

The lack of a consistent nomenclature for reconstructive theatre means that exactly what does and does not count varies from case to case. The Globe focuses on reconstructing material elements of production, yet as Tucker laments, they do not use historical rehearsal techniques. The OPS, on the other hand, does not appear to care much about material elements, but instead focuses on what they claim to be historical rehearsal and performance practices. Which of these

is “Original Practice?” The Globe appears to fall under Tucker’s definition, though the context in which he uses it is somewhat unclear. The OPS clearly consider themselves to be doing “Original Practice,” as it is in their name. However, much of their practices are not at all historical, which raises another question—if the practices are not original, is it still fair to call it “Original Practice?”

This is the very problem I have with the term. Why I prefer terms like reconstructive theatre or “historical imaginings” is that there is no inherent claim to authenticity, and, furthermore, the term refers to the goals of the production, rather than the product. The OPS is certainly attempting to reconstruct something, even if it is based on questionable assumptions about the past. Their work also certainly falls under the category of “historical imagining,” as the no-rehearsal method is, essentially, an imagined version of history based (loosely) on primary sources. Establishing a clear term for the field, followed by a clear definition of that term, is an essential step in sorting out reconstructive theatre. As I state in my introduction, it is difficult to study something if you do not have a clear idea what, exactly, it is. Some of the fault here can be attributed to Tucker, as he provides no title for his methodology within *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare* and appears to have been comparably unspecific during his work with the OSC.

The issue of nomenclature is, in many ways, indicative of a much larger problem: there appears to be very little consensus on anything in reconstructive theatre, especially between scholars and practitioners. While some scholars, like Purcell and Worthen, among others, are attempting to establish some general theory, it appears difficult to do without an established base.

Among other things, there appears to be no established scholarly position on Tucker, either. While Tucker certainly appears to be an unloved figure by many academics, even that is not the case across the board. Weingust appears to respect Tucker, likely due in part because he sees Stern's work as confirming Tucker's claims about historical rehearsals, rather than debunking them. While I believe this is incorrect, especially in light of my correspondence with Tucker, the fact that Weingust does not argue that this is the case, but appears to simply assume that Stern confirms Tucker's claims demonstrates there is not even a clear scholarly consensus on this point. The general disinclination to discuss Tucker that appears to be common in academia means that relatively little has been done to establish a verdict on his work.

It is also worth pointing out that much of the pioneering work done in reconstructive theatre, including that of Tucker and the Globe, was done by theatre practitioners, not scholars. While performance-based research and scholarly interest in reconstructive practices are now certainly well-established, it is important to remember that this movement largely began in the world of professional theatre. While it is certainly useful in professional theatre to have common terms and techniques, it is not necessary, and, in this case, it appears to have been beneficial that different companies develop their own methodologies based on their own research. It is likely because academic interest has emerged later, in some instances as a response to "Original Practice" methodologies, that there is no clear consensus on anything.

5.2 Moving Forward

So, how does reconstructive theatre move forward? With regards to the professional theatre, many of the problems presented by Tucker's methodology have already been addressed. One of the primary problems is Tucker's assumption of authority, yet companies like the Shakespeare Tavern have examined Tucker and subsequently rejected some of his conclusions. While Tucker may treat himself as an authority on the subject of reconstructive theatre, he does not appear to be regarded this way by the theatre community at large, with figures like Stern having much greater influence.

Another problem, the availability of historical data, has already been addressed by Stern, not to mention REED, many of the volumes of which can be found for free online. Compared to when Tucker first began his work, it is now relatively easy for theatre practitioners to conduct their own research, and thus come to their own conclusions. This research also provides an excellent groundwork for theatre scholars to both establish their own methodologies for practice-based research, and as context for examining extant approaches. There is also a great deal of academic interest in reconstructive theatre in recent years; a significant number of journal articles on the subject have been published in the past two years, along with the second edition of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*, which may prompt renewed interest in examining Tucker's work.

Tiffany Stern's more recent work has also served to push the scholarship forward, and projects like *Shakespeare and the Queen's Men* demonstrate the possibility of successful

collaboration between academics and professional actors. Collaboration also appears to address some of the pitfalls of reconstructive theatre; one way Tucker's poor practices as a historian might have been avoided is if he had worked with actual historians. Such collaboration is clearly happening; Grassroots has worked with Tiffany Stern in the past, and Jensen and Whipday called upon the expertise of professional actors with experience in minimalist rehearsal techniques. Reconstructive theatre is, after all, inherently interdisciplinary—it must be performed by actors, based on literary analysis and historical research, with costumes and props based on archaeological evidence. Companies like Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern are already doing this—they take the work done by historians and archaeologists and produce their work based on it. While the scholars in question may not be collaborating directly, there is definitely a collaborative spirit and an inherent understanding that scholarly research is a useful source. While primary sources are certainly useful, they can be difficult to interpret, and thus the analysis of subject experts is extremely helpful in avoiding the sort of problematic inferences that Tucker draws.

This collaboration may even be able to address the issues of nomenclature and definition; as there are many scholars and theatre practitioners all operating under different terms (or differing definitions of those terms), a standard nomenclature must be negotiated. Again, this is something that may already be on the horizon, as close ties have already been established between companies like the Globe, ASC, and the Shakespeare Tavern. The similarity in practices between companies, like those found in Grassroots and the Shakespeare Tavern, already indicate

that there is some common ground. This can also be seen in the scholarship; the careful manner in which Jensen and Whipday view the historicity of their project is very similar to Purcell's perspective on the subject, not to mention that of Shakespeare and the Queen's Men. There is very clear common ground between both scholars and theatre practitioners, and this may serve as a suitable platform from which to develop a cohesive theory of reconstructive theatre.

5.3 Summary

Patrick Tucker's role in the emerging field of reconstructive theatre is a complex one; on one hand, he is a pioneering figure with a not insignificant role in popularizing the notion of reconstructing historical performance techniques. However, while some of his conclusions do appear to have historical merit, the crux of his methodology is the absence of rehearsal, which is contradicted by the historical record. Tucker's apparent conviction that historians are wrong, paired with the inflexibility of his methodology when it comes to informal rehearsal, are quite problematic, and there is always an inherent danger that readers will take Tucker at his word.

So it is with nuance that Tucker's place must be established. Minimalist rehearsal techniques are still a worthwhile methodology for reconstructive theatres, and thanks to the work of Tiffany Stern, we now have a great deal of research to base that work on. However, if the central premise of reconstructive theatre is to use historical rehearsal and staging techniques, then adapting methodologies in light of new research is essential to fulfilling that premise.

Regardless of anything else, we must appreciate the impact Patrick Tucker has had. The Original Practice Shakespeare Festival is alive and well, nearly two decades later. Projects like “Read Not Dead” at the Globe are reminiscent of Tucker’s work, which began there, and though they have not used his method since his time there, this may be a hint that his legacy at the Globe lives on.

Tucker’s methodology is problematic, but the significance of the questions it raises cannot be ignored. And yet, it seems to be; most of the academic sources I have read mention him only in passing or not at all, and even the OPS fails to acknowledge him on their website. While I fundamentally disagree with Tucker on both his research practices and his non-rehearsal claim, he is certainly due a little more credit than he appears to have been given. I believe my earlier reference to Freud is an appropriate metaphor; the man is generally regarded as the father of psychoanalysis, but nobody would dream of using his methods today. Perhaps this is how we should regard Tucker; an influential, founding figure in the discipline of reconstructive theatre, but someone who was, ultimately, wrong about a great deal. The benefit of acknowledging Tucker is a historical figure is it allows him to be given the credit he is due, while also recognizing that his methodology is historically dubious, and thus arriving at an appropriately nuanced view.

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