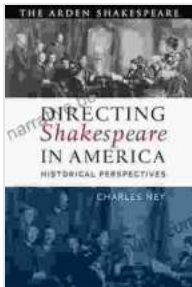


# Directing Shakespeare in America: Historical Perspectives from the Arden Shakespeare

William Shakespeare's plays have been performed in America for over 300 years. During that time, American directors have interpreted Shakespeare's works in a variety of ways, reflecting the changing cultural and political landscape of the United States.

This book explores the history of Shakespearean directing in America, from its beginnings in the 18th century to the present day. It features essays by leading scholars on the major directors and productions of each era, as well as a comprehensive timeline of Shakespearean productions in America.



## Directing Shakespeare in America: Historical Perspectives (Arden Shakespeare) by Charles Ney

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 2203 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 259 pages



## The Early Years: 1750-1850

The first Shakespearean productions in America were staged in the mid-18th century by touring British companies. These productions were often

met with hostility from American audiences, who were unfamiliar with Shakespeare's language and style. However, by the early 19th century, American actors and directors began to develop their own interpretations of Shakespeare's plays.

One of the most important early American Shakespearean directors was James Murdoch. Murdoch was a Scottish actor who emigrated to the United States in 1796. He directed many of the most successful Shakespearean productions of the early 19th century, including the first American production of Hamlet in 1803. Murdoch's productions were known for their realism and attention to detail. He also helped to popularize Shakespeare's plays among American audiences.

### **The Romantic Era: 1850-1900**

The Romantic era was a time of great change in American theater. Romantic directors such as Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman emphasized spectacle and emotion in their productions of Shakespeare's plays. Forrest was particularly known for his flamboyant performances, which often included elaborate costumes and scenery. Cushman was one of the first American actresses to play leading roles in Shakespeare's plays. She was known for her powerful and passionate performances.

The Romantic era also saw the rise of the star system in American theater. Actors such as Edwin Booth and Helena Modjeska became household names, and their performances of Shakespeare's plays were highly anticipated events.

### **The Realist Era: 1900-1945**

The Realist era was a time of reaction against the excesses of the Romantic era. Realist directors such as David Belasco and Augustin Daly emphasized naturalism and authenticity in their productions of Shakespeare's plays. Belasco was known for his elaborate sets and costumes, which were designed to create a realistic atmosphere. Daly was known for his attention to detail, and his productions were often praised for their accuracy and historical authenticity.

The Realist era also saw the rise of the American Shakespeare Festival. The first American Shakespeare Festival was founded in 1934 in Stratford, Connecticut. The festival has since become one of the most important Shakespeare festivals in the world, and it has produced many of the most acclaimed Shakespearean productions of the past century.

### **The Modern Era: 1945-Present**

The Modern era has seen a wide variety of approaches to Shakespearean directing. Some directors, such as Peter Brook and Joseph Papp, have emphasized the experimental and avant-garde. Others, such as Michael Kahn and Mark Rylance, have focused on creating traditional and accessible productions.

The Modern era has also seen the rise of the multi-cultural Shakespeare movement. Multi-cultural directors such as Julie Taymor and George C. Wolfe have cast actors from a variety of backgrounds in their productions of Shakespeare's plays. This movement has helped to make Shakespeare's plays more relevant to a wider audience.

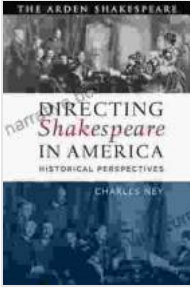
The history of Shakespearean directing in America is a long and complex one. American directors have interpreted Shakespeare's plays in a variety

of ways, reflecting the changing cultural and political landscape of the United States. This book provides a comprehensive overview of this history, and it is an essential resource for anyone interested in the study of Shakespearean performance.

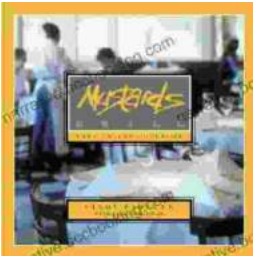
### **Timeline of Shakespearean Productions in America**

1750: First Shakespearean production in America, staged by the Hallam Company in Williamsburg, Virginia. 1796: James Murdoch emigrates to the United States. 1803: Murdoch directs the first American production of Hamlet. 1820: Edwin Forrest makes his stage debut. 1849: Charlotte Cushman makes her stage debut. 1852: Forrest and Cushman star in a production of Macbeth at the Broadway Theatre in New York City. 1864: Edwin Booth makes his stage debut. 1879: Helena Modjeska makes her American debut. 1890: David Belasco directs his first Shakespearean production, Hamlet. 1895: Augustin Daly directs his first Shakespearean production, The Merchant of Venice. 1934: The first American Shakespeare Festival is founded in Stratford, Connecticut. 1954: Peter Brook directs his first Shakespearean production, King Lear. 1965: Joseph Papp founds the New York Shakespeare Festival. 1975: Julie Taymor directs her first Shakespearean production, A Midsummer Night's Dream. 1983: George C. Wolfe directs his first Shakespearean production, The Colored Museum. 1990: Michael Kahn becomes the artistic director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. 2003: Mark Rylance becomes the artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe in London. 2014: Phylicia Rashad becomes the first African-American woman to direct a Shakespearean production on Broadway.

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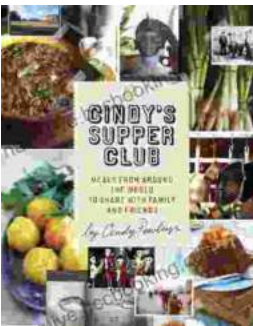


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