

SHAKESPEARE IN DANCE, INTERNATIONALLY AND IN ROMANIA – A SHORT SURVEY

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Abstract: *Over four hundred years after the Great Will's death, we need to draw the line once more and review the more famous versions of his plays put on in drama theatres and cinema around the world, as well as their translations into other artistic languages. I have undertaken below a short review of some of the choreographic versions of his tragedies and comedies put on internationally, following the chronological order of their writing. There will have been many more, but this is not meant to be an exhaustive survey. My own contribution to the list is mostly about the Romanian versions, often little known abroad. I have also added the versions created by Romanian born choreographers living and working abroad, and those signed by foreign masters the Romanian audiences were able to attend.*

Keywords: *Shakespeare in dance, Shakespeare in ballet, Shakespearean choreographic versions, Shakespeare inspired music, choreographed sonnets.*

A (very) brief historical outlook

Soon after ballet coagulated into a genre, it was inevitable that it would be built also around stories which literary and theatrical works inspired. Therefore, the works of Shakespeare were providing the basis for ballet pieces as early as the 18th century.

By the 19th century, opera and ballet had become even more significant genres among the performing arts, and the first masterpieces were created. However, it was only during the 20th century that the Shakespeare based repertoire actually flourished. In the early 21st century, exploring the richness of the Stratford-upon-Avon Bard continued, as choreographers tackled new titles under new perspectives.

Whilst some plays appear to have obsessed the choreographers, others do not seem to have tempted them at all.

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Shakespeare's plays transposed into dance/ballet

Richard III, 1592.

- 1981: Avet Terterian's "Monologues" had a two acts version of the ballet inspired by "Richard III", following on from the one act version of 1979, at the Yerevan Opera in Armenia.

In 1995, the Romanian born ballet star and choreographer Gheorghe Iancu premiered the two acts ballet "Ricardo III" at the Teatro Sociale di Rovigo in Italy, subsequently adopted by the Scala Theatre in Milan.

Apart from these, most choreographies based upon Shakespeare's drama have been short pieces centred upon portraying the main character.

The Taming of the Shrew, 1593.

- 1954: The first documented transposition of this Shakespearian play into ballet comes from Maurice Béjart, and was performed to music by Domenico Scarlatti by the Ballet des Étoiles de Paris.
- 1969: The most famous version however is that of John Cranko to the same score, lately rearranged by Kurt-Heinz Stolze and premiered at the Stuttgart Ballet in Germany.
- 1986: Kai Tai Chan set the story in 19th century China and present day Australia, featuring Kate as a Warrior Woman, in "The Shrew" at the Sydney Opera.
- 2013: Jean-Christophe Maillot was invited to put on a new and more contemporary version to music by Dimitri Shostakovich for the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

In Romania, Ioan Tugearu's choreography to a collage of English composers was premiered at the National Opera of Bucharest in 1977. It was restaged in 1988 and 1992 under slightly different titles, and at the Timișoara Romanian Opera in 1997.

Titus Andronicus, 1593.

- 2008: Dominic Walsh created for his own dance theatre in Houston, USA, a modern story about hate and revenge by the same name that took place in the video surveillance room of an airport.

Romeo and Juliet, 1594.

As one of the most frequently visited love stories of all times, this was translated into choreographic language as early as the 18th century. "Romeo and Juliet" is exceptional in that not one but several versions choreographed later have become famous.

- 1785: The oldest stagings in the history of dance records are the ones created by Eusebio Luzzi at Teatro La Fenice in Venice, and
- 1811: Vincenzo Galeotti (Royal Danish Ballet, Copenhagen).
- 1938: Ivo Váňa Psota (Brno, Czechoslovakia)
- 1940: Leonid Lavrovsky's ballet at the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad was a huge success, due both to Sergei Prokofiev's splendid music and to Galina Ulanova's memorable rendering of Juliet.
- 1955: Frederick Ashton (Royal Danish Ballet, Copenhagen)
- 1958: John Cranko followed the plot closely, observing its narrative and using a classical vocabulary (Stuttgart Ballet).
- 1965: Kenneth MacMillan (Royal Ballet "Covent Garden")
- 1971, 1981: Conversely, John Neumeier (Hamburg Ballet) and
- 1972: Tom Schilling (Berlin Komische Oper) had more modern, personal and imaginative visions.
- 1977: Having first performed the part of Romeo in MacMillan's production, Rudolf Nureyev created his own version for the current English National Ballet.
- 1977: Michael Smuin to music by Prokofiev was faithful to Shakespeare (San Francisco Ballet).
- 1979: In Yuri Grigorovich's vision of the story at the Bolshoi Theatre, the ensemble scenes were better achieved than the solos, yet the production was a big success on tours abroad.
- 1982: Harold Collins (Queensland Ballet, Brisbane)
- 1985: László Seregi (Hungarian National Ballet, Budapest)
- 1991: Massimo Morricone (Northern Ballet, Leeds)
- 1996: Jean-Christophe Maillot's "Roméo et Juliette" was a lively, classical-contemporary take on Shakespeare, where Friar Laurence took centre stage and full responsibility for the tragedy (Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo).
- 2007: Seen by many as a new Pina Bausch, Sasha Waltz gave the story a very different outlook by surrounding Romeo, Juliet and Padre Lorenzo only with an ensemble.
- 2007: Peter Martins, "Romeo + Juliet" (New York City Ballet)
- 2008: Krzysztof Pastor (Scottish Ballet, Glasgow)
- 2008: Mark Morris also premiered the original Prokofiev score, composed for a lost version of the play, the one with a happy ending.
- 2009: Cathy Marston, "Julia und Romeo" (Bern Ballet, Switzerland)
- 2011: An unconventional and technically spectacular production was created by Alexey Ratmansky for the National Ballet of Canada.
- 2012: Christian Spuck cast dancers from both the Zürich Ballet and the Junior Ballet company in a complex, updated performance.
- 2012: Graeme Murphy put on a visually opulent version with the Australian Ballet in Melbourne.
- 2016: Patrice Bart produced an adaptation after Lavrovsky which featured the Romanian born Miruna Micu as Juliet at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb.

The first Romanian version was staged by Vasile Marcu at the National Opera of Bucharest in 1960 and was followed by those choreographed by Mihaela Atanasiu (Romanian National Opera of Iassy, 1971), Yuri Papko (National Opera of Bucharest, 1989), Gheorghe Stanciu's adaptation

after MacMillan (Romanian National Opera of Iassy, 1997), then Ioan Tugearu (again National Opera of Bucharest, 2001).

Although withdrawn after about one year because of some allegedly copyright problems, the modern-clad version of the Moldavian born choreographer Radu Poklitaru at the Bolshoi Theatre was unanimously acclaimed in 2003.

Having premiered in 2005 at the Maribor Opera in Slovenia, “Radio and Juliet” by the Romanian born choreographer and ballet director Edward Clug to music by Radiohead was included in the National Opera of Bucharest’s repertoire in 2010.

Also in Maribor, Valentina Turcu’s concept remained true to Shakespeare’s text in 2012.

Other recent Romanian productions have been put on by Eugen Gîrneţ (“Maria Bieşu” National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Kishinev, Moldova, 2008), Pavel Rotaru (Sibiu Ballet Theatre, 2013), and Horaţiu Cherecheş (“Oleg Danovski” Opera and Ballet National Theatre, Constanta, 2014).

Bucharest ballet audiences were able to watch Tom Schilling’s production on tour in 1975, followed by Bertha Yampolsky’s more modern vision for the Israel Ballet based upon a music collage of Camille Saint-Saëns, Franz Liszt and Giacomo Rossini scores in 2008, and a contemporary “Roméo et Juliette” by the French choreographer Thierry Malandain in 2011.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 1595.

- 1855: The earliest reference to a ballet on this comedy was that of Giovanni Corsati to music by Giorza, at La Scala Theatre.
- 1877: After Marius Petipa found out what a marvellous music Mendelssohn-Bartholdy had composed and used it at the Mariinsky Theatre in Skt Petersburg, the score became almost compulsory for all subsequent productions for over a century.
- 1906: Mikhail Fokine in Skt Peterburg, for students of the Imperial School
- 1933: David Lichine: “Nocturne” to music by Rameau, for the Colonel de Basil’s Ballets Russes in Paris.
- 1944: Boris Romanoff in Montreal.
- 1955: Jean-Jacques Etcheverry (Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels)
- 1962: George Balanchine, author of one of the best known “choreographic translations”, once confessed that he had been more interested in Mendelssohn’s music than in Shakespeare’s text, and said that his ballet “could be watched and enjoyed without having read the play”.
- 1964: Frederic Ashton’s choreography premiered at the Royal Ballet “Covent Garden” as “The Dream”.
- 1976- 1996: Heinz Spoerli, four versions (Basel Theatre and Zürich Opera)
- 1977: John Neumeier inserted just a few fragments of music by Ligeti, in his three acts ballet performed by the Hamburg Ballet.
- 1981: Tom Schilling (Berlin State Opera)
- 1981: Robert Warren to Mendelssohn arranged by Salzedo (Manchester Opera)
- 1985: Gray Veredon (Helsinki)
- 1986: Bruce Wells (Boston Ballet)
- 1989: László Seregi to Mendelssohn and János Novák, (Budapest National Opera)
- 1989: Uwe Scholtz (Zürich Opera)

- 1990: Dennis Nahat (Cleveland Ballet)
- 1990: Harold Collins (Queensland Ballet, Brisbane)
- 1992: Peter Wissman (Aachen Ballet, Germany)
- 1993: Amedeo Amodio (Atterballetto, Reggio Emilia)
- 1997: Christopher Wheeldon (Colorado Ballet)
- 1997: Darius James' production was considered to be the breakthrough of the Welsh Ballet CYMRU in Newport, UK.
- 2000: Mauro Bigonzetti chose scores by Elvis Costello for his version with Aterballetto of Reggio Emilia. This was met with mixed appreciations by the critics, who thought it merely focused on "the gelid relationships in the plot".
- 2004: David Nixon set the action to music by Mendelssohn and Brahms in a sleeper train from London to Edinburgh with the Northern Ballet in Leeds.
- 2006: Chrissie Parrott (Australian Ballet, Melbourne)
- 2008: François Klaus (Queensland Ballet, Brisbane)
- 2010: At the State Opera in Vienna, the Finnish Jarma Elo made a lesser impression because of the abundance of characters and mime.

Mihaela Atanasiu's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was staged at the National Opera of Bucharest in 1989 and 1995, having been put on initially at the Belgrade Opera in the former Yugoslavia in 1983, where it won the Great Prize at the International Ballet Festival. It was set to a composite music score that inevitably included pages of Mendelssohn's music.

In 2003, the Belgian choreographer Marc Bogaerts presented a shorter and more humorous version to original music by Virgil Popescu. Another version on a Romanian stage belonged to Melinda Jakab, who inserted some pages by Tchaikovsky into the music collage at the Hungarian Opera in Cluj in 2014.

Fr. Ashton's version (1964) toured in Romania two years later and was staged at the National Opera of Bucharest in 2015. Tom Schilling's production was seen by Bucharest audiences not long after it premiered in 1981.

Henry V, 1598.

- 2004: One year after the Iraq war ended, David Gordon considered the drama from a new post-modern perspective by portraying the immorality of the war in "Dancing Henry Five" to music by William Walton, with seven dancers and a narrator, in New York.

Much Ado about Nothing, 1598.

- 1976: Vera Boccadoro choreographed to music created by T. Hrenikov a piece entitled "Love for Love" inspired by the play, for the Bolshoi Theatre.

The Twelfth Night, 1599.

- 1931: Antony Tudor choreographed “Cross Garter’d” to music by Girolamo Frescobaldi for the Ballet Rambert in London, keeping only some of the main characters and actions from Shakespeare’s comedy.
- 1942: Andrée Howard to Grieg (Liverpool)
- 1986: Boris Eifman put on a work inspired by “The Twelfth Night” to music by Gaetano Donizetti in an unusual style which he called cinema-ballet.
- 1996: John Neumeier to Vivaldi, “VIVALDI or ‘What you Will’” (Hamburg Ballet)
- 2012: The Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb included in its repertoire Alexandar Popovski’s modern version of the comedy.
- 2019: After having staged “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” in 2018, Ananda Bena-Weber choreographed a new production of “The Twelfth Night - A Ballet Noir” for the Sierra Nevada Company, USA.

As You Like It, 1599.

- 1981: Paul Taylor to music by William Boyce: “Arden Court” (Paul Taylor Dance Company, New York)
- 1985: John Neumeier approached the Shakespearean play in a neoclassical style (Hamburg Ballet).
- 2010: Donna and Hannah Bontrager with live music by Honkytonk Piano, “As You Like It: A Wild West Ballet” (Ballet Fantastique, Eugene, Oregon)
- 2015: Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker to music live by Brian Eno adopted a contemporary view, barely reminding its source, in “Golden Hours” (Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels).
- 2017: Set in Seoul and inspired by the US elections, James Cousins’ “Rosalind” to Seymour Milton’s score was a bold reinvention of “As You Like It”, with just four dancers of his own Company.

Hamlet, 1600.

Choreographers were fascinated by the complexity of this character from early times.

- 1788: Francesco Clerico created a ballet after “Hamlet” to his own music in Venice.
- 1816: Louis Henry put on a “*pantomime tragique en trois actes mêlée de danses*” to music by Wenzel Gallenberg in Paris, with a happy ending.
- 1934: Bronislava Nijinska created a modern version to a collage of Franz Liszt’s music for the Paris Opera, in which she cast herself in the main role in disguise, just as Sarah Bernhard had done in the drama theatre.
- 1942: Robert Helpmann staged a one act mime-drama to music by Tchaikovsky (Sadler Wells Ballet, London)
- 1950: Victor Gsovsky (Münich Opera)

- 1970: Konstantin Sergheyev (Kirov Theatre, Leningrad), starring Mikhail Baryshnikov)
- 1971: Vakhtang Chabukiani (Tbilisi Opera, Georgia)
- 1976; 1985; 1997: John Neumeier, “Hamlet: Connotations” to music by Aaron Copland (New York)
- 1988: Kenneth MacMillan, “Sea of Troubles” to music by Bohuslav Martinů and Anton Webern for a group of former dancers of the Royal Ballet “Covent Garden”
- 1993: Barry Moreland (West Australian Ballet, Perth)
- 1996: Peter Schaufuss, a modern-classical version to scores by Sort Sol/Black Sun and Rued Langaard (Elsinore, Denmark)
- 1998: Boris Eifman, who specialised in revamping the classics, filtered the plot through the Slavic soul and the imperial history in “Russian Hamlet: The Son of Catherine the Great” for the Eifman Ballet of Skt Petersburg.
- 2000: Stephen Mills used cinematic techniques and alterations of the traditional plot in his work to music by Philip Glass with Austin Ballet, USA.
- 2007: One of the most prominent choreographers of the new classical wave, Christopher Wheeldon used minimalistic scores (Arvo Pärt) in his one act piece for the Bolshoi Theatre.
- 2008: Oksana Titova (Latvian National Ballet, Riga)
- 2008: Kevin O’Day opted for a more contemporary approach (Stuttgart Ballet),
- 2011: as did David Nixon (Northern Ballet, Leeds).
- 2015: Moldavian born choreographer Radu Poklitaru and director Declan Donnellan set a ballet in two acts to music by Dmitry Shostakovich for the Bolshoi Theatre.

The Merry Wives of Windsor, 1600.

- 1942: Considered to be better suited for opera than ballet, the comedy has just one memorable choreographed version recorded, the one created by Vladimir Burmeister and Ivan Kurilov to music by V.Oransky at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Troilus and Cressida, 1602

- 2006: Paul Taylor, “Troilus and Cressida (reduced)”, with Paul Taylor Dance Company in New York.

Othello, 1604.

- 1818: Salvatore Vigano produced the first choreographic version to a collage made up mainly of Rossini’s music at La Scala Theatre.

- 1949: José Limon created the milestone twenty minutes ballet “The Moor’s Pavane” to music by Henry Purcell for the American Ballet Theatre.
- 1955: Erika Hanka, 10 scenes to a score by Boris Blacher (Viena State Opera)
- 1956: Tatjana Gsovsky (Berlin State Opera)
- 1957: Vakhtang Chabukiani in “The Moor of Venice” followed the plot closely in a traditional libretto at the Tbilisi Opera in Georgia.
- 1959: Jiří Němeček (National Theatre, Prague)
- 1960: Serge Lifar, with the Netherlands Ballet in Monaco
- 1967: Jacques d’Amboise (New York City Ballet)
- 1968: Garth Welch, originally for the Australian Ballet School in Melbourne
- 1971: Peter Darrell (New London Ballet)
- 1972: John Butler to music by Dvořák (Ballet du Rhin, Strasbourg)
- 1985: John Neumeier (Hamburg Ballet)
- 1994: Dmitri Bryantsev (Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre, Moscow)
- 1997: Lar Lubovitch staged a post-modern version, co-produced by the American Ballet Theatre and the San Francisco Ballet.
- 2007: Kirk Peterson (Alberta Ballet, Calgary)
- 2012: Doug Elkins in “Mo(or)town Redux”, reworked José Limon’s „The Moor’s Pavane“ at the Baryshnikov Arts Centre in New York.

In Romania, the tragedy was transposed into a full length ballet by Marius Zirra at the National Opera in Iassy in 1976 and Vasile Marcu at the National Opera of Bucharest in 1978.

King Lear, 1605.

- 1989: Annette Leday, „Kathakali King Lear” in Paris
- 1994: Maurice Béjart, “King Lear-Prospero” to music by Henry Purcell and Elizabethan composers (Ballet Béjart Lausanne)
- 2008: Igor Dobrovolsky attempted to picture “a scene of pride, madness and shattered dreams” for the Atlantic Ballet of Canada.
- 2017: Roger Creel’s “Lady Lear” to original score by Scott Moore was a bold production in which King Lear became Lady Lear and his daughters became his sons, for the Louisville Ballet, USA.

Macbeth, 1605.

- 1785: Charles Le Picq put on his “Macbeth” to music by Locke in London.
- 1816: Vincenzo Galeotti premiered his ballet based upon “Macbeth” to music by Claus Schall in Copenhagen.
- 1960: José Limon pared down “Macbeth” into a duet for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in “Barren Sceptre“.

- 1979, 1985: Pina Bausch, “He Takes Her by the Hand and Leads Her Into the Castle, the Others Follow“ (Wuppertal Dance Theater)
- 1980: “Macbeth” was a huge success for Vladimir Vassiliev both as a choreographer and as a performer of the leading role at the Bolshoi Theatre.
- 2016: Robert Weiss staged a version that exceeded the audiences’ and the critics’ expectations to the powerful score of J. Mark Scarce for the Carolina Ballet, USA.
- 2016: Francis Patrelle set “Macbeth” to a patchwork score by Tchaikovsky for his own company, performed by students of several dance academies in New York.

Antony and Cleopatra, 1606.

- 1765: Jean-Georges Noverre’s “Cléopâtre”, staged at the Paris Opera as a *ballet d’action*, is thought to have comprised more mime than dance, according to the choreographer’s principles.
- 1808: In response, Jean-Pierre Aumer and Rodolphe Kreutzer put on a new more ballet-like version.
- 1909: Mikhail Fokine and Anton Arensky’s “Egyptian Night” was an international success. Choreographed in 1908 at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg to music by Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky, it was included as “Cleopatra” in the programme of the first Parisian season of the Ballets Russes, with Ida Rubinstein in the leading role and costumes by Léon Bakst.
- 1961: Martha Graham brought her own deeply original perspective to the play in “One More Gaudy Night” to the exotic music by Halim El-Dabh with her company, using her own modern technique.
- 2000: Ben Stevenson to music by Rimsky-Korsakov focused on Cleopatra’s tragic destiny rather than on her relationship with Antony (Houston Ballet).
- 2011: David Nixon to music by Claude-Michel Schönberg (Northern Ballet, Leeds).

Coriolanus, 1607.

- 1804: Salvatore Viganò, one of the greatest dancers and choreographers of the turn of the 19th century who had also undertaken extensive music studies, created the ballet “Coriolano” to scores by Joseph Weigl at La Scala Theatre.

The Winter’s Tale, 1610.

- 2014: The full evening ballet choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon to music by Joby Talbot, co-produced by the Royal Ballet “Covent Garden” and the National Ballet of Canada, was a great success.

The Tempest, 1611.

- 1834: Best known for having created “Giselle”, Jean Coralli looked for inspiration in literary works and produced “La Tempête ou l’Île des Génies” (“The Tempest or the Genies’ Island”) to music by Jean Schneitzhoeffter at the Paris Opera.
- 1979: Glen Tetley chose to stage his two acts work to live music by Arne Nordheim with soprano, baritone, and orchestra, with Ballet Rambert in London.
- 1980: Michael Smuin to Paul Chihara’s score that expanded themes from Henry Purcell (San Francisco Ballet).
- 1982: Rudolf Nureyev put on his own technically and visually spectacular version at the Royal Ballet “Covent Garden” in London.
- 2010: Stephen Petronio created “I Drink the Air before Me” for his own modern dance company in the USA, in which the literary source was barely recognisable.
- 2011: Crystal Pite, “The Tempest Replica” (Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt)
- 2012: Nominated Best Large Scale Dance Production at the Theatre Critics of Wales Awards, Darius James’ production featured a score by Jean Sibelius written for an earlier version of the play (Welsh Ballet Cymru).
- 2013: In his one act piece, Alexei Ratmansky stretched to the maximum the dancers’ technical and artistic abilities at the National Ballet of Canada in Toronto.
- 2014: Krzysztof Pastor also combined the neoclassical and the post-modern style with acting at the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam.
- 2016: In David Bintley’s production to a commissioned score by Sally Beamish, the visual action took precedence over the emotional drama (Birmingham Ballet).

In Romania, Sergiu Anghel’s “The Tempest” was a theatre-dance performance, including four actors among the cast, given at the “Oleg Danovski” Ballet Theatre in Constanta in 2001.

Other attempts

Some choreographers have only selected certain characters or their main features, without transposing into dance the whole play.

- 1985: John Neumeier in “Shakespeares Liebespaare” (Shakespeare’s Lovers), put together a compilation of his Shakespearean ballet pas de deux with the Hamburg Ballet.
- 1999: David Bintley created a gallop through seven of the Bard’s plays to Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn’s jazz in “The Shakespeare Suite“ with Birmingham Ballet.

At the Bucharest National Opera, Romanian Ioan Tugearu choreographed “Richard III” to music by Gustav Mahler in 1989. This solo was then included in “Playing Shakespeare” (1997), a one-man show featuring Răzvan Mazilu, where a whole array of characters were displayed through dance.

In his “Folia, Shakespeare & Co”, a “choreographic-theatre” performance premiered at the Metropolis Theatre in Bucharest in 2014, contemporary choreographer Gigi Căciuleanu focused on the typology of the Jester as portrayed in the Bard’s plays.

It was not only Shakespeare's plays but also his sonnets that inspired choreographers throughout time.

- 1964: Kenneth MacMillan staged "Images of Love", a ballet in nine parts to music by Peter Tranchell, based on speeches from Shakespeare's plays and his sonnet 144.
- 2009: Maurice Béjart transposed into ballet sonnets 18, 23, 25, and 43.
- 2009: Roland Petit also transposed Shakespeare's sonnets 2, 11, 18, 44, and 116.
- 2013: John Neumeier in "Shakespeare Dances, Shakespearean sonnets" used contemporary language with a classically trained technique with Hamburg Ballet.
- 2016: Within its series of Shakespearean commemorative performances, Birmingham Ballet premiered Jessica Lang's "Wink", a series of "choreographed sonnets", where she captured the mood of five of the Bard's poems.
- 2019: Paul Vasterling in "Lucy Negro Redux" explored the mysterious love life of Shakespeare through the perspective of the "Dark Lady" for whom many of his famed sonnets were written, with Nashville Ballet.

Conclusions

In Shakespeare's plays there are many references to dances such as the *galliard* or *sinkapace* („Twelfth Night“, „Much Ado About Nothing“, „Henry V“), *volta* („Troilus and Cressida“, „Henry V“) , *courante*, *canario* („All's Well That Ends Well“, „Twelfth Night“), *jig* („Love's Labour's Lost“), *country footing* („The Tempest“), *pavane*, and stage directions indicate dancing in many plays, including „Romeo and Juliet“, „Much Ado About Nothing“, „Twelfth Night“, „Macbeth“, and „As You Like It“. Terms like 'measure' and 'foot it' can also refer to dancing, and dance is often woven into the plot as part of a masque or masquerade ball.

“Some of the reasons for this sense of dance in Shakespeare's works reflect the thinking at the time. Dance was seen as a representation of the 'cosmic order' of things and it was common to include references to it in everyday life and conversations – much in the same way as we use music references and song lyrics today.”²

Yet, how do we explain the drive to translate Shakespeare's writings into an unspoken language?

“The main reason that these plays work so well in ballets is that there is such a strong emotional content. Whether it is the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet or the sadness of other characters, Shakespeare included a lot of emotion in this writing. And this high emotional content translates supremely well to dance, particularly to ballet with its innate expressiveness. And this is no doubt why it remains so popular – audiences can make an emotional connection with the dancers in ways they can't always manage with a character on a page.”³

Another reason why some of Shakespeare's plays translated so well into ballet was the use of the exquisite music they had inspired to great composers, which is a kind of double or successive translation, as in the case of Mendelssohn's "Midsummer's Night Dream" or

² Ibidem.

³ <https://www.jadeharrisonschoolofdance.co.uk/index.php/about/blog/50-why-so-many-great-ballets-are-based-on-shakespeare>

Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet". It is no coincidence that these are some of the best loved and everlasting ballet titles.

But first of all, as John Neumeier so appropriately pointed out, "Shakespeare is the best source of inspiration for choreographers because he is the most human of writers. He has penetrated so deep down into man's soul, portrayed people's characteristics and relationships so vividly and strongly that we, the audiences, are able to understand them even without words, however paradoxical it may seem."

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