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THE DIACHRONIC APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF RHYTHM IN
SHAKESPEARE'S PERFORMANCES

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The article explores the overall influence and creativity of W. Shakespeare, as well as changes in approaches to theatrical interpretations and performances of Shakespeare's works from a diachronic perspective.

The themes of Shakespeare's works delve into the complexities of human relationships, ensuring their relevance to this day. The significance of Shakespeare's dramas and comedies on contemporary literature cannot be overstated.

Performances of Shakespeare's works evolve over time, rendering them entirely modern. The article discusses a shift in approach to speech rhythm, adding different characteristics and melodiousness, eliciting positive reactions from the audience. The diachronic approach involves comparing various performances across different time periods. To investigate real changes in the prosody of Shakespearean performances, the authors examined chronologically different renditions of the same excerpts and compared their key indicators using modern computer programs. The conclusions indicate significant changes in pause lengths, speech rates, and the direction of the main tone.

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The role of rhythm in Shakespeare's performances serves as an emotional foundation and an even stronger link connecting the actor and the audience.

Key words: *evolution, rhythm, development of performance styles, a symphony of tones and inflections, to preserve unique voices and manners of performers, rate of speech, a narrowed range of frequency of the main tone, localization of pauses, maximum duration of pauses, alliteration, repetition of consonants, platform for continual reinterpretation and innovation.*

ДІАХРОНІЧНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ВИВЧЕННЯ РИТМУ В ПОСТАНОВКАХ ШЕКСПІРА

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У статті йдеться про вплив та творчість В. Шекспіра в цілому та про зміни в підходах до театральних підходів та виконань творів Шекспіра в діахронічному аспекті.

Тематика творів В. Шекспіра торкається складнощів людських стосунків, і тому його доробки залишаються релевантними й досі. Неможливо переоцінити важливість впливу драм та комедій В. Шекспіра на сучасну літературу.

Виконання Шекспірівських творів змінюється з часом, що робить їх абсолютно сучасними і модерними. В статті йдеться про зміну підходу до ритму мовлення, що додає інших рис та мелодійності і викликає позитивні реакції глядача. Діахронічний підхід має включати порівняння різних виконань в різні часові періоди. Для того, щоб дослідити реальні зміни в просодії виконань шекспірівських творів, автори дослідили хронологічно різні варіанти реалізації однакових уривків, і за допомогою сучасних комп'ютерних програм порівняли основні їхні показники. Висновки свідчать про значні зміни у показниках пауз, швидкості мовлення та напрямку основного тону.

Роль ритму в виставах В. Шекспіра служить немов би емоційною основою та ще міцнішим ланцюжком, який з'єднує актора та глядача.

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***Ключові слова:** еволюція, ритм, розвиток стилів виконання, симфонія тонів та інфлексій, зберегти унікальні голоси та манеру виконання, швидкість мовлення, звужений діапазон частоти основного тону, розташування пауз, максимальна довжина пауз, алітерація, повторення приголосних, платформа для постійної реновації та інновації.*

Shakespeare's works are a timeless tapestry of literary brilliance that continues to resonate across generations. His contributions to English literature and the enduring global appeal of his plays are unparalleled [2, p. 12]. From the tragic tale of "Romeo and Juliet" to the comedic genius of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare's diverse portfolio showcases his mastery of storytelling and character development [2, p. 78].

His plays delve into the complexities of human emotions, societal norms, and the timeless struggles of the human condition. The themes explored in his works remain relevant to this day, making his plays a cornerstone of literary education and theatrical performance [3, p. 92; 4, p. 315].

Shakespeare's impact on the world of literature and drama cannot be overstated, and his works continue to inspire and influence artists and audiences alike. His ability to intertwine wit, tragedy, and human nature has left an indelible mark on the literary landscape. The enduring popularity of his works, reflecting their universal appeal and lasting relevance, solidifies Shakespeare's legacy as one of the greatest playwrights in history [5, p. 207; 6, p. 51; 7, p. 117].

It is crucial to grasp the evolution of characteristics of performance of Shakespeare to gain valuable insights into changing stage playing practices and audience reception over time. Examining how rhythm has been used and interpreted in various productions is essential for gaining a deeper appreciation for the role it plays in shaping the overall theatrical experience.

So what is rhythm of a theatrical play? It's the pulsating heartbeat of a theatrical production, the underlying pattern of movement and sound that gives life to the performance. Tempo is the speed at which the actors move and speak, influencing the overall atmosphere and emotional impact of the play. In addition to rhythm and tempo we should also consider cadence, in other words the rise and fall of the actors' voices, which shape the musicality of their delivery and add depth to the spoken words.

These three elements mentioned above work together to create a cohesive and

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engaging performance that resonates with audiences on a high level. By mastering the rhythm, actors can effectively convey the intended emotions and messages of the play, leaving a lasting impact on viewers.

A diachronic study involves the examination of a phenomenon across different time periods. In the context of Shakespearean performance, it focuses on analyzing the variations in rhythm, delivery, and interpretation of his works across different historical periods [8; 9-11]. This comprehensive approach enables researchers to gain valuable insights into the evolution of Shakespearean performance, shaped by changes in theatrical norms, cultural context, and artistic interpretations [12].

Furthermore, the diachronic study provides a valuable framework for understanding the historical development of performance styles in general, as well as acting techniques, and audience preferences [13]. It offers a nuanced exploration of how Shakespeare's texts have been adapted, reimagined, and presented on stage over the centuries, shedding light on the dynamic relationship between the playwright's timeless verses and the evolving traditions of theatre [14].

Exploring the diachronic aspects of Shakespearean performance allows scholars to unravel the complex layers of artistic innovation, societal influences, and historical contingencies that have contributed to the diverse interpretations associated with the Bard's enduring legacy [15; 16].

Researchers may examine the shifts in acting styles from the formal and declamatory approach of the Elizabethan era to the more naturalistic and psychologically nuanced performances of the modern stage [17; 18]. They may also explore how different directors and actors have interpreted and brought their own perspectives to Shakespeare's works, influencing the overall portrayal and reception of the plays [17].

Additionally, a diachronic study may delve into the impact of cultural and social changes on the performance of Shakespeare's plays. For example, researchers may investigate how the plays were received and adapted during periods of political unrest, societal transformations, or artistic revolutions [18]. This analysis can provide valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between theatre and society, highlighting the ways in which Shakespeare's works have resonated with audiences across different historical contexts.

Overall, a diachronic study of Shakespearean performance offers a comprehensive exploration of the ever-evolving relationship between the text, the

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stage, and the audience, while also recognizing the diverse creative choices that have shaped their performance history.

In early Shakespeare performances, the rhythm wasn't just a backdrop but a dynamic force that infused every aspect of the theatrical experience. The actors' delivery of lines was akin to an intricate dance of sound and emotion, rather than a mere recitation. Each pause, each emphasis, and each modulation contributed to the overall rhythm of the performance [19]. The cadence of the dialogue wasn't a mere recitation of words; it was a symphony of tones and inflections that resonated with the audience's emotions.

Furthermore, musical accompaniment played a pivotal role in enriching the rhythmic experience in early Shakespeare performances. From live musicians providing interludes between scenes to the use of instruments to underscore the emotional beats of the play, music added depth and richness to the performance [20]. This musical layer intertwined with the spoken word, creating a harmonious fusion that heightened the audience's emotional connection to the narrative unfolding before them.

In the times before the invention of radio any information about the manner of actors' performing was limited to the description of theatrical schools, principles of declamation and actors' moves and gestures on the stage. The beginning of Golden Era of Radio in 1930s led to the appearance of different radio channels and programs which made it possible to preserve unique voices and manners of performers who appeared before the microphone in radio studios. The old priceless radio recordings of those remote times can now be comparable to a newer recording, which is important, because every epoch imposes its imprint on the manner of acting, on the style of playing, on the interpretation of images, as well as on the phonetic and forensic design of the actors' performance in general. Only old radio recordings preserved in archives can be a true and authentic source of information for subsequent diachronic studies [21].

The diachronic research of possible changes in actor's style and in theatrical radio performances of W. Shakespeare's plays is the focal point of interest while investigating the dynamics of the change through time. The researcher [22; 23] collected the audio recording of Shakespearian radio performances of historically different periods of time, mainly from the 30s of the 20th century to the 50s and to the 21 century. A hypothetical assumption as to the existence of variations in the phonetic

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realizations of performances in different periods of time has been put forward. The investigation [24] confirmed the existence of certain prosodic changes in the analyzed realizations, namely: the radio recordings of Mercury Theater as chronologically the most remote ones (1930-1940 years) among the five radio recordings (Mercury Theater, Living Shakespeare Series, British Broadcasting Corporation, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Complete Archangel) are characterized by a comparatively slower rate of speech, a narrower range of Frequency of the Main Tone (scenic public speeches) and a comparatively faster rate of speech and a wider range of Frequency of the Main Tone (monologues-inner reflections). The localization of pauses, their larger quantity and maximum duration are other distinctive features of Mercury Theater realizations, as well as the longest duration of speaking and the slowest rate of speaking. The shortest duration of sounding in combination with the lowest rate of speaking and a narrow range of Frequency of the Main Tone (FMT) testify to the attempts to depict a specific, positive, image of a hero as an elderly man full of self-esteem and pride (Mercury Theater), which differs from the image of a hero created by another actor (Living Shakespeare Series), with an unnaturally fast rate of speaking, high and unpleasant voice with a specifically wide change in the Frequency of the Main Tone (FMT), in an attempt to create rather a negative image.

The existence of correlation between such markers of prosody as the range of Frequency of the Main Tone (FMT) and the rate of speech, and between the rate of speech and the duration and quantity of pauses, has been proven.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's masterful use of poetic devices such as alliteration and repetition added to the overall musicality of the language, created a sense of rhythm and cohesion within lines [25]. Repetition, whether of words or phrases, served to emphasize key themes and emotions, imprinting them in the minds of the audience long after the performance had ended.

The rhythm in these early performances was a delicate balance of tension and release. Moments of heightened intensity, such as soliloquies or dramatic confrontations, were punctuated by softer, flowing passages of dialogue or reflection [26]. This ebb and flow created a dynamic and emotionally rich experience for the audience, drawing them into the world of the play and allowing them to experience a range of feelings and sensations alongside the characters.

Moreover, the lighting and staging were carefully orchestrated to enhance the rhythm of the performance. Changes in lighting, from bright to dim, from warm hues

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to cool tones, mirrored shifts in mood and tone within the play (Korda, 2002). Similarly, carefully choreographed movements and transitions added a visual dimension to the auditory experience, further enriching the rhythmic tapestry unfolding on stage [27].

In summation, these elements—actors' delivery, poetic meter, musical accompaniment, poetic devices, lighting, and staging—worked in concert to create a captivating and immersive theatrical experience that appealed to all the senses. It was a performance where rhythm wasn't just heard but felt, where every beat resonated with the audience's emotions and imagination, leaving an indelible mark on their hearts and minds.

In modern Shakespeare performances, the evolution of performance techniques has significantly impacted the rhythm of the delivery. With the advent of technology such as microphones and sound systems, actors now have tools to enhance the precision and control of their vocal delivery. This technological advancement allows for a more nuanced modulation of voice, enabling actors to emphasize the intricate rhythms inherent in Shakespeare's verse [28; 29; 30].

Moreover, the incorporation of diverse acting styles from around the world has enriched the rhythmic landscape of modern performances. As actors draw inspiration from various global theatre traditions, they bring forth a multitude of rhythmic sensibilities, resulting in a more varied and dynamic approach to rhythm [31; 32]. This convergence of different performance techniques has contributed to a richer tapestry of rhythms, reflecting the diversity of interpretations and cultural influences in contemporary Shakespearean productions.

Contemporary Shakespeare performances often venture into non-traditional settings, transcending the confines of traditional stage spaces. From urban landscapes to post-apocalyptic worlds and even outer space, these innovative settings provide a canvas for creative reimagining of rhythm in performance. In such settings, performers utilize non-verbal expressions and physicality to convey the rhythm of the text, introducing experimental and unconventional rhythms that challenge traditional interpretations [9; 10; 11].

In recent years, modern Shakespeare performances have witnessed a growing integration of music and soundscapes into productions. This fusion of spoken word with musical elements adds a new dimension to the rhythmic experience, as the interplay between voice and music creates intricate layers of rhythm [33; 34]. Live

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music, ambient sounds, and rhythmic patterns interweave to redefine the auditory landscape of Shakespearean performances, offering audiences a multisensory engagement with rhythm [35; 36].

The role of rhythm in early Shakespeare performances transcends mere delivery; it serves as a conduit for emotional engagement and comprehension for the audience. Through the lens of diachronic study, it becomes evident that the cadence and tempo of the delivery wield significant influence over the audience's interpretation of the plays. The rhythm acts as a silent orchestrator, dictating the mood and impact of pivotal scenes, thereby shaping the audience's emotional journey through the narrative [9; 10; 11].

Moreover, rhythm serves as a guiding force, navigating the audience through the intricate complexities of Shakespeare's language. As actors modulate their voices to match the rhythmic contours of the verse, they imbue the text with clarity and depth, ensuring that every nuance and subtlety is conveyed with precision [2; 37; 38]. This synchronization of rhythm and language enriches the audience's overall experience of the performance, fostering a deeper connection to the characters and themes explored on stage.

Ultimately, rhythm emerges as a powerful tool in the arsenal of theatrical expression, transcending linguistic barriers to communicate directly with the audience's emotions and imagination. It is through the subtle cadences and pulsating beats of rhythm that Shakespeare's timeless verses come to life, resonating with audiences across generations and reaffirming the enduring power of live performance [5; 35; 36].

The evolution of rhythmic interpretation in modern Shakespeare performances marks a departure from traditional approaches, signaling a shift in artistic sensibilities and audience expectations. While iambic pentameter remains a cornerstone of Shakespearean verse, modern performers exhibit a greater willingness to explore and experiment with diverse rhythmic structures [39]. This evolution is reflective of broader societal changes and shifting artistic paradigms, wherein the rigid confines of traditional meter give way to a more fluid and dynamic approach to rhythm. Modern performers embrace a wider palette of rhythmic patterns, ranging from subtle variations in tempo and phrasing to bold shifts in emphasis and cadence [7; 40]. This newfound freedom allows for a more nuanced and multidimensional portrayal of characters and themes, enriching the overall theatrical experience for audiences [41].

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In contemporary Shakespeare performances, rhythmic innovation and artistic freedom reign supreme as performers boldly experiment with unconventional rhythmic patterns and techniques [42]. Syncopations, irregular meters, and strategic pauses are employed to subvert expectations and imbue performances with a sense of spontaneity and vitality [5; 35; 36]. This willingness to push the boundaries of traditional rhythmic conventions allows performers to infuse their interpretations with fresh energy and creativity, resulting in performances that captivate and inspire [33; 34].

Rhythm as a Reflection of Cultural Context:

The rhythmic interpretation of Shakespeare's works is deeply intertwined with cultural context, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of performers and audiences alike. Different cultural milieus give rise to distinct rhythmic sensibilities, as performers draw inspiration from their own cultural traditions and artistic influences (Orgel, 2010). This cultural infusion enriches the rhythmic tapestry of Shakespearean performances, infusing them with layers of meaning and interpretation that resonate with specific audiences and foster cross-cultural connections [43; 44].

Ultimately, the evolution of rhythmic interpretation in modern Shakespeare performances underscores the enduring relevance and adaptability of the Bard's works. As performers continue to push the boundaries of rhythm and expression, Shakespeare's timeless verses remain a vibrant and ever-evolving testament to the power of artistic interpretation and human creativity [9; 10; 11].

Moreover, comprehending the implications of rhythm in Shakespeare's works provides valuable context for interpreting historical performances and adapting these timeless pieces for modern audiences. By studying how rhythm has been interpreted and utilized across different time periods and cultural contexts, we gain insight into the evolving nature of Shakespearean performance and its enduring relevance [2; 37; 38]. This contextual understanding enables directors, actors, and scholars to breathe new life into Shakespeare's works, ensuring their continued resonance with contemporary audiences.

The profound implications of rhythm in understanding Shakespeare's works extend far beyond academic curiosity. They enrich our appreciation of the profound artistic legacy of the Bard, illuminating the enduring power of his words to captivate and inspire audiences across generations [3; 28; 29; 30]. By recognizing the transformative potential of rhythm in Shakespearean drama, we are not only

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preserving a literary heritage but also fostering a platform for continual reinterpretation and innovation, ensuring that Shakespeare's works remain vibrant and relevant for generations to come.

Future research could explore the integration of advanced technological tools, such as motion capture and virtual reality, to analyze the impact of movement and spatial dynamics on the delivery of Shakespearean verse. By employing motion capture technology, researchers can meticulously track the gestures and movements of actors during performances, providing valuable insights into how physicality influences rhythm and meaning [45]. Similarly, virtual reality platforms offer immersive experiences that allow audiences to interact with Shakespearean scenes in novel ways, potentially enhancing their understanding and engagement with the text [46].

By examining performances from different historical periods researchers can gain insights into how cultural factors shape the rhythmic expression of Shakespearean texts, enriching our understanding of their global resonance and adaptability.

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