

Seeing Shakespeare

You may not be able to get out and see a Shakespeare performance right now, but fear not! Dr Lynn Robson, Tutorial Fellow in English Literature, shares some of her favourite online finds.



The RSC has launched [At Home with Shakespeare](#), and the BBC has broadcast the following plays as part of their [Culture in Quarantine](#) project. I've added my opinions about each production, but you shouldn't take my word for it, watch for yourselves:

Macbeth (2018), *directed by Polly Findlay with Christopher Eccleston and Niamh Cusack.*

Divided critics and audiences but I saw it twice and was genuinely scared for the whole two hours of the performance. You won't be expecting the way the witches are portrayed. Dr Who as Macbeth: what's not to enjoy?

Hamlet (2016), *directed by Simon Godwin with Paapa Essiedu.*

The second-best *Hamlet* I've ever seen (happy for you to guess what my favourite one is). Set in an African Elsinore, this is a star-making performance by Paapa Essiedu, one of the most exciting actors working today. If you enjoy this check out this video on [YouTube](#).

Romeo and Juliet (2018), *directed by Erica Whyman.*

Another one that divided audiences but I loved its energy, commitment, and pace. A female Mercutio, and a brilliant Juliet. Erica Whyman recognises what a radical play this was when Shakespeare wrote it, and directs it at full throttle.

Much Ado About Nothing (2014), *directed by Christopher Luscombe.*

Charming, witty production, which plays with a Downton Abbey-esque vibe. Set at the end of the First World War it was in a double-bill with *Love's Labour's Lost*, and retitled *Love's Labour's Won*. That's a

reference for Shakespeare nerds, which I'm happy to explain. Highly recommended.

Othello (2015), directed by Iqbal Khan with Hugh Quarshie and Lucian Msamati.

Another cherished theatre-going memory. Iqbal Khan is always provocative – sometimes it doesn't work but this one worked for me. Hugh Quarshie is elegant and dangerous as Othello, and Lucian Msamati is compelling as black Iago. Made me rethink the way I teach and think about this play and I can't give higher praise than that.

The Merchant of Venice (2015), directed by Polly Findlay.

Not the Las Vegas-set *Merchant*, sadly, but still a coherent, accessible production which doesn't shy away from the problems this play dramatises and explores.