

MIAMI 2001: REPORT FROM THE 29TH ANNUAL MEETING

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The twenty-ninth annual meeting may have been a little smaller than usual, as many members opted to bypass Florida on their way to Spain for the World Shakespeare Congress in Valencia. But those who chose Miami will probably agree that this year's SAA meeting was not one they'll soon forget. President Meredith Skura began her Annual Luncheon address by commending the outstanding work of Miami's Local Arrangements Committee, and her acknowledgement unleashed a wave of applause—long and loud—as people remembered the previous evening at Vizcaya. Red, green and peach-colored parrots perched under palms; classical guitar music wafting through the 16th-century villa; formal gardens straying off to the right and stone terrace leading from an inner courtyard down to the water; succulent tropical dishes, hors d'oeuvres and chilled wines—the Opening Reception in Miami set the tone for a splendid three days.

Ms. Skura continued with an amusing account of Shakespeare's success in the business world. Currently making the news are such books as Elizabeth I CEO: A Strategic Lesson from the Leader Who Built an Empire and Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide To Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage. Even more successful than these noble tomes are the training seminars with their Shakespeare Lite scripts, video clips, and trunksfuls of costumes. "What does all this have to do with us?" asked Ms. Skura. It shows "that America's Shakespeare is alive and well, and that our nation's movers and shakers still believe in his wisdom...What other writer could get the President of Grumman's Electronic Sensors Sector to put on tights and a purple cloak?"

On a more sober note, Ms. Skura reminded us of the growing crisis in the country's public schools and asked that we continue our efforts to make a difference. She urged us to "think more about the potential teachers in our own classes, to teach more about teaching, and to talk with the teachers who are already working in the schools and might welcome our collaboration." Of course, as always, this year's meeting offered seminars and workshops on teaching at various levels and with various methodologies, and the special session for area secondary—school teachers gave every indication that we are heeding the call to stay connected.

Overall, the range of paper sessions, seminars, workshops, and other events offered in the name of "Shakespeare" was impressive. This year's plenary session on historicizing Shakespeare's language in a post New Critical age resonated well amidst a number of seminars and papers on various aspects of language and history. And enthusiastically attended were seminars and workshops on issues of performance—the latter linking two other popular topics: film and electronic media as aids for both teaching and research.

The evening performances themselves were a huge success. *Much Ado About Nothing* transported viewers to the "swing era" with music and dance of the 1940s. The acting in even the minor roles was accomplished, and the innovative transposition of Leonato to Leonora—giving Hero a mother instead of a father—made for a neat twist. On Saturday evening Leroy Clark's *Shakespeare's Journey*, performed by talented and well-coached undergraduates, presented a convincing reconstruction of Shakespeare's life. The play ran late, but those who were able to stay till the end were rewarded with a dramatic and tight exploration of backstage feuding between Wil Kempe and Shakespeare that lent credibility to events in their lives, and was theatrically satisfying.

As always, the meeting concluded with the Malone Society Dance. Gone was "the usual SAA Average White Band with its wedding/bar mitzvah standards" (as one veteran put it). This year's dance was rocked by Miami's own Haitian/Caribbean fusion of reggae, ska and jazz. And while word had it that Ayabonmbé's music was WAY TOO LOUD, there were plenty of people out there dancing. As one Californian gleefully remarked: it was exciting just to be in a place where so much electricity could be generated.

Whether we think of the hotel's beautiful pool, the fabulous reception at Vizcaya, the loudest band in the hemisphere, or any number of exciting papers, we should all remember this: that the memorable programs and events of the Shakespeare Association meeting for the year 2001 were made possible by the persons and institutions listed below.

Outgoing Trustees: Harry Berger, Jr. (University of California, Santa Cruz), Barbara Hodgdon (Drake University), Jean E. Howard (Columbia University).

Program Committee for 2001: Chair Barbara Hodgdon (Drake University), John Michael Archer (University of New Hampshire), Anthony B. Dawson (University of British Columbia), Susan Frye (University of Wyoming).

Local Arrangements Committee: Co-chairs Peggy Endel (Florida International University) and Mihoko Suzuki (University of Miami), with James Andreas (Florida International University), Anthony Barthelemy (University of Miami), Phillip Church (Florida International University), Kent Lantaff (University of Miami), Jennifer Low (Florida Atlantic University), Jeffrey Shoulson (University of Miami), James Sutton (Florida International University), Dayle Wilson (University of Miami).

Sponsors of the 2001 Meeting: Florida International University, Miami; University of Miami, Coral Gables; Barry University, Miami Shores; Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton; Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers; Florida State University, Tallahassee, and the Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies; New College of the University of South Florida, Sarasota, and the New College Program in Medieval-Renaissance Studies; University of South Florida, Tampa.

Additional Support for the 2001 Meeting: Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council, Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council, Miami-Dade County Mayor, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners.

Conference Administration: SAA Program Coordinator Lee Tydings, with Jackie Hopkins and Julie Morris.