

Glen Byam Shaw (1904-1986) was an actor/director whose work shaped British Theatre and Shakespeare across the last century. Shaw is notable from a research perspective for having made detailed pre-production notebooks for all of the Shakespeare productions he directed. From 1947-51 he directed the Old Vic Theatre School. Shaw became co-director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1952, first with Anthony Quayle and then alone. There he directed 14 plays, revitalised the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, brought in major figures to direct productions, oversaw productions including Tony Richardson's *Othello*, directed *As You Like It* to begin in winter and progress to summer for the first time, and selected Peter Hall to succeed him in 1959. Hall established the RSC a year later, building on Shaw's foundation.

My thesis seeks to serve as the first major biographical investigation of Shaw. No full biography of Shaw exists, despite the fact that almost all of his contemporaries and friends have been extensively biographed and studied. Shaw's influence on British theatre is not accurately reflected by the amount of scholarship surrounding him. Shaw was key to the development of post-war Shakespeare and was also the key architect of what would become the RSC. His work at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre; revitalising the theatre's output, bringing in both renowned, established names and up and coming practitioners; gave Peter Hall the opportunity to build on that legacy in the RSC. A case could be made for Shaw being *the* most significant figure in post-war Shakespeare. This thesis looks to fill that gap in the scholarship of the histories of both post-war Shakespeare studies and the RSC.

This grant allowed me to undertake a research trip to Cambridge University Library where letters between Shaw and Siegfried Sassoon are held. These letters date from the early 1920s through to the late 1960s and detail the relationship between the two men as well as the events of their lives over that period. Getting access to these letters and being able to take the time to properly explore them allowed me to not only read them but transcribe those most relevant to my researches.

From this trip I was able to gather evidence of Shaw's personal, uncensored opinion of his own work and time as director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. I gained insight into his mindset at the outset of the Second World War and into how it affected him. This also gave me a window into how his directorial work was informed by his military and wartime experiences, understandings and prejudices. I also gathered supporting evidence of Shaw's bisexuality and the ways in which it may, or may not, have affected his directorial decisions.

The research outcome of this trip was invaluable to my thesis and will help to make a significant and important contribution to a much neglected area of renaissance and Shakespearean historiography through the lense of performance studies. This trip would not have been possible without the Greg Wells Research Award grant and I am very grateful for it.