

Stratford FESTIVAL



CBC IDEAS WEEK

FORUM ACADEMY SERIES



Shakespeare
DRAMATURGY

Alexa Alice Joubin

Sunday 23 July 2023

2:00 PM

Tom Patterson Theatre

Purchase tickets at Stratford Festival



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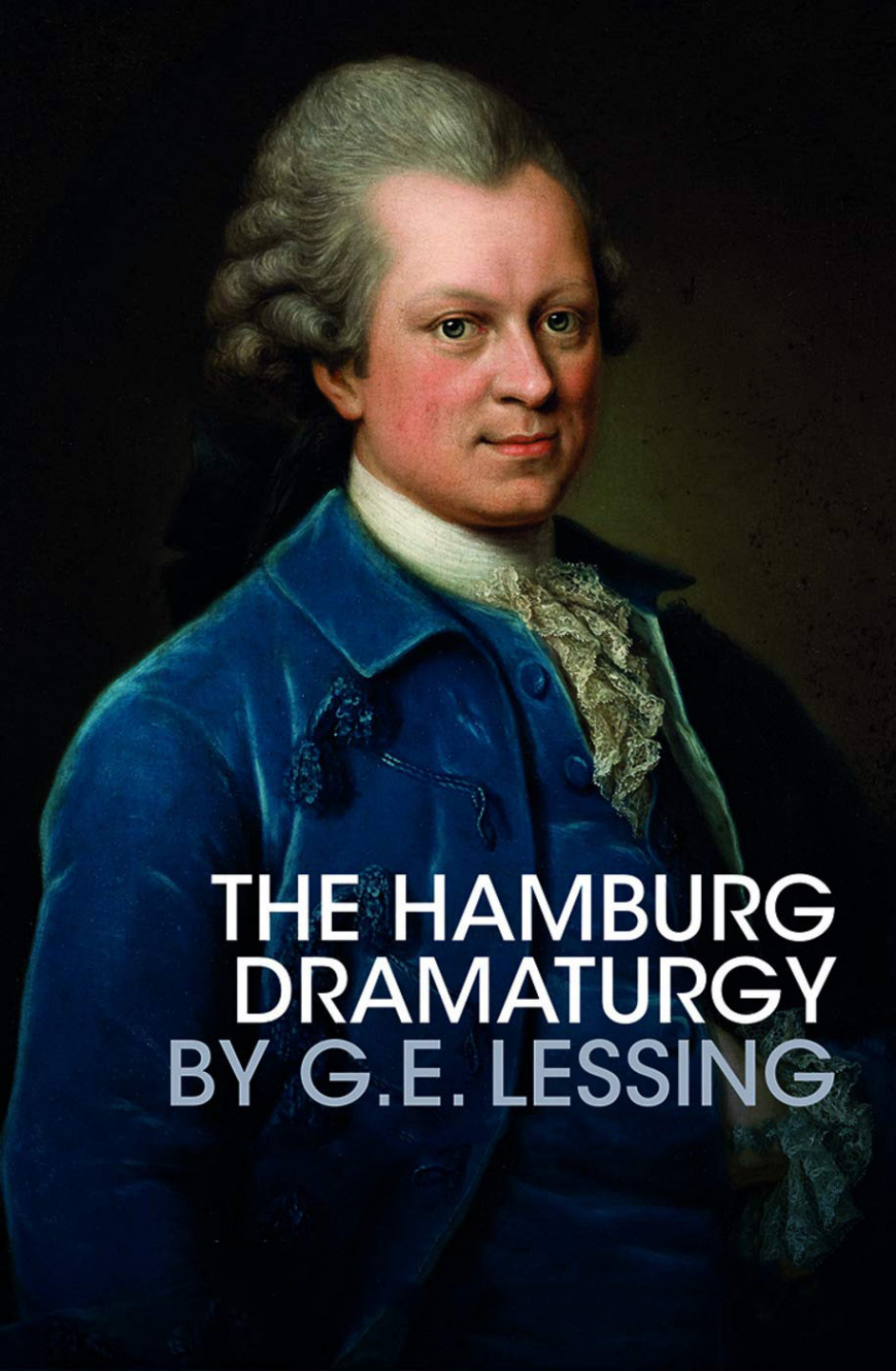
Shakespeare **DRAMATURGY**

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What Is Dramaturgy?

Eighteenth-Century Perspectives

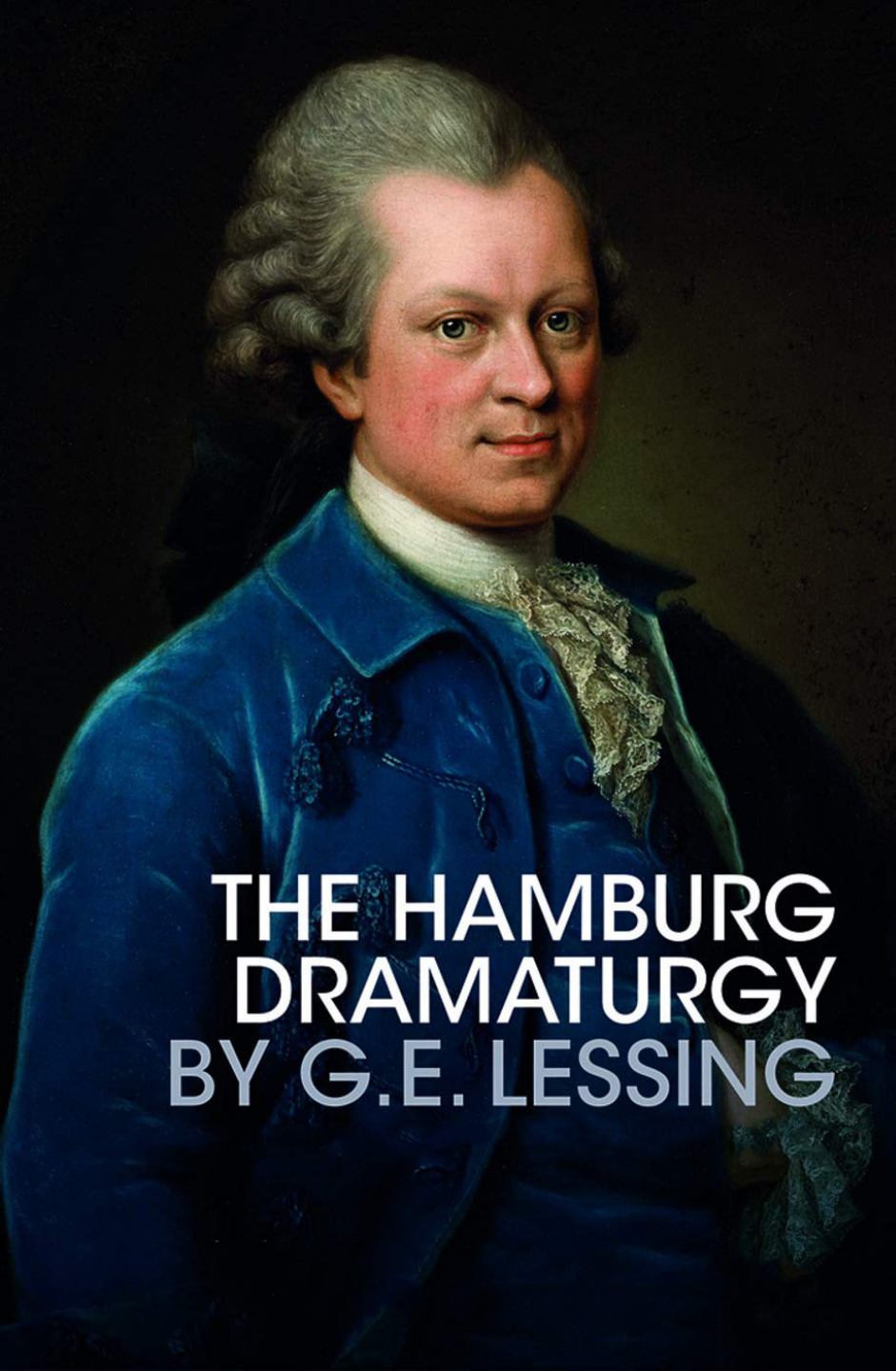


THE HAMBURG DRAMATURGY BY G.E. LESSING

Two Insights on Dramaturgy

1. As opposed to textual criticism, dramaturgy calls for holistic analyses of acting, current events, the significance of performance site, & mise-en-scene.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing,
Hamburgische Dramaturgie, 1767



THE HAMBURG DRAMATURGY BY G.E. LESSING

Two Insights on Dramaturgy

2. “The great discernment of the drama critic lies in their ability to distinguish, whenever they feels pleasure or displeasure, to what extent that feeling should be credited **to the writer or to the actor.**”

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing,
Hamburgische Dramaturgie, 1767

What Is Dramaturgy?

Twenty-First-Century Perspectives

Dramaturgy: Core Concept

Performativity

Performativity vs Performance

- **Performativity:**

A linguistic function that permeates all narratives (including performance)

- **Performance:**

An artistic form of intentioned and citational enactments for limited duration

Performativity

Conscious or unconscious uses of language to affect social actions known as **speech acts**

Speech Act

Officiation, apologies, consents, greetings, invitations, sentencing, complaints, etc.

Performance

“Citational” enactments for artistic effects that are bracketed from social practices of daily life by theatrical conventions

Performativity *in* Performance

- **Performativity:**

Characters' unspoken motivations
(beyond the plot on a superficial level)

- **Performance:**

Characters and audiences behave in
particular ways to create, fit in, or
deviate from social norms

Amaka Umeh as Hamlet (dir. Peter Pasyk), Stratford 2022



Performativity *in* Performance

- **Performativity:**

“To be, or not to be, that is the question”:
rhetoric + unspoken motives

- **Performance:**

Props and theatrical conventions

Character's personal truth vs implicit
meanings deduced by audiences

Performativity of Performance

- Performativity informs all speech acts on and off stage
- Openness in all speeches and utterances because meanings emerge contextually over time

Gender as Case Study of Performativity & Dramaturgy

Twelfth Night, dir. Martha Henry (Stratford 2017)
Sarah Afful as Viola & E.B. Smith as Orsino



Gender in *Twelfth Night*

- ORSINO: But died thy sister of her love, my boy?
- CESARIO: I am **all the daughters** of my father's house,
And **all the brothers** too:
and yet I know not.

Gender in *Twelfth Night*

- ORSINO: Cesario, come;
For so you shall be, while you are a **man**;

But when in other habits you are seen,
Orsino's mistress and his fancy's **queen**.

Gender in *Twelfth Night*

- Final reunion scene of “gender reveal” often misunderstood
- Cesario never changes into “maid’s garments”
- Orsino continues to call him boy and Cesario
- Double **weddings** announced but not staged (Cesario + Orsino; Sebastian + Olivia)

Gender in *Twelfth Night*

- The enduring mystery and **dramaturgical** challenge:

Cesario does not have any lines after Orsino's declaration of love

- Traditional dramaturgy = misconception of **crossdressing** as a convenient and temporary dramatic device

Gender in *Twelfth Night*

- Traditional dramaturgy overlooked the **transgender** cues of Cesario
- “Crossdressing” is a misnomer -- sartorial camouflage that compartmentalizes genders
- Glosses over the **performativity of all speech acts**
- Suggests that trans bodies are inauthentic

Productions Rethinking Gender

- *As You Like It*, dir. Desdemona Chiang, California Shakespeare Theatre, 2017
- *Hamlet*, dir. Daniel Winder, Iris Theatre, Covent Garden, London, 2019

As You Like It, dir. Desdemona Chiang, California Shakespeare, 2017

Thematizes queer homelessness & features trans actors



Hamlet, dir. Daniel Winder, Iris Theatre, Covent Garden, London, 2019

Non-binary actor Jenet Le Lacheur
as Hamlet (pictured)



The Importance of Dramaturgy

- Shows that text alone does not encompass everything words connote
- Counters text-centric biases that regard gender practices as fixed, reflecting the supposed fixity of printed text
- It's all about **embodiment**

The Importance of Dramaturgy

- Understanding words as both a spatial and temporal concept
- Adding nuance to the meanings of the physicality of playmaking

The Importance of Dramaturgy

- Attending to **material** aspects of performance
 - somatic presence of actor / audiences
 - voice / vocal work
 - props & costumes
 - sets

The Importance of Dramaturgy

- Gender = What one does or says in a given space at a given point in time
- Dramaturgy = One travels through life with evolving identities
- Dramaturgy emphasizes **interpersonal relationships** that may shift over time

Conclusion

- Why rethink gender through dramaturgy now?
- Shakespearean theatre is trans theatre (cross-gender roles; boy actors; subversion of social norms)
- In *Twelfth Night*, Viola would have been played by a boy actor presenting as feminine who later dresses as page boy Cesario

Conclusion

- *Twelfth Night* features Cesario rather than Viola in most of its dramatic action
- Falstaff as the Witch of Brainford to escape Ford's house in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- Imogen as the boy Fidele in *Cymbeline*

Conclusion

- In *As You Like It*: Rosalind venturing into the woods as Ganymede
- In *As You Like It*: Celia, Phoebe, and Audrey were also played by boy actors in Shakespeare's time

Conclusion

- But current legislation criminalizes transgender people and cross-gender performance
- These attitudes endanger classical (and Shakespearean) theatre
- High-school drama programs are withering
- Theatre festivals are affected

Dramaturgy for All