

“Being Here Together”: Global Partnerships in Higher Education

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As countless educators learned during 2020, enhanced videoconferencing technology has broadened pedagogical possibilities. When the COVID-19 pandemic required classes to move online, relatively recent advances in the capabilities of videoconferencing platforms helped make it possible for much teaching and learning to continue. Some educators made this change successfully, others struggled, but the classes that worked could occur because electronic products such as Zoom and Canvas facilitate both synchronous and asynchronous sessions, screensharing, message boards, blog postings, breakout rooms, and myriad other features that allow students and teachers to see and hear each other, and to collaborate in ways that would have been unimaginable a few years ago. Even before many instructors were unexpectedly pushed into using videoconferencing in education, however, I was already keenly aware of such technological advances because of my lengthy involvement with an initiative instituted about a decade ago to expand international communication between students, faculty, and arts practitioners. I will describe this endeavor, the World Shakespeare Project (WSP), in detail below.

Technology works much more smoothly now, but even earlier, often primitive, international linkages helped create a vibrant network of faculty, students, and arts practitioners who continue to meet, discuss, and perform Shakespearean scenes in conjunction with colleagues

around the globe. Some of our collaborators are keenly interested in Shakespeare, but others are more concerned with forging international connections, practicing English language skills, or collaborating with students in other countries. We are fortunate to retain the ability to be flexible; our interactions with different partners vary according to the needs and wishes of a diffuse cadre of participants. Aligning with views expressed by Doreen Starke-Meyerring and Melanie Wilson in their 2008 book *Designing Globally Networked Learning Environments: Visionary Partnerships, Policies, and Pedagogies*, we endeavor to “build global partnerships that are characterized by cultural respect, mutual benefit, collaboration, and shared leadership” (3).

The WSP incorporates Shakespeare partly because his plays figure in curricula around the world. Those involved in nurturing this enterprise share a desire to include widely disparate groups in global educational conversations. While Shakespeare is the epitome of a “dead white male,” the emotional, intellectual, and metrical richness of his drama, combined with his educational prominence in numerous countries, make his work a significant conduit for intercultural communication. The colonialism-based controversies surrounding Shakespeare today introduce numerous topics for discussion. In addition, there are many groups, such as the Shakespeare in Prisons Network, that incorporate Shakespeare into social justice initiatives.¹ Our project interacts with numerous participants in such initiatives, as we seek to broaden the international knowledge and experience of all those involved in our collaborations.² We want to bring more widespread backgrounds, opinions, and perspectives into the classroom than students from one single location can generally provide. Participants in this endeavor believe we all profit

¹ The Shakespeare in Prisons Network grew out of the biennial Shakespeare in Prisons conference, often held at Notre Dame University. There are also many Shakespeare programs working with people with autism, homeless individuals, veterans, and other specialized communities.

² Julie Lindsay discusses intersections and differences between “global” and “international” in her 2016 book *The Global Educator: Leveraging Technology for Collaborative Learning & Teaching* (ix).

from having a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and pedagogical approaches, and that everyone benefits from gaining new ideas and appreciation for difference in the classroom. As Inge Ellen Steglitz and Barbara Kapler Mikk assert in their 2017 book *Learning Across Cultures: Locally and Globally*, “such learning must be meaningful to the individuals in terms of the learning outcomes and ways of being in the world that they consider important” (6). Since our project addresses texts that are canonical, though not unchallenged, across innumerable national boundaries, the students involved gain enhanced perspectives on material already embedded in their curriculum, while the participating instructors, arts practitioners, and technologists expand their understanding of the ways that global cooperation can strengthen their approaches to education in this new environment. As Indira Nair and Margaret Henning note in *Models of Global Learning*, “Most educators agree that ‘global education’ is vital as our world changes at an unprecedented pace and people come together from different cultures, value systems, and ways of thinking, changing the way we communicate, connect, work, and play” (2).

Accordingly, WSP always incorporates intercultural dialogue as part of our sessions. In the U.S. classroom, we keep an eye out for new developments in our partners’ countries throughout the semester; regular emails from students across the globe suggest that they do likewise. By the time the term is complete, the students have learned a great deal about the world while acquiring deeper knowledge of Shakespearean drama. As we interweave the study of Shakespeare with intercultural dialogue, we endeavor to follow Nair’s and Henning’s advice: “Create a global consciousness and conscience. Understand and look at issues from the perspective of other countries, but also develop ways to become self-interrogating about their place in the world and the impact of the United States on the rest of the world” (10).

At the start of this largely electronic project in 2011, international educational videoconferencing was still in an immature state. A team of technicians typically flooded the classroom in order to monitor the technology and assist during our lengthy sessions, and there were regular staff meetings to determine which electronic resources would be best suited for the goals of the initiative, since we desired to link with diverse institutions, whether or not they possessed sufficient financial backing to afford state-of-the-art equipment. Many of our initial collaborators had limited access to advanced videoconferencing technology, so we subscribed to the Blue Jeans Network, an internet bridging system, which helped stabilize our exchanges with institutions lacking significant bandwidth and other necessary electronic components. The entire enterprise was often clunky and unreliable, but students, faculty, and arts practitioners in numerous locations were excited by the opportunity to engage in a range of conversations, performance exercises, and assignments. Faculty from our local business and medical schools would often observe in order to learn how we were managing multiple simultaneous connections, and other visitors were common too. We had entered a new age, which generated many glitches, but also created considerable enthusiasm about the possibilities on the horizon.

Nearly a decade later, technology has changed and classroom videoconferencing has become more common. After several technological experiments, we now use Zoom, which became the ubiquitous videoconferencing platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though far from perfect, this system requires less infrastructure and expense, while offering more reliable connections than our previous services. Our technical team remains a critical part of our endeavor, but they are no longer physically present during most electronic sessions. As Ubaldimir Guerra et al. acknowledge in their article “International Teaching and Learning Without Leaving the USA: Voice and Movement, Language and Literature,” published in

Globally Networked Teaching in the Humanities: Theories and Practices (eds. Moore and Simon), “Information technology personnel are the backbone of a globally linked course infrastructure and are key in troubleshooting technological difficulty” (184). That has been our experience throughout this process. Our initial sense of wonder coupled with frustration has not completely faded, but the sets of issues needing to be addressed have shifted, and information technologists remain at the center of our work. This essay will offer some of the lessons we have learned and the challenges we have faced during our efforts to create and maintain long-term partnerships with collaborators around the world. Many lengthy friendships have been formed and students have encountered innumerable people and ideas they never previously considered. Some of the international students who were involved at the beginning are now instructors who eagerly introduce their own students to the project. The initiative requires considerable thought and care, however, and it cannot flourish without regular communication between partners at home and those based in many far-flung sites.

The project team was fortunate to receive seed funding from Emory University’s Halle Institute for Global Research and from the Provost’s High Risk/High Potential Initiative Fund. These resources facilitated site visits to distant, often remote, locations associated with potential collaborators and gave us the opportunity to assess technological and curricular needs. Ties with several colleges and universities in India had already been established, however, through previous work with the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India, so it made sense to begin our new, virtual curricular adventures with students there. Our first formal electronic interactions were with Nistarini College in Purulia, West Bengal, a tribal area in India that lacked many educational resources until fairly recently. While the College had limited technological facilities, faculty there were anxious to participate. When we first met electronically on a dark morning,

the Purulian students presented a chilling rendition of the Witches' scenes from *Macbeth*, fashioned after qualities associated with those deemed witches in their own rural environment. In Purulia, women identified as witches remain visible even today, particularly among the traditional inhabitants of this region. This initial connection, which linked India, the United States, and England, fostered a remarkable interaction. While the technology was imperfect, participants in all three locations reported amazement at how clearly the scenes resonated across the continents. The encounter was a resounding success that set an optimistic tone for future undertakings.

The international educational videoconferencing sessions that followed resembled the first one. Students in each location discussed their understanding of the play within the context of their home environment. While witches are often not as prominent in our community as they are in Purulia, we talked about legal challenges to the *Harry Potter* series that were mounted in the U.S. in 2006 due to concerns about the books promoting witchcraft to children.³ We discussed lines in Shakespeare's play that suggest that *Macbeth's* "weird sisters" have powers, but that these are limited. In Act One, Scene Three, for instance, where the witches express their anger at the sailor's wife who refused to share her chestnuts, they can wreak havoc upon her husband's ship, but cannot destroy it. The Purulian students described varying local beliefs about witches, explaining that some people merely use witchcraft charges as a convenient excuse to punish women or escalate property disputes, while others are convinced that supernatural possession is real. Everyone then returned to the text to consider how Shakespeare's characters responded to the idea of witchcraft and how his audience would have perceived the witches. As part of this conversation, we read excerpts from Marjorie Garber's essay "Macbeth: The Male Medusa," in which she discusses the "*Macbeth* curse" whereby acting companies through the ages have

³ See <https://ncac.org/update/harry-potter-challenged-in-georgia>.

instituted prohibitions against speaking the name of the play inside a theater. By the time our sessions ended, the students had learned a great deal about the play, theatrical traditions, and concepts of witchcraft, but they had also gained new information about people and regions that had previously eluded their attention. Purulia has been growing exponentially over the past few years, but coverage of the region continues to characterize it as “backward.”⁴ Many of the students there have impressive professional ambitions, but they typically are first-generation learners. They have little exposure outside their home areas. Our students, in contrast, represent many socioeconomic backgrounds, but they have rarely given rural India much thought. The two groups’ engagement in these sessions, therefore, enhances everyone’s global understanding while deepening their knowledge of the material under consideration.

Since we already had connections with Nistarini College in Purulia and knew what pedagogical and technological challenges looked like there, it was a perfect choice for our maiden partnership. Once this relationship was securely established, we started to seek additional participants. Students at Nistarini are predominantly Hindu, so we sought to identify an appropriate institution with a largely Muslim student population. Drawing on contacts with Emory’s Middle Eastern Studies department, we reached out to Professor Saida Bennani at Hassan II University in Casablanca, Morocco, to see if she might be interested in pursuing a collaboration. Morocco was completely unknown to the U.S. faculty, staff, and students involved with the WSP, so it was helpful that funding was available to support a site visit, including workshops, shared electronic classroom sessions, and meetings with both instructors and administrators in order to determine sustainability. Support from presidents, deans, and others in leadership positions is critical to these initiatives, but there needs to be strong faculty interest and specific technical expertise in order to make the linked sessions truly work. On the rare occasions

⁴ See <https://thewire.in/rights/west-bengal-purulia-jangalmahal-lockdown-hunger>.

when administrators have championed such collaborations, but faculty have felt too overburdened to take on a new project, the partnerships have not flourished. In their article “How to Get Started with COIL,” published in *Globally Networked Teaching in the Humanities: Theories and Practices*, Sarah Guth and Jon Rubin rightly caution newly-formed collaboration teams that, “Both you and your partner need to be equally engaged, committed, and responsive to negotiating the course content and teaching load you will be sharing. Without equal input, the course can become unbalanced and will then reflect only one cultural perspective” (32). Commitment at all levels remains essential.

Fortunately, in our case, the students and faculty in Morocco were enthusiastic, despite constrained technical conditions. After struggling with sound and bandwidth issues, they were able to connect successfully with the United States, and this event generated sufficient interest among the educators in Casablanca that the university, remarkably, was soon able to solicit local funding in order to quickly and extensively revamp their videoconferencing facilities. The partnership with Casablanca proved so strong, moreover, that two of our American students were invited to participate in the International Festival of University Theatre at Hassan II while they were studying abroad in England the summer after the collaboration began. This personal opportunity for the students is unfortunately rare, but we remain hopeful that similar exchanges with our partner institutions will become possible in the future.

When we began our partnership with Hassan II, we were initially warned that the university curriculum was largely based on American Studies and that the students were unlikely to be interested in Shakespeare. We went prepared for the unknown and planned to offer a mixture of dramatic exercises, only some of which would be based on Shakespeare. To our amazement, the students rebelled against this agenda. Unbeknownst to us, several of them had

already privately practiced scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and wanted to share them with the group in Casablanca and with students in Atlanta. Obviously, we were happy to comply and enjoyed several sessions where students in both locations performed and discussed Shakespeare's famous comedy.

In additional sessions, we considered *Hamlet* through an international lens, enhanced by insights gained while studying this play with students at Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College in Mount Pleasant, Michigan and Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. Given the prominence of *Hamlet* and its recent presentation by Shakespeare's Globe in countries around the world,⁵ this play offered opportunities to talk about Shakespeare's relevance in different locations, a topic we always include in our collaborations. We never take it for granted that students will be interested in Shakespeare and we have engaged in numerous discussions about colonialism and related issues in these class meetings. In one memorable encounter, we read *Hamlet* in conjunction with Drew Hayden Taylor's 2016 *Dead White Writer on the Floor*, an absurdist piece that interrogates stereotypes about indigenous people. The undergraduates at Saginaw Chippewa recommended this text in order to generate discussion about canonicity and the role of racial stereotypes in literature. The conversations were thought-provoking and memorable, particularly since our American students live in one of the states involved in the nineteenth-century's Trail of Tears, where countless tribal members were forcibly removed from the Southeastern United States and moved to what is now Oklahoma. Once again, we learned about *Hamlet*, but we also created a significant conversation exploring a range of important issues.

In the years following these initial encounters, our initiative has grown to include additional partnerships in many countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Malaysia, Kuwait, Japan,

⁵ See *Hamlet Globe to Globe: Two Years, 190,000 miles, 197 Countries, One Play* by Dominic Dromgoole, former artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe.

Australia, the United Kingdom, Uganda, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, with plans to include Chile, Finland, and Malawi in the near future. We have also partnered with several North American tribal colleges and with prison populations in several countries. Some of these collaborations are robust and others need further attention to ensure their ongoing stability. None of them continues without a significant investment of time and a keen alertness to local needs and circumstances, but the end results remain worthwhile and energizing. Site visits have not always been possible, but we have moved forward nonetheless, relying on personal contacts whenever they can be arranged. In some instances, faculty have forged ties at conferences, even when trips to partner institutions were not financially feasible. Sometimes grant funding has been available for travel, but many key gatherings in person have been supported by frequent flier miles or airline vouchers. Last spring, Eve Nabulya, one of our collaborators from Makerere University in Uganda, was planning to join us in person since she had a fellowship bringing her to the U.S. We are hopeful that she will be able to come when the pandemic subsides. As these examples suggest, resourcefulness and serendipity remain important in all aspects of these collaborations.

Those interested in developing similar ventures can hopefully benefit from our expertise, particularly since we have been able to try a number of different configurations for the partnerships over the past several years. In general, our efforts have correlated with Julie Lindsay's definition of such endeavors: "'online global collaboration' broadly refers to geographically dispersed educators, classrooms, and schools that use online learning environments and digital technologies to support curricular objectives, intercultural understandings, critical thinking, personal and social capabilities, and ICT [information and communications technology] capabilities" (139). We experimented with models involving both regular and intermittent electronic sessions, for example, and electronically linked classrooms on

our two local campuses (40 miles apart) for all sessions over the course of several semesters, as part of an effort to determine whether this kind of connection might be feasible internationally. These linked sessions often worked well, particularly since technologists on one campus ensured that both spaces share the same top-flight equipment. We created a virtual circle of chairs and removed desks in order to encourage students to focus on each other, rather than on electronic devices. We shared discussions and performance exercises. The students often dressed up for these interactions and occasionally openly flirted with each other across the ether. We had virtual sword fights and skillful, creative scenes performed by students from each location. Our interactions were not perfect, but they were productive and memorable.

Less successful, however, were our efforts to have the students from each campus collaborate on group projects. Occasionally these interactions worked well and students created some noteworthy presentations, including inventive adaptations of Shakespearean texts. The distinctive campus cultures, differing schedules, and physical distance between the two campuses were often impediments, however. The rural campus has longer class sessions, which reduces the amount of time students have for additional activities. Its urban counterpart contains many students committed to internships or paid employment that similarly affect their availability. Most of the students on one campus were juniors or seniors, while the other college caters to first- and second-year students. None of these circumstances were dealbreakers, but they made collaboration difficult. We had similar problems when we assigned group projects to our students and undergraduates at Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College. Many of the Michigan students work lengthy hours in the local casino while attending college and raising children. Their ability to meet electronically outside of classroom hours was extremely limited. We did our best to facilitate asynchronous interactions, but had limited success.

Now that everyone has gained considerable new experience with electronic platforms, however, it may be feasible to investigate such assignments again post-COVID-19. According to Robert O’Dowd and Tim Lewis, authors of the 2016 book *Online Intercultural Exchange: Policy, Pedagogy, Practice*, our challenges in this aspect of our initiative are not uncommon: “It would appear that most telecollaborative exchanges never move beyond the first and second task types as students present, exchange, and compare information but rarely go that extra step to actually collaborate together to complete a document or project” (279). Accordingly, since curricular differences and schedule anomalies frequently make regular or extended connections problematic between institutions, we commonly rely on a module-based format that favors synchronous meetings rather than attempting to contend continuously with time-change differences and contradictory curricular demands. Notably, Nathan R.B. Loewen, who has written extensively on collaborative networked teaching and learning, insists in *Effective Social Learning: A Collaborative, Globally-Networked Pedagogy* that “real time” encounters succeed better pedagogically than asynchronous collaborations: “Actual, in-person communication only happens in real time. Asynchronous communications from pen-pal exchanges to blog posts, or wikis are simply not as dynamic. . . collaboration, particularly of the co-hosting kind, makes possible the recognition of others that makes learning intercultural” (13). Our experiences thus far correspond with this observation. Meeting together in “real time” remains our primary goal, although we continue to explore options for having the students partner effectively outside of class.

Typically, we consult with our partners as far in advance as possible in order to determine whether or not their syllabi and schedules might be compatible with ours. We are fortunate to retain considerable flexibility regarding the texts included in the U.S. classroom, which is helpful

since many of our collaborators possess limited ability to adjust syllabi geared toward exam preparation, or set institutionally rather than by individual instructors. In addition, many international colleges and universities have extensive exam schedules, so we need to plan our interactions during times when they are engaged in coursework rather than assessment. We also have to remain alert to conflicts between academic calendars in different parts of the world. Argentina, for instance, often places academic breaks at times largely incompatible with those in the United States, since the seasons in these two countries do not correlate. While we often meet with students there successfully during the regular academic year, aided by coordination with the Fundación Shakespeare Argentina, South American interactions are frequently best accommodated when we are able to hold classes during the intensive term known as Maymester, which meets for three weeks shortly after commencement in the U.S. We also need to be aware of our partners' other schedule constraints. Students in rural India, for example, often need to be home before dark in order to ensure their personal safety, although they are sometimes able to meet with us during Indian evenings by using their instructors' home computers. Undergraduates in Kuwait are enthusiastic partners, but they frequently have busy extracurricular commitments. In Morocco, we have had to contend with unpredictable shifts in time zones that sometimes occur during Ramadan. In the United Kingdom, the changes between standard time and daylight (or summer) time no longer coincide with the calendar followed in the U.S., so we need to remember not to presume that we know the current time in our collaborators' locales. We have not always negotiated these issues successfully, but we have learned to be particularly careful about re-checking schedules and communicating regularly with everyone involved so that the chance of a mishap is reduced. We are not able to link with all of our partners each term, but having a range of classrooms to connect with regularly helps keep this initiative alive.

Part of our success emanates from our continual awareness that everyone involved, whether faculty, students, administrators, or technical staff, has innumerable competing demands on their time, and that everyone needs to demonstrate that they are committing their energies productively. Accordingly, we work hard to ensure that all who participate gain the kind of recognition they require in order to facilitate widespread buy-in for these activities. For some of our partners, the publicity received through academic publication is important, so we include them in essays as often as possible; others wish their students to receive certificates of participation to bolster their academic credentials. Collaborators are typically pleased to be involved in broader educational initiatives such as conference presentations or grant proposals, and we accommodate that goal as frequently as we can. Our technical support team participates as intensively as our academic and performance partners. As noted, for instance, we have been using Zoom technology for quite some time. In 2019, our international pedagogical efforts were included in team member Brenda Rockswold's presentation at Zoomtopia, the professional gathering of technologists working in this realm. Acknowledging everyone who collaborates in this venture helps to keep the project sustainable. Over the years, technical professionals in different locations have become quite familiar with each other and often exchanged gifts of equipment or edible local treats when anyone has been able to visit one of our partner sites. Not surprisingly, people remain more willing to engage fully in these exchanges when their own efforts are recognized and appreciated. Keeping this aspect of collaboration at the forefront of our undertaking has helped us through the inevitable pattern of successes interwoven with obstacles that characterize most complex projects.

We have been fortunate that planning class modules with our partners tends to go smoothly, although we wholeheartedly concur with G. Brooke Lester's observation in *Effective*

Social Learning: A Collaborative, Globally-Networked Pedagogy that “There needs to be a substantive openness about what will happen in the learning space in order for participants to extend ‘acceptance’ to all who are present” (43). Instructors agree initially on the text that each group of students will read, decide whether the undergraduates in different locations will exchange essays written according to shared instructions, and determine what role our acting or directing partners will play in the scheduled sessions. When our collaborators have specific goals they wish to reach, we are generally able to accommodate them. Some semesters, we focus on interactions between two locations at a time. On other occasions, we bring together participants from several sites, though we do not typically connect people from more than four regions simultaneously. We try to keep groups small enough so that everyone has an opportunity to speak and people can be addressed by their names. It is helpful, but not essential, if the groups are comparable in size. During the terms when we were linked for each class session, however, we insisted that both locations host the same number of students. This helped each student group feel as though they were working on an equal, shared playing field. We look forward to experimenting with the many new Zoom features that have emerged during the pandemic, such as breakout rooms and polling mechanisms, so that we can enhance these aspects of our project.

We have also been pleased at everyone’s willingness to tackle problems as they arise, but these instances underscore the importance of working closely with technology partners. As Loewen notes, “All too often the difficulties are relatively small in nature but large in effect, such as an unplugged cable or a missed software update” (129). Our experiences have been similar, but generally surmountable. When we encountered irresolvable time zone issues with our Kuwaiti collaborators, for instance, Professor Katherine Hennessey had her students there record their conversation and send it to us rather than canceling the session. We then responded in kind

and her students sent us a follow-up recording. We would have preferred a live connection, but were pleased that engagement was still possible. A downed tree in Seattle once made a video link impossible, but since Steve Rowland, our collaborator there, has a long history with radio broadcasts, we carried on through an unusually professional voice connection. Audio synchronization is better than it used to be, so we spend less time grappling with those issues, particularly since we have developed a number of videoconferencing etiquette techniques to support balanced conversations. Still, our technologists continue to test connections before each linked class, and we always have a backup plan so that class sessions will not be abandoned if our communication tools fail us. We also regularly leave open time at the end of sessions so that students can ask each other questions that are not directly linked to the assigned topics. These classroom collaborations are designed to promote intercultural dialogue and we encourage participants to take full advantage of that opportunity. We have learned a great deal about performative, educational, historical, and cultural contexts in countries around the world over the years of these partnerships. Our students in the United States have gained insight into people and places they had rarely encountered before. Many of these students, faculty, and arts practitioners have remained in contact with us for several years. One undergraduate from a remote region of Jharkhand, India remarkably ended up living in our project's U.S. home base of Atlanta.

We have also deepened our understanding of Shakespearean drama, since the diverse perspectives offered in shared classes raise issues and questions that do not emerge as readily in non-collaborative sessions. Students in Morocco, for example, frequently view fairies as dangerous figures, unlike Americans, who tend to think of them more like Disney princesses. This contrast helps illuminate the complexity of the fairies represented in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. North American tribal students at Saginaw Chippewa College offer perspectives on the

colonialism inherent in *The Tempest* that are strikingly more personal than those expressed by students from backgrounds more distanced from such histories. Incarcerated students tend to view *Henry IV, Part 1*'s Falstaff as a dangerous influencer jeopardizing young Prince Hal, unlike the more conventional undergraduates who see him as a relatively benign, comical drunkard. Students in Kuwait helped their counterparts in the U.S. understand the implications of Sulayman Al-Bassam's "*Richard III: An Arab Tragedy*" and explained why the filmed audience often laughs at scenes that do not appear funny to those in the U.S. When American undergraduates and Malaysian graduate students each read *The Merchant of Venice* and watched a controversial Israeli production, American students (many of whom were Jewish) and Muslim students from Malaysia (who remarked that they had never before met any Jewish people) were able to discuss the play in the context of Malaysia's decision not to recognize Israel as a state, despite strong, though fraught, economic ties between the two countries, not unlike the economic relationships portrayed between Jews and Christians in the play. Through engagement with these multiple perspectives, all the students involved expand their knowledge base, and sharpen their comprehension and appreciation for this dramatic literature.

Our initiative is time-consuming, but rewarding. Students often report that their education has been strongly and positively influenced by these unexpected encounters in their Shakespeare classroom. They spot news items about partner countries, for example, that previously would have slipped past them. On a trip to India to meet with new collaborators among incarcerated men performing Shakespeare, I also met many former students who remain enthusiastic about their past involvement with this project and wish to share similar experiences with the undergraduates they now teach. The investment of time and technical resources thus remains productive. Current technology enables innumerable new global encounters. Our venture has

thrived, in part, because it is hosted by an institution with the resources and vision needed to support its development. As we move further into the twenty-first century, such opportunities are becoming increasingly available to an even more diverse group of educators and students. In our experience, “being here together” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, IV, i) has consistently offered abundant and generative classroom successes.

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