The Yard and Korean Shakespeare¹

Abstract: Since the New Globe Theatre opened in 1996, they have used the yard as an acting area or entrances. Even though the authenticity of using the yard is disputable, nobody denies that the yard must be a very effective tool for performing Shakespeare at the Globe Theatre. The yard is an essential part of traditional Korean theatre, called "talchum (mask dance)" or "talnori (mask play)." The yard is its stage as well as the auditorium. Therefore, the players are surrounded by the audience, and the players can, and often do interact with the audience, speaking to the audience, or treating them as players, or acting as if they were some of the audience. The theatrical style of using the yard has much influenced the modern theatre of Korea. And many Korean directors including Oh Tae-suk, Yang Jung-ung, Sohn Jin-chaek, Park Sung-hwan, and myself, have applied the yard techniques to their Shakespearean productions. Korean Shakespearean productions, which use the yard actively, can be more evidence that the yard must be an effective tool for Shakespeare, not only at the Globe Theatre but also at any kind of theatres of today. No one knows whether Shakespeare actually used the yard or not. But the fact that many Shakespearean productions have used the yard successfully, implies that Shakespeare's texts themselves have enough room for the yard.

Keywords: yard, Globe Theatre, traditional Korean theatre, Shakespeare

Almost every performance at the new Globe Theatre in London shows the yard being used as an acting area or, at least, for entrances by the performers. The effectiveness of the yard as an acting area must be the reason that the new Globe Theatre insists on its use, despite the problem of its historical authenticity. Peter Oswald, who composed *Augustine's Oak* performed at the Globe Theatre, testified to the effectiveness of the yard as follows:

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¹ This article is based on my paper "Shakespeare, Yard, and the Style of Traditional Korean Theatre" published in Korean in Shakespeare Review Vol. 43. No. 3, 2007: 519-546.

The yard is a part of the drama. If you can activate the power of the groundlings, they will help the play along, and the actors can shift gears incredibly. It can make all the difference – the yard has the power to do that, more than any seated audience could ever have. (8)

It is disputable whether Shakespeare really used the yard as an acting area or for entrances. Many Shakespearean scholars, including Andrew Gurr², insist that 'using the yard' is not authentic because there is no direct evidence in Shakespeare's plays that Shakespeare let his actors have access to the audience in the yard and use the area for acting. Moreover, the stage rail, which the original Globe theatre is supposed to have had at the edge of the stage, indicates that Shakespeare could have wanted to barricade the stage from the audience rather than to have actors interact actively with the audience.

However, the British traditional theatre, including mystery cycles and moral interludes like Mankind (1460s), Fulgens and Lucres (1490s), and even some of Shakespeare's contemporary plays such as The Knight of the Burning Pestle (1607), The Careless Shepherdes (1656), and many masques including The Masque of the Inner Temple (1613) and The Masque of Flowers (1614), provide evidence that playwrights did attempt more active and direct approaches to their audience. For example, the actors would mingle with the audience in the yard, and initiate direct interactions with them or, at least, used the yard as their acting area, helping the audience to commit to the performance more fully and even, perhaps, controlling their responses more effectively. Using the yard as an acting area or for interacting with the audience in the yard must have been one of the traditional dramatic methods that Shakespeare and his contemporaries had been accustomed to. However, the question of the stage rail, its purpose, and when it was first mounted on the Globe stage, remains. Also, we must keep in mind that everything on the stage would be remountable and removable. Therefore, the existence of the stage rail cannot completely negate the possibility that Shakespeare utilised the yard in the performances of his plays.

Above all, the most powerful evidence supporting the possibility that Shakespeare must have used the yard theatrically at his Globe Theatre is given by the experiences of the new Globe Theatre. The new Globe Theatre used the stage rail only for the 2000 production of *Hamlet*, which never let the players enter the yard. However, after this production, the new Globe Theatre has never repeated this arrangement. Instead, the yard, which most Globe Theatre

² Referring to the wrestling match in the yard in *As You Like It* (1999), directed by Lucy Bailey at the Globe Theatre, Andrew Gurr approved of the dramatic effect of using the yard, but denies its Shakespearean authenticity: "It is easy nowadays to fall for the temptation of trying to engage the groundlings by directly enlisting them in the show, but that was not Shakespeare's way" (33).

productions actively utilise, seems to have become a representative brand for the new Globe Theatre, which distinguishes its own Shakespeare performances from those of all other theatres.

It is interesting that the theatrical way of using the yard as an acting area, as well as for actors' entrances, as used by the new Globe, is reminiscent of the performance style of traditional Korean theatre. The yard is an essential part of traditional Korean theatre, called 'talchum' (mask dance) or 'talnori' (mask play). The yard constitutes the stage. Therefore, the players are surrounded by the audience, and can interact with the audience by speaking to audience members, treating them as fellow players, or acting as if they themselves are part of the audience. The theatrical style of using the yard has greatly influenced the modern theatre of Korea, and not a few Korean directors such as Oh Tae-suk, Yang Jung-ung, Sohn Jin-chaek, Han Tae-sook and Lee Hyon-u, have applied these yard techniques to their Shakespearean productions.

The reasons as to why Korean directors use yard techniques are various. However, their main reasons probably do not diverge too much from those of the new Globe Theatre: performing very near to or among the audience can give more vitality to the performance than proscenium stage productions that divide the auditorium from the stage; it can also help the audience, who can tire after standing for a prolonged period during the production, to concentrate more easily on the performance and to enjoy it more actively. Although Shakespeare's plays are great classics, they are sometimes hard to understand and even boring for Korean audiences. Therefore, it is natural and reasonable that Korean directors try to employ the yard techniques of traditional Korean theatre when they direct Shakespeare plays.

This study explains the yard techniques of traditional Korean theatre and examines representative Korean Shakespeare productions that actively use yard techniques. These Korean Shakespeare productions, which variously use yard techniques even in ordinary modern theatres without yards, provide positive support for the new Globe Theatre's use of the yard, and for the existence of the yard in Shakespeare's plays.

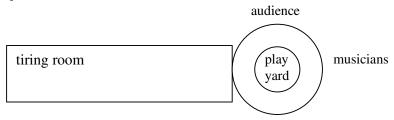
The Yard Techniques of Traditional Korean Theatre

Active interactions between players and audience constitute one of the most representative characteristics of traditional Korean theatre, which is known as 'talchum' (mask dance) or 'talnori' (mask play). According to Jo Dong-il, "Talchum is a play in which the more undistinguishable doers and seers are from each other, the better the performance is" (143), and, "It is the nature of the relationship between the players and the audience that doers should be seers while doing, and seers should be doers while seeing" (143 – 4). It is basically due to the lack of distinction between auditorium and stage that the players and

the audience can be unified into one, mixing each other's identities in *talchum*. The stage is separated from the yard in the Globe Theatre, whereas there is only the yard in the venue for *talchum*, where the players and the audience coexist together. Consequently, in the performance of *talchum*, such acting patterns as 'entering and exiting among the audience,' 'exchanging dialogue with the audience as if they were the players,' and 'acting in the audience' are repeated throughout.

The following two scenes of *Yangjubyeolsandaenori*, one of the representative *talchum* plays, vividly show that the players appear through the audience out of the *kaebokcheong* (the tiring room). Seo Yeon-ho's drawing (100) of the performance place of *talchum* helps us to visualise the situation.

[Fig. 1]



<sc. 2: Omjung and Sangjoa>

Omjung: (Enters from the kaebokcheong, and takes five or six steps into the play yard, and then stands with his hands on his waist.) Damn it! I haven't been out for many years. My legs are shambling, and I am so upset, and distracted.

<sc. 3: Mokjung and Omjung>

Mokjung: (Takes five or six steps to the centre of the play yard from the entrance of the play yard, and stands there with his hands on his waist and shaking his hips) Yerai, yerai, yerai. I am out for the first time in many yawns. I feel dizzy from top to bottom, and my whole body is weary. (Lee 141)

Any *talchum* play will include numerous scenes in which players speak to the audience directly, treating them as if they were players or leading them to show impromptu reactions. The following presents a scene from *Bongsan Talchum* and a scene from *Yangjubyeolsandaenori*:

<Bongsan Talchum sc. 6>

Maltuki: Hush! (Music and dance stop) Hey, spectators! Lend me your ears! / If you have no money, let me know it, and.... (Hong 114)

< Yangjubyeolsandaenori, sc. 6>

Chibali: (To the audience) Hey, everyone, you spectators, you'd better leave here, / if you have any care for your lives.

One little mistake and you'll be killed here. (Lee 167)

Many *Talchum* plays also include scenes in which the musicians, sitting among the audience, pretend to be members of the audience and exchange dialogue with players, which is reminiscent of the new Globe Theatre's practice, where players go into the yard and perform a scene amongst the audience. Here is just such a scene from *Bongsan Talchum*:

<Bongsan Talchum, sc. 7:>

Old Man: (Enters and cries in front of the musician) ye, ye, ye, ye, ye.

Musician 2: Who are you, old man?

Old Man: I'm just an old man, who came here to play once. I've heard the music sound for the play.

Musician 2: If you want, let's play together!

Old Man: I don't care about you. I will play after I find my old wife, who got lost. (Hong 123)

Both the old man and the musician pose as spectators for the play. The musician, sitting in the front row, performs the role of a spectator, and the old man, as a spectator, tells him that he will enjoy the play after he finds his wife.

Traditional Korean Theatre has not only been continuously performed up to the present but has also been modernized into *madangkeuk* (yard play) from the 1970s, and frequently performed for the public. The theatre companies of Gilajabi and Ukumchi, the representative *madangkeuk* companies, have shown what a dynamic place the uncomfortable yard can be transformed into when the players and the audience join together in a performance. The yard has a special meaning in Korean theatre that is based on the tradition of the yard. Therefore, the theatrical concept concerning the role of the yard is often found, even in the modern performances that do not adopt the traditional theatre style. The yard is a familiar performance condition both for Korean directors and for Korean audiences. Moreover, it can be said that the traditional Korean theatre's ways of using the yard are not all that different from those of the new Globe Theatre, although they have differences of degree and frequency.

The Yard and Korean Shakespeare

The current Shakespeare boom is one of the most noticeable aspects in Korean theatre, which has shown passionate and rapid development along with

the democratization and globalization of Korean society since the 1990s. Until the 1980s, it was not easy to find even one professional Shakespeare production a year. However, there are about 400 productions of Shakespeare plays. Many of these have used yard techniques, regardless of their performance styles.

Yang Jung-ung's A Midsummer Night's Dream and Lee Seung-kyu's Comedy of Errors used the yard or the auditorium in the same way as in talchum performances. Oh Tae-suk's Romeo and Juliet adapted the acting style of talchum players: actors faced the audience and spoke toward the audience. Soh Jin-chaek directed The Merchant of Mapo, a Korean version of The Merchant of Venice, in the way of 'madangnori' (yard play), which is the modern form of talnori (mask play). Han Tae-sook surprised the audience by changing the auditorium into the stage in an instant in her Lady Macbeth, by letting Lady Macbeth walk into the auditorium as the audience remained on the stage. National Changkeuk Company's Romeo and Juliet, directed by Park Sung-hwan, performed a folk play with the audience for the masquerade scene. In *Macbeth*, Play with Music, directed by Kim Sun-ae, actors interacted with the audience throughout the performance, following the style of talnori. Yeo Ki-ya's Comic Show Romeo and Juliet and Kim Dae-hwan's The Taming of the Shrew, which have been continuing an open run since 2008, share a secret with regard to their popularity: active audience participation. In Comic Show Romeo and Juliet, the audience can select the Romeo and Juliet of the day among four Romeos and four Juliets by voting, and can change the selected Romeo and Juliet after Tybalt's death scene. Each Romeo and Juliet has different characteristics like femme fatale Juliet, school girl Juliet, and bodyguard Romeo, gangster Romeo. The audience can compose sixteen versions of *Romeo and Juliet*. In *The Taming* of the Shrew, the theatre is made into a pub, and the audience joins in the performance as the pub's first-time visitors. The actors continuously interact with the audience, and the audience is frequently invited onto the stage to play some simple roles extempore. I directed Coriolanus in 2005, and Hamlet Q1 in 2009. Deeply interested in the yard, I actively used various yard techniques for those two productions.

Often breaking the fourth wall, all of these productions use the auditorium as part of the stage and the audience as players. In order to examine how yard techniques can vary, let's now look more closely at two contrasting productions: Yang Jung-ung's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which follows the performance style of the traditional Korean theatre more directly, and my *Coriolanus*, which adapts the yard techniques using a modern performance style.

1. Yang Jung-ung's *A Midsummer Night's Dream (MND)*: A Traditional Application of the Yard

Yang Jung-ung's MND 'Koreanizes' Shakespeare's original play according to the style of Talchum and the form of traditional Korean puppet theatre, 'Cocdookaksee Nolum' (puppet play). All of the characters, wearing thick white make-up like puppets, gesture and move to the percussion sounds of Cocdookaksee Nolum or Talchum. The stage is wholly empty except for the musicians, positioned in a corner of the stage. The players talk with the musicians or the audience, and enter or exit through the auditorium. The more theatrical the play is, the more freedom is possible, prompting the audience to accept a dream world along the lines of a puppet theatre or a cartoon. Even if the Dokkebi (Korean goblin) King and Dokkebi Queen, as the roles of the fairy King and Queen, move like Cocdookaksee puppets, wearing traditional Korean costumes, and even if Byeok (Hermia)'s Taekwondo jump kick is presented like wire action, and even if the Dokkebi King is enthralled with a pig-headed old woman, into whom an old woman Ajumi (for Bottom) is changed into, instead of the original scene where Titania falls in love with Donkey-headed Bottom, the audience seem to accept these changes and enjoy the performance.

It can be said that Yang Jung-ung intends to make a communal playground where players and the audience play together and enjoy themselves together so that the audience willingly accept his version of a *MND*, twisted and inverted from Shakespeare's *MND* in a way that is familiar to a Korean audience.

When it was performed at Hanul Theatre of the National Theatre of Korea in 2004, the audience was offered snacks before the performance began, and they were invited to eat the snacks even while the show was going on. As the show began, Dokkebis, who were dancing on the stage, squeezed in between the audience, or popped out in front of the audience, or lurked within the audience. The DVD of the Bogota performance shows that Dokkebi DuDuri (Puck), who was edging his way through the audience, suddenly beat a drum at a boy's ear to surprise him, and that the Dokkebi King, Kabi, made the whole audience burst into laughter by pulling up a female audience member onto the stage and making a joke to her in clumsy Spanish. In Yang's MND, the auditorium was transformed into an Athenian wood where four lovers wandered, although the ways of using the auditorium or of playing with the audience are changed, according to each theatre's conditions. Whether the players descend to the auditorium or the audience ascends to the stage, as Mark Hopkins noted in his review of the 2007 Sydney performance, Yang's MND often breaks the fourth wall and brings the audience into the playfulness onstage. Of course, not every one welcomes the collapse of the fourth wall. Sam Marlowe, in his review in The Times, criticized Dokkebi, the main culprit in breaking the fourth wall: "The goblin-like *Dokkebi*, jabbering and leering in hemp robe and grotesque

make-up, can be faintly irritating." However, most of the audience enjoyed the physical contact with the players as well as their "jabbering and leering".

Yang's *MND*, which applies the style of traditional Korean Theatre to the Shakespearean play, from acting and performance methodology to speech and music, has been performed in various kinds of theatres with few changes: the Hanul Theatre of the National Theatre of Korea, which has both the yard and a stage like the Globe Theatre, the open-air theatre of Bogota in Columbia, the Barbican Centre in London and Riverside Theatre in Sydney, both of which are not equipped with a yard, and even small theatres like the Guerrilla Theatre at Daehakro in Seoul. Yang's *MND* can be a straightforward example of the idea that using the yard (the auditorium) or the audience in the yard (the auditorium) is possible and effective when it comes to performing Shakespeare.

2. Lee Hyon-u's Coriolanus: Modern Application of the Yard

When I directed *Coriolanus* at the Jayu Theatre in the Seoul Art Centre in 2005, I grappled with two problems: one was that I wanted the audience to identify themselves with the characters or citizens in the play, in that there seemed to be a number of common points between the political situation of Korea and that of the play, and the other was that I believed that this play needed a specific theatrical mechanism to help the audience to continuously concentrate on the performance, given that this play lacks the melodramatic quality of other Shakespearean tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra*, and the plot is relatively simple, so the audience may feel bored. The solution for these problems was the yard.

First of all, it was important to select the proper venue in order to find an alternative yard in the general theatres that are not equipped with a yard. My final decision was the Jayu Theatre, where the three sides of the stage are surrounded by the audience and it is, therefore, easy for the actors to have contact with the audience. This situation is like the Globe Theatre, even though the size of the stage is not large enough for a production with about 30 players or for three floor sets of Roman ruins.

I also needed a mechanism to fuse the stage and the yard, because I wanted to expose the present reality of today from that of the Shakespearean play by making a collage of the ancient Roman style and that of the 21st century in every production element, including costumes, set designs, and music. For such a mechanism, I used television monitors.

Fifteen television monitors were set up on the stage. These monitors were designed as part of the Roman ruins, the same Roman ruins we can view today (see Fig. 2). From the moment they entered the auditorium, the audience began to see their own images appearing on the monitors. After the performance started, the monitors repeatedly showed the audience in real time at the scenes

where Roman soldiers or citizens gathered together. In the same way, just as the actors on the stage of the Globe Theatre go into the yard to merge with the audience, it was intended that the audience see their appearance on the stage through the monitors.

I changed the street where Roman citizens riot in Act 1, scene 1, into baths in Rome. Enjoying the bath, Menenius and the other noblemen see the laborers' demonstration on the monitors. The demonstration scene was captured from the real television news of Korea. After a while, the laborers in the monitors, looking like today's common Korean laborers, swarm onto the stage (see Fig. 3).

At that very moment, the monitors begin to show the audience in real time. It implies that not only the real players but also the audience are included in the rioting crowd who rush into the bath. Although the monitors present symbolic images for each scene like a butterfly, the statue of Romulus and Remus suckling a she-wolf, and the emblem of the Volsce, the monitors telecasted the appearance of the audience in real time for important mob scenes such as when the Roman citizens riot, when the Roman citizens welcome Coriolanus' victorious return, when the Roman citizens exile Coriolanus from Rome as the enemy of the people, and finally when the Volsce people, instigated by Aufidius and his conspirators, condemn Coriolanus as the killer of their family and demand his death.

Sometimes, the monitors showed the players sitting among the audience. Before the performance began, Sicinius and Brutus had already sat down in the front row of the auditorium. The monitors showed them in close-up from the moment when Coriolanus announces that Sicinius and Brutus have been selected as tribunes (see Fig. 4). As soon as Coriolanus and the other nobles and the perplexed citizens exit at the news of the Volsce's attack, Sicinius and Brutus step into the stage directly from their seats. The monitors telecast their movement from when they get up from their seats until they approach the stage, namely, just before they can be fully viewed by the audience. When the audience can see Sicinius and Brutus on the stage, the monitors begin to show the audience. The audience can see themselves as well as the two tribunes on the stage.

In the last scene, where Coriolanus is killed by the Volsce, the monitors show the audience. But while Coriolanus' dead body is carried away through the city gates, the monitors focus on two characters among the audience: Volumnia and Young Martius, wearing modern costumes. I wanted to create a scene in which a Volumnia of today explains the history of Coriolanus to a Young Martius of today. This was to create a strong message that Coriolanus' story could be repeated in 21st century Korean society, and was not restricted to the Rome of 2,500 years ago.

Besides the monitors, it was my intention that the structure of the set

should impart the same effect of unifying the audience with the players on the stage. The entrance for the Roman citizens was constructed under the auditorium. When the Roman citizens entered and exited from the entrance under the auditorium, it created the impression that they entered and exited among the audience. For the combat scenes and Coriolanus' victorious return scenes, Roman nobles and soldiers, and even Volsce soldiers, used this underground entrance (see Fig. 5). It must be relatively limiting both for the audience and for the players to use the auditorium in indoor theatres, unlike the situation with the yard or open-air theatres with a yard, because the audience are required to sit on their fixed seats in the indoor theatre. Originally, I had wanted to use the centre aisle of the auditorium for entrances. However, as the Jayu Theatre did not have a central aisle in the central auditorium, I decided to make an underground entrance under the central auditorium. It can be said that television monitors and the underground entrance emphasised a kind of conceptual contact with the audience instead of actual physical contact.

However, this performance had physical contact with the audience as well. It was Act 2 that troubled me most. Act 2 had no special dramatic action and could come across as boring to the audience, while the other acts could be dynamic and dramatic due to riot, war, treason, and death. In particular, the long and monotonous Act 2 sc. 3, in which Coriolanus tries to get the voices of the plebeians, was a problem. Therefore, I tackled this scene by using the audience and the auditorium in earnest. Instead of requesting the voices of the plebeians passing over the stage, Coriolanus went into the auditorium to ask the audience for their voices. The result was very satisfactory. The audience was surprised to find the sudden appearance of Coriolanus among them, and burst into laughter at Coriolanus' sudden Christmas or New Year greetings, improvising words along with his original lines. The effect was, in fact, much more dramatic than expected, as You Tae-ung, who performed the role of Coriolanus, was a television star.

There was another scene in which Coriolanus entered the auditorium. This was Act 3, sc. 3, where Coriolanus exits while cursing Rome where he was condemned as the enemy of the people and exiled by the plebeians. I wanted the audience to feel a stronger sense of unity with the Roman plebeians exiling Coriolanus. Coriolanus was positioned between the auditorium and the stage for the trial scene. At this moment, Coriolanus was completely surrounded by the common people in the auditorium and the common people on the stage, as well as the common people on the monitors. Coriolanus elbows his way wildly through the audience over the balustrade above the last row of the first floor auditorium to the second floor balcony. I expected that the audience would feel

³ This production was performed from December 22 to December 31, 2005. The Christmas and New Year greetings were well-timed.

the situation in the play more realistically through such direct and physical contact.

When I directed this production, both the traditional Korean and the new Globe theatre yard techniques provided me with significant help. Above all, I knew that the roles and the functions of the yards of these two different theatres are, basically, not too different from each other. I was familiar with the dramatic effects of the yard through my experience with the traditional Korean theatre, and I was also sure of the value of the yard in Shakespearean productions through study of the new Globe Theatre's use of the yard. Consequently, I had no hesitation in bringing the concept of the yard into my direction of *Coriolanus*.

Conclusion

We cannot be sure, as yet, about Shakespeare's use of the yard as an acting area. However, the new Globe Theatre shows daily how effective the yard is for performing Shakespeare. In addition, a number of Korean Shakespeare productions, by Korean directors who are familiar with using the yard, continue to show the various usages and the possible applications of the yard.

Further research is needed to certify whether the yard was part of the authentic methodology of Shakespearean performances. The new Globe Theatre's productions, which have used the yard successfully, and the Korean Shakespeare productions, which have proved the various applications of the yard even in the ordinary proscenium theatre, let us imagine how Shakespeare can be presented using more stereoscopic and diverse techniques, if the yard is accepted as an authentic element of Shakespearean dramaturgy. The yard is a relatively untapped and rich repository both for performing and for studying Shakespeare.

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Fig. 2. The stage design, by Yang Young-il.

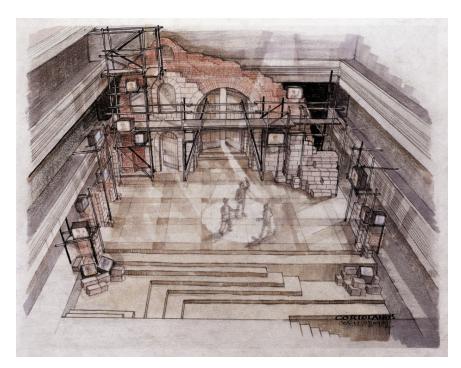


Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

