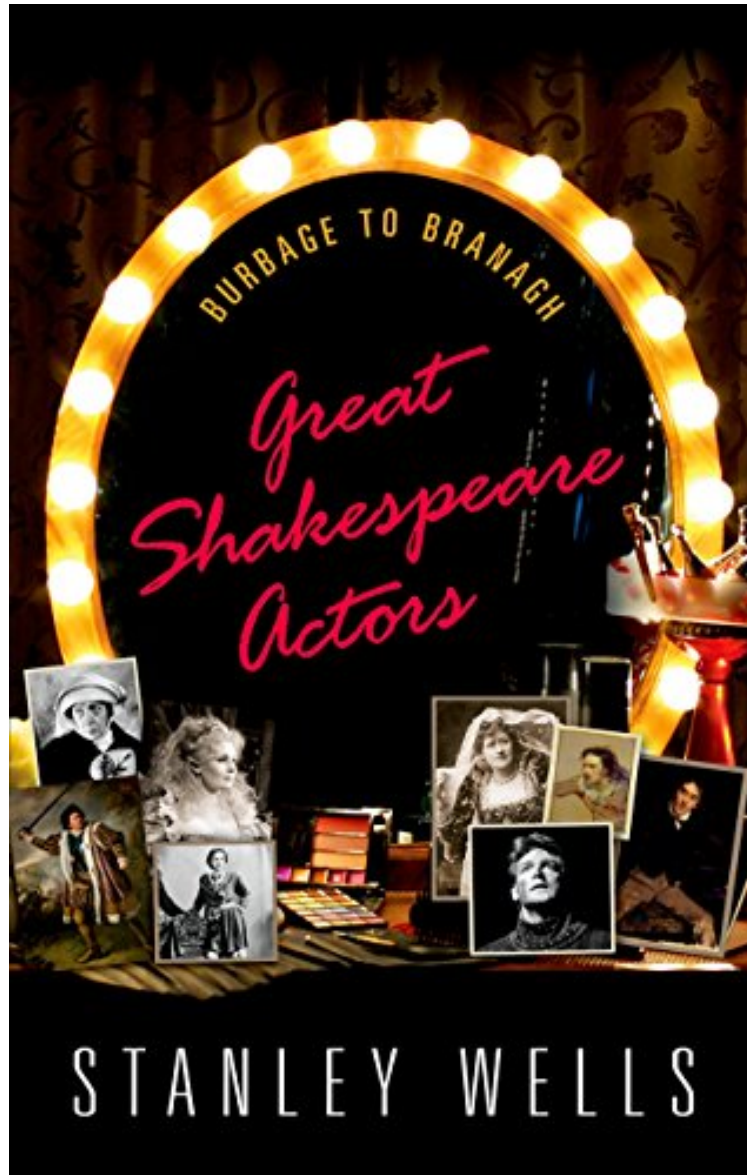


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## Great Shakespeare Actors: Burbage to Branagh

*Stanley Wells*

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**Stanley Wells : Great Shakespeare Actors: Burbage to Branagh** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Great Shakespeare Actors: Burbage to Branagh:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. All the world's a stage as this book provides the reader short essays on great Shakespeare actors from Burbage to Branagh By C. M Mills Dr. Stanley Wells the author of Great Shakespeare Actors is an acknowledged expert on the works of the Bard William Shakespeare (1564-1616). In this 308 page book he gives the reader a glimpse behind the drawn curtain to learn more about famous and great actors and

how the production of Shakespearean drama has evolved since the days of the Globe Theatre's heyday in the sixteenth century to today. Shakespeare is the world's greatest playwright and his immortal tragedies, comedies and history plays will live as long as humanity roams the earth. The book looks at the acting careers of several Shakespeare actors from Richard Burbage the star of Shakespeare's company to such luminaries as Sarah Siddons, David Garrick, Edmund Keen, Edmund Booth, Ellen Terry, Michael Redgrave, Sir Laurence Olivier, Sir Ralph Richardson, Dame Peggy Ashcroft and many others. The author also provides information on the staging and acting styles which have been favored over the long centuries of Shakespeare acting on the boards. This book is a fun read filled with pictures and facts. It would be very helpful for acting students, students of drama and Shakespeare and anyone who want to enhance their cultural literacy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Bit of Dry Toast...By Stephen L. Broker I found this to be extremely dull, given the exalted roster of its subjects. Some good stuff here and there, but there are better books out there, and, I hope, not so dryly written. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Shallow scholarship and a disappointment. By Theseus I'm sorry to say this book is a huge disappointment to me. I respect Stanley Wells as a scholar of Shakespeare (not including text structure and the mechanisms of prosody) and even more as a scholar of Elizabethan culture, but it is sad to see that, like many critics and scholars, he understands almost nothing about acting. He can describe the effects of a performance, but when he attempts to explain the process the actor used to get there, he is simply ignorant. Also, given his reputation, the bibliography he provides to document his points is shockingly weak: he uses one or perhaps two currently popular biographies for each actor, sometimes omitting major works, and he seems to have consulted very few primary sources. For John Philip Kemble, for example, he lists only Linda Kelly's recent "The Kemble Era" and doesn't mention the more scholarly classic, "John Philip Kemble," by Herschel Baker. For Sarah Siddons, he omits James Boaden's 1827 "Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons," which includes interviews with her colleagues. I don't think Wells's book will help anyone understand how an actor works on a Shakespeare play, and its generalizations will probably do more harm than good.

Great Shakespeare Actors offers a series of essays on great Shakespeare actors from his time to ours, starting by asking whether Shakespeare himself was the first; the answer is No; and continuing with essays on the men and women who have given great stage performances in his plays from Elizabethan times to our own. They include both English and American performers such as David Garrick, Sarah Siddons, Charlotte Cushman, Ira Aldridge, Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Edith Evans, Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Peggy Ashcroft, Janet Suzman, Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, and Kenneth Branagh. Individual chapters tell the story of their subjects' careers, but together these overlapping tales combine to offer a succinct, actor-centred history of Shakespearean theatrical performance. Stanley Wells examines what it takes to be a great Shakespeare actor and then offers a concise sketch of each actor's career in Shakespeare, an assessment of their specific talents and claims to greatness, and an account, drawing on contemporary reviews, biographies, anecdotes, and, for some of the more recent actors, the author's personal memories of their most notable performances in Shakespeare roles.

"Aimed at a broad readership, the book offers short biographies of "great Shakespeare actors" from Shakespeare's time to our own ... the book will very likely prove a helpful and entertaining resource for many." --Kevin Curran, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* About the Author Stanley Wells, Honorary President, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Stanley Wells, described by Roy Hattersley as 'Our greatest authority on Shakespeare's life and work', is honorary President of The Shakespeare Birthplace, Emeritus Professor of Shakespeare Studies of the University of Birmingham, and Honorary Emeritus Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. He was for nearly twenty years the editor of the annual Shakespeare Survey, and writes for the TLS and many other publications. He has edited *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies* and is General Editor (with Gary Taylor) of *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare* and co-author of *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*. His most recent books are *Shakespeare For All Time*, *Looking for Sex in Shakespeare*, and *Shakespeare, Sex, and Love*.