

Virtual Reality "Othello" pilot at the Hollywood Fringe, a workshop

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Tony Williams demonstrating Virtual Reality "Shakespeare in the Sphere."
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Presented by Erin Fleming and Tony Williams of **Shakespeare in the Sphere**, this year's Hollywood Fringe presented one event that was not a play, but a workshop demonstration of the use of [virtual reality](#) technology and the works of [Shakespeare](#). This event held on June 21, 2016, called "Virtual Reality: A Revolutionary Approach to Theatre," consisted of a panel discussion of the technology, and the bard, followed by a demonstration of the audience of a scene from the play "Othello" using virtual reality equipment.

As stressed by the panel, Shakespeare can be reinvented for a modern day audience. As pointed out by Tony Williams when it comes to the young, "you get them interested in Shakespeare, they are going to be interested in the arts, because Shakespeare has influenced everything we see." Williams studied Chemistry, and yet plays "Othello" in their demonstration. Williams emphasized that he has nephews who do music in Georgia who have had friends die. He credits their involvement with arts as saving them and helping others deal with their environment. His business partner Erin Fleming who plays Desdemona in their virtual reality pilot, stressed that art helps "let it out, and letting it out in a creative way it is much better."

As part of their panel, Shakespearean expert Elizabeth Swain, actor, director, and teacher, informed the group about the basis of her training was to make Shakespeare not as "stuffy." Swain is a member of the **Antaeus Theater Company**, a group that focuses on Classical Theater. Swain emphasized that Shakespeare strengthens the use of language and impacts everything one does with language. She points out how Shakespeare's stories have such great human details to notice and how "he gets us." The objective of their work, to get past people who say they "hate Shakespeare" or "I am terrified of Shakespeare" to influencing joy of the art and getting it. Part of their theater's work involves dealing with incarcerated youth.

Britany Extrum lead camera tech of **Birns and Sawyer** in North Hollywood educated the audience of the technical issues involved with Virtual Reality. Birns and Sawyer most recent arrival, the Nokia Ozo 360, stood at the center of the room for the audience to see. According to Extrum, Virtual reality involves taking different cameras or lens images of the environment at different angles and then stitching them together. This can be done either monoscopic or stereoscopic, meaning flat square or slit like the human eye. There are many other cameras that can be used. The objective of Virtual technology, to make an immersive environment for the viewer that makes the viewer feel they are there.

According to Extrum the workflow for post production for virtual reality with the Nokia camera, involves the camera recording the images in Nokia proprietary raw. Nokia has three applications available online. Run the footage through the "pipeline" (these applications), and convert it to high quality DPX files or MP4s or editorial 360s. Once those files are processed, the files can be auto-stitched in Nokia, or a quick stitch a blend overlapping the images. The auto-stitched file leaves stitched DPX files. Extrum stressed that the final stitched files need to be color corrected. These stitched DPX files can be imported into Premiere Pro, Nuke, or anything to give a color pass. The files can also be stitched in Nuke.

Shakespeare in the Sphere plans "Romeo and Juliet" as their next project and working on curriculum for kids. Please see [their site](#) for more information.

This author demonstrated Virtual Reality. The images seemed curved and a bit broken. However, it has a great deal of potential. Unlike 3D there appeared to be no physical negative effects of using the Virtual reality device.

Author makes the following personal point: Swain made the point that two books influence most artists, Shakespeare and the Bible. However this is the United States. The bible has no place in the education system. Several members of the Theater Company Anteaus need to be made aware of this as well and to understand this author has a legal case of discrimination and slander against SAG AFTRA and she is an actor and a legitimate member of the UNION.

SUGGESTED LINKS

- [Shakespeare four hundred plays at the Hollywood Fringe](#)
- [Gangster "Hamlet" at the Hollywood Fringe](#)
- ["Shrew'd" one woman's view of Shakespeare's "Taming of" at the Hollywood Fringe](#)
- [Shakespeare's 'MacDeth' political commentary as farce at Hollywood Fringe](#)
- [All female 'Complete Works of Shakespeare \(Abridged\) at the Hollywood Fringe](#)



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