

Friday 14, 6:00pm

ROMEO Y JULIETA '64 / Ramón F. Suárez (30') Cuba, 1964 / Documentary. Black-and-White. Filming of fragments of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* staged by the renowned Czechoslovak theatre director Otomar Kreycha.

HAMLET / Laurence Olivier (135') U.K., 1948 / Spanish subtitles / Laurence Olivier, Eileen Herlie, Basil Sydney, Felix Aylmer, Jean Simmons. Black-and-White. Magnificent adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy, directed by and starring Olivier.

Saturday 15, 6:00pm

OTHELLO / The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice / Orson Welles (92') Italy-Morocco, 1951 / Spanish subtitles / Orson Welles, Michéal MacLiammóir, Suzanne Cloutier, Robert Coote, Michael Laurence, Joseph Cotten, Joan Fontaine. Black-and-White. Filmed in Morocco between the years 1949 and 1952.

Sunday 16, 6:00pm

ROMEO AND JULIET / Franco Zeffirelli (135') Italy-U.K., 1968 / Spanish subtitles / Leonard Whiting, Olivia Hussey, Michael York, John McEnery, Pat Heywood, Robert Stephens.

Thursday 20, 6:00pm

MACBETH / The Tragedy of Macbeth / Roman Polanski (140') U.K.-U.S., 1971 / Spanish subtitles / Jon Finch, Francesca Annis, Martin Shaw, Nicholas Selby, John Stride, Stephan Chase. Colour. This version of Shakespeare's key play is co-scripted by Kenneth Tynan and director Polanski.

Friday 21, 6:00pm

KING LEAR / Korol Lir / Grigori Kozintsev (130') USSR, 1970 / Spanish subtitles / Yuri Yarvet, Elsa Radzin, Galina Volchek, Valentina Shendrikova. Black-and-White.

Saturday 22, 6:00pm

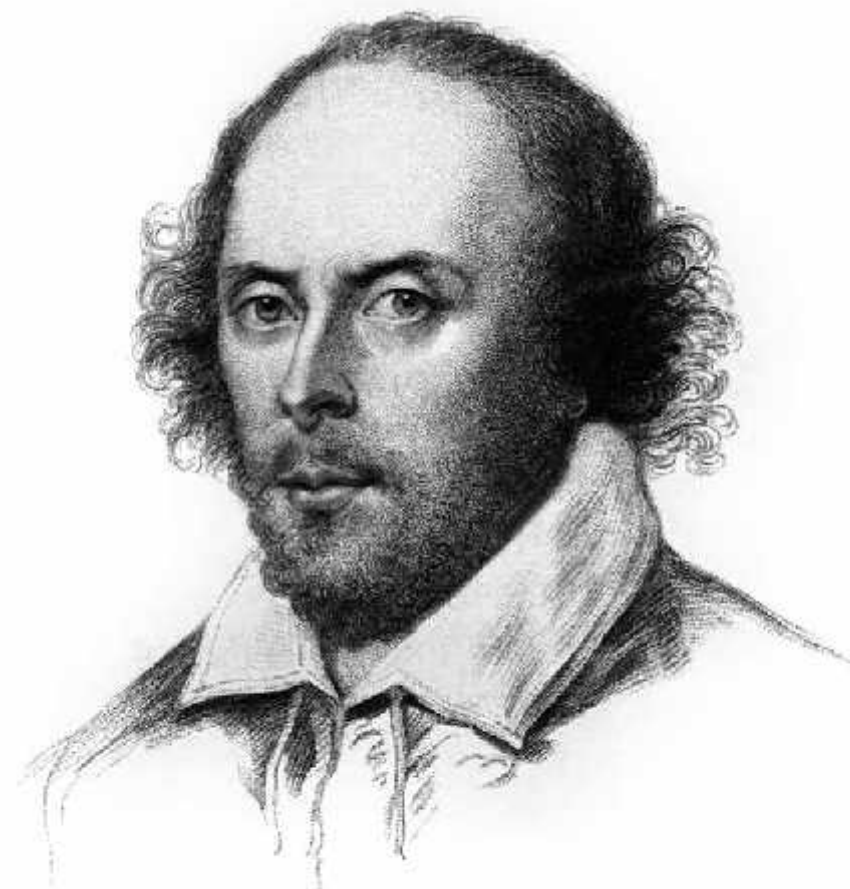
CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT / Orson Welles (115') Spain-Switzerland, 1965 / in Spanish / Orson Welles, Keith Baxter, John Gielgud, Jeanne Moreau, Margaret Rutherford, Norman Rodway, Marina Vlady, Walter Chiari, Michael Aldridge, Fernando Rey. Black-and-White.

Sunday 23, 6:00pm

PROSPERO'S BOOKS / Peter Greenaway (129') U.K.-Netherlands-France, 1991 / Spanish subtitles / John Gielgud, Michael Clark, Michel Blanc, Erland Josephson, Isabelle Pasco. Colour.

Programming and Notes: Antonio Mazón Robau

Acknowledgements: British Council, Benigno Iglesias, Armando Cid, and the «André Bazin» Media Library (International School of Cinema and Television).



400 YEARS ON, SHAKESPEARE ON THE SCREEN



Cinemateca de Cuba



OCTOBER 14-23, 2016
400 YEARS ON, SHAKESPEARE ON THE SCREEN
SHAKESPEARE, A SCREENWRITER?

The worldwide celebrations of the 400 years which have gone by since the passing of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) could most certainly not have been overlooked by the Cuban Film Archive. Already at the time of its founding, between February and March 1962, the nascent institution programmed more than ten film versions of classics by the eminent playwright, poet and actor, unquestionably one of the greatest in world literature. Four centuries on, when Shakespearean plots continue to arouse the imagination of multiple filmmakers, the Film Archive will screen a new cycle gathering several attempts to transpose into the language of motion pictures the legacy of the man who brought together the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the erudite and the popular.

The exceptionally celebrated author of *Hamlet* and so many other exemplary plays was born and died in Stratford-upon-Avon, and in 1592 he was already known in London as a playwright and actor. The early stages of his career were recreated by John Madden in the award-winning film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998). His talent flourished both in tragedy and in comedy, in such a way that many of his 36 or 38 dramatic plays are considered masterpieces. This explains why his contemporaries dubbed him 'The Bard of Avon'.

Every encyclopaedia insists on the disagreement among specialists about the chronology of his pieces, which must be classified in three groups: the historical dramas, the comedies and the tragedies. The first stage of his production (1590-1594), considered one of initiation and optimism, foreshadows his brilliant gifts with plays like *The Comedy of Errors*, *Titus Andronicus* and possibly the delicious farce *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The greater part of his best comedies were written during the second period (1595-1600), one of technical skill: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It*, the tragedy: *Romeo and Juliet*, and the historical dramas: *Julius Caesar*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. The third stage (1601-1608), one of full development and maturity, includes his great tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. To the last creative period (1609-1613), known as one of final serenity and perfect balance between the tragic and the comic, belong *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, among others.

Shakespeare was a keen observer, able to reach into the depths of the human condition, a wonderful creator of types, who could single out every character in his prolific and influential production by granting them their own personalities, while he managed to lend a symbolic value to his heroes, without making them something subhuman like his contemporaries. According to the scholars of his work—in contrast with Greek tragedy, wherein fate, as something extra-human, destroys man, and French tragedy, in which man fails when he crosses certain boundaries drawn by culture and society—he managed to find tragic conflict within man himself, in the discrepancy between blood and reason, between the limited and the infinite of human nature. Ingenious irony and reflection come together in his comedies, without moving away from traditional humour.

It is a well-worn statement that the leading figure of Renaissance literature refuses—like most of the classics—to be adapted into film, but therein lies a contradiction. Since the time of silent cinema, most of this author's plays have been taken to the screen; sometimes with the serious and praiseworthy purpose of conveying the contemporary transcendence exuded by his texts, and to make them available to present-day sensitivities, but other times—most times?—with the sole purpose of exploiting his gift of capturing all human feelings, contradictions and passions with incredible truthfulness and energy.

Cinema has felt attracted to Shakespeare's plays, since they have cinematic structures and a solid dramatic construction of themes: they achieve the fluidity of the necessary action, at times the spectacular quality, and even propitiate large mass movements, which are so pleasing to the camera lens. Not to be forgotten, of course, is the enormous psychological richness of the characters he conceived, which have become challenges for players of all times.

It is always emphasised that the fundamental step in order to adapt a Shakespearean play from the stage to the screen is to translate its poetic language, for images are not static enough that they would allow the poetry to come through (and thus result in what could not be considered good cinema). The attempt to tone it down in favour of an indispensable dynamism of action would be better cinema, although it barely has to do with the work of a man who was able to be both burlesque and pathetic, both satirical and passionate.

Renowned filmmakers have been tempted by the possibility of recreating the Shakespearean universe. Outstanding for their contributions are Sir Laurence Olivier (*Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*), Orson Welles (*Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Chimes at Midnight*), Akira Kurosawa (*Throne of Blood*, *Ran*) or Grigori Kozintsev (*Hamlet*, *King Lear*), without forgetting British director Peter Brook and his version of *King Lear*, shot almost simultaneously with the one produced in the Soviet studios.

For Florentine Franco Zeffirelli, with his sense of movement and the realism of his approach to stage originals in *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*, 'the secret of fidelity is a state of mind which tries to understand what the author was looking for.' Zeffirelli brought about a revolution—although he would rather call it a restoration—by just following Shakespeare's directions, even to the extreme of being the first to restore the central characters of his meticulous adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* to the exact ages indicated by the so-called 'Bard of Avon'.

A revitaliser of Shakespeare, Zeffirelli, in his splendid versions—which did not cease to trim the text—, moves away from the cold and different representations of some who preceded him and tried to make the result look more faithful, and he has stated: 'We have to keep in mind the time of the author. The Elizabethan Age was not a cold and contemplative time, but rather a bloody time. The society of his country at that time was very vivid, violent, sexual, of great feelings, of great scandal, of great human and social freedom, because they had broken loose from the authority of the Church. Afterwards, the Victorian Age has made Shakespeare look like a cold classic, but it wasn't like that, he was a man of spectacular theatre. His plays had duels, songs, sex, everything was expressed violently. We have to understand the world in which the author worked and what the public, the society demanded.'

Another Briton, Kenneth Branagh, stated it was time to carry out the cinematic reinterpretation of Shakespeare's work. Mindful of both the letter and the spirit of the originals, in his brilliant transpositions of *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing* or *Hamlet*, he is associated with an accessible Shakespeare for 'non-specialists'. His guiding principles are: 'employing cinematic techniques to give an idea of the immediacy of the story. Using costumes and sets of the time, but always trying to create an image of real people and things, not of a museum Shakespeare.' For Branagh, an admirer of Polanski's *Macbeth*, Welles's *Chimes at Midnight*, Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* and *Ran*, and Olivier's *Hamlet*, the intention is to make the author 'seem somewhat joyful and not a sort of religious experience'.

The versions have had dissimilar luck, because in approaching them we occasionally find that they do not try to adapt to the world of the author, but to their own interest. This review by the Cuban Film Archive of some of the most praised—and which excludes those in which the stories were reset in time—corroborates the inability of filmmakers to avoid the eternal query on Hamlet's lips: 'To be, or not to be: that is the question'; by paraphrasing him we might say that the dilemma is 'Shakespeare, or not Shakespeare.'