

B R E N T G R I F F I N

Introduction

The articles included in this special issue all evolved from papers presented during the Ben Jonson First Folio Quadricentennial Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia on September 23 and 24, 2016. The idea for the commemoration developed directly from the work of the Resurgens Theatre Company, a professional “original practices” troupe that performs the plays of Shakespeare’s contemporaries through an enhanced prosodic approach to verse-speaking. As a theatrical apparatus built for scholarly research in Early Modern production modes, Resurgens became the catalyst for a promising collaborative partnership between an academic institution (the University of North Georgia) and an Elizabethan-styled performance venue (the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse). An agreement was signed by the three parties in October 2014 that, among other things, provided for a conference on “English Renaissance verse drama for scholars and practitioners interested in applied early modern prosody, as well as textual and cultural studies.” The event would take place on the UNG campus and at the Shakespeare Tavern, the latter space affording participants the opportunity to augment their research with fully staged productions specifically crafted by Resurgens for the conference. 2016 was selected as the year for the inaugural effort and, because of the Folio’s inestimable importance to the history and practice

The Ben Jonson Journal 25.1 (2018): 1–3

DOI: 10.3366/bjj.2018.0206

© Edinburgh University Press

www.euppublishing.com/bjj



Figure 1. Ben Jonson First Folio Quadracentennial Conference Poster. Image courtesy of Resurgens Theatre Company. Artwork by Courtney Torres.

of both printing and playmaking, the 400th anniversary of the publication of Ben Jonson's *Workes* served as the focal point for the occasion. But like the aristocratic patrons of old, UNG's support for the endeavor proved little short of nominal, as the funds necessary for hosting the conference at the college were suddenly unavailable when needed. Undaunted, organizers shifted the entire affair to the Tavern in Atlanta (christening the new Shakespeare Academy building for educational use—with Ben Jonson, no less!)

and Resurgens shouldered the financial burden. The articles that follow are a testament to their perseverance.

As one of only two conferences in the US dedicated to the Folio's quadricentennial, the event brought together established and rising scholars from across the country to reflect on playtexts and textual play in Jonson's *Workes*, as well as its considerable influence on seventeenth-century performance styles and print culture. Among those attending, David Gants delivered the plenary address, and the various sessions were moderated by Brian Corrigan, Joe Falocco, Brent Griffin, James Hirsh, and Steve Pearson. Ashley Lyn Blair, Emily Crawford, and Emily Garmon furnished administrative and material support throughout the weekend, and Laura Cole arranged for the use of the Tavern's facilities.

True to purpose, Resurgens complemented the conference presentations with evening performances of *The Alchemist* and *Volpone*. Both plays were edited and directed by Brent Griffin, and featured the following "original practices": audience interaction, judicious editing, minimalist staging, organic music, original pronunciation (specifically, with regard to accentual phrasing), Renaissance costuming, an uninterrupted performance, and universal lighting. *The Alchemist* was performed on Friday, September 23 at 7:30 p.m. with the following cast: Janine DeMichele Baggett (Dol Common), Ashley Lyn Blair (Neighbor), J. Tony Brown (Sir Epicure Mammon), Hannah Lake Chatham (Dame Pliant), Emily Crawford (Neighbor), Robert Bryan Davis (Drugger), Thom Gillott (Subtle), Brent Griffin (Lovewit), Joseph Kelly (Ananias), Genevieve Leopold (Neighbor), Stuart McDaniel (Face), Daniel Pino (Kastril), Hayley Platt (Surly), Catherine Thomas (Neighbor), and Frankie Webster (Neighbor). *Volpone* was performed on Saturday, September 24 at 7:30 p.m. with the following cast: Ty Autry (Bonario), Janine DeMichele Baggett (Celia), Eric Brooks (Avocatore), Hannah Lake Chatham (Nano), Robert Bryan Davis (Voltore), Joe Falocco (Corvino), Thom Gillott (Volpone), Joseph Kelly (Corbaccio), Hayley Platt (Mosca), and Catherine Thomas (Lady Would-be).