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Response Paper 2.1:
The Show Must Go Online's *Hamlet*

Part A: Notes from Viewing

- Cool things with lighting in the opening scene.
- Woman as Claudius, woman as Hamlet.
- Black actor as Laertes. White Polonius. Actresses with Indian ethnicity as both Gertrude and Ophelia.
- For Hamlet's first soliloquy, the shift from multi-screen to the focus on Hamlet is really powerful.
- Kristin Aterton is strikingly beautiful (if I may say so), which creates a relationship of affection between the audience and the character.
- Middle of 1.2, Hamlet and Horatio's handshake works as a "magic of theater" moment: we're paying attention to how cool it is that the actors make the moment work, rather than the story being told.
- There's another moment when they swear on Hamlet's sword.
- R&G a pair in their home.
- Excellent camera play with "well, god a mercy," and the make up is a great comedic effect. Again, you're thinking, "How did they pull that off": thinking about a feat of acting more than the story being told. You feel a little inspired by what others in quarantine can do, the creative ways they can outmaneuver qt.
- The doofus energy with R&G and Ham in 2.2 is great.
- All the acting must occur in the upper 1/3 of the body, with no movement.
- KA's costume comes undone as the "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy unfolds.
- The dia de los muertos make-up in "To be" suggests half-mad, half-sane. (Rob and KA discuss the make up in the after-show Q&A.)
- Wipes much of make up off in exchange with Ophelia.
- Exchange with Ophelia becomes a same sex relationship, like the production's Claudius and Gertrude.
- Hamlet plays with mobile phone during exchange with Ophelia.
- The make up takes on new meaning when Hamlet tells Ophelia, "God hath made of you one face..."
- When Hamlet comes back on at 3.2, her makeup is gone, whereas the actors are fixing their make up.
- Interesting spatial weirdness when Hamlet lays her head on Ophelia's lap, but is in the Zoom box next to her.
- Dumbshow uses shadow puppets (really skillfully).
- There's a lot of hubbub when Claudius rises after the the Mousetrap. The Zoom glitches signifies the disorder in that moment.
- Claudius's soliloquy is very close to the camera, and very intimate.
- There's the problem that SO MUCH was on Zoom during this period. Did people really want MORE Zoom?
- I found myself playing the game of asking how the actors were doing this. Were they reading lines from their screen, or did they have them memorized?
- Fancy screen work during Hamlet's soliloquy while Claudius is at prayer. Pre-recorded performances are played alongside the live soliloquy.
- When screens come on, they flash the last image. Takes audiences out of the dramatic illusion, but emphasizes the theatrical craft.
- Had to get a picture of EC as Claudius printed so that KA could have it for, "Look upon this picture."
- The intermission which answers questions about the technological wizardry emphasizes how the focus of the production is the production choices themselves, not the story told.
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are played by a couple. Needing a pair of characters requires a pair quarantining together.
- Ros and Guil go on their mobile phones when searching for Hamlet. Provides a jittery feel. They use someone behind the camera to point a flashlight at them when Hamlet points it at the screen.
- Having EC play Claudius adds layers to the "Dear mother" / "Loving father" exchange.
- When KA comes back on for the trip to England (4.4), she's wiped all her makeup off, looks refreshed.
- Ophelia's Zoom connection was choppy when she came back on for her mad scene (4.5).
- With the casting, the scenes between Claudius and Gertrude are all female.

- At his rebellion, Laertes's sword is pointing through the camera, almost feels like it's at the audience.
- When she enters mad, Ophelia's make-up is off, not as clownishly as Hamlet's earlier. It's a more realistic, in contrast to Hamlet's feigned, madness.
- Pirates! Everyone loves to see pirates dressed as pirates.
- Casting Hamlet, Claudius, Polonius, and King Hamlet with white actors, and many of the rest of the cast with actors of color (Gertrude, Laertes, Ophelia) reproduces some unfortunate racial dynamics in the English-speaking world. Was this race-conscious casting that was done on purpose (to convey power dynamics in the story)?
- The gravedigger set up his room so it looks like he is down in a grave, with dirt on the table behind him. KA sets up her camera so she's looking down at the gravedigger.
- OMG Hamlet returning from his adventure with the pirates has an eyepatch.
- The gravedigger brings the comedy. Clownish song.
- Gravedigger holds up a headline about Boris Johnson when saying everyone win England is mad.
- KA takes the clown nose off Yorrick and puts it on herself for, "I knew him Horatio."
- Good skull play with "quite chop fallen."
- Laertes's camera is set up to be from Ophelia's perspective at her funeral.
- Hamlet and Laertes go onto handheld shake cam for their brawl.
- Osric is costumed as a sort of disco king, played as lusty for Laertes.
- KA slows down her delivery for "Let be." The silence is powerful after so much noise in the play.
- As soon as they started handing out foils, I wasn't asking, "How will they do the sword fight?"
- The climax played so differently without swelling music and film-making effects to indicate it.
- I literally rewound the video after Claudius's death to try to see how EC achieved the effect.
- KA creates a blood-dripping-from-mouth effect for her death.
- The closeness of the dead bodies lying on screen—their stillness—is much more affecting on Zoom than in either theater (where the audience's attention is directed elsewhere on stage) or in film (where the camera goes elsewhere).
- The English ambassador has a distinctly Shakespearean look.
- Sound effect of shooting and music at end.
- KA's Hamlet went to a handheld cam for her death. KA's partner
- The cast and crew introductions use the applause of ASL. Interesting to think about how ASL has provided language for Zoom.
- It seems there's so much agency for each individual actor in terms of props and costumes that many in the cast and crew are as fascinated to see how it's done as the "audience."

Part B: Comparative Analysis

1. The Makeup

Evidence	
<p><i>SHAKESPEARE</i></p> <p>KING, <i>aside</i> O, 'tis too true! How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience. The harlot's cheek beautied with plast'ring art Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it Than is my deed to my most painted word. O heavy burden! (3.1.58-62)</p> <p>HAMLET I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble, and you lisp; you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness your ignorance. (3.1.154-58)</p>	<p><i>TSMGO</i></p> <p>When Kristin Atherton's Hamlet appears in Act II, feigning madness, she has her face painted in a <i>Dia de los Muertos</i> fashion. It's quite a shock when she pulls the book she's reading down to reveal her makeup (1:12:02). When the players arrive, she throws off her hat (1:21:06). During the "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy, she rubs her face, cause the make up to start to smear (1:30:27). For "To be, or not to be," her make-up is half wiped off (1:34:50). When Hamlet returns for the play within the play, her make up is fully wiped off (1:44:49). Later in the play, when Ophelia goes mad, Tanvi Virmani's make-up is more subtly smudged (2:38:59).</p>
Analysis	
<p>In <i>Hamlet</i>, both Claudius and Prince Hamlet characterize make up as dishonest, a mechanisms of deception whereby one's true face is disguised to look like something else. That view of make-up holds in <i>The Show Must Go Online's Hamlet</i>, where Prince Hamlet's feigned madness is affected through Kristin Atherton's elaborate <i>Dia de los Muertos</i> make up. Moreover, Hamlet's drift from feigned madness into actual madness is signaled by the smudging and wiping away of the make up: as Hamlet grows more mad, Kristin Atherton's face becomes more and more evident. Yet Tanvi Virmani's Ophelia upends this dynamic. Her Ophelia is clearly actually mad, which is signaled by the smearing of her make-up.</p>	

2. Color and Race

Evidence	
<p><i>SHAKESPEARE</i></p> <p>He reads. To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia— That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; "beautified" is a vile phrase. But you shall hear. Thus: He reads. In her excellent white bosom, these, etc. (2.2.117-21)</p> <p>The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms, Black as his purpose, did the night resemble When he lay couchèd in th' ominous horse, Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared With heraldry more dismal. (2.2.477-81)</p>	<p><i>TSMGO</i></p> <p>Scholar David Sterling Brown's introduction—delivered with a "Straight Outta Elsinore" t-shirt that cites rap icons NWA—draws attention to racial dynamics at work in <i>Hamlet</i>, especially white masculinity. That introduction provides a fascinating frame for thinking about the casting of <i>The Show Must Go Online's</i> production. Many of the character with the most lines are played by</p>

	white actors: Hamlet by Kristin Atherton, Claudius by Emily Carding, Polonius by Michael Bertenshaw, and Horatio by Emilio Vieira. Laertes is played by a Black actor, Gabriel Akamo. Gertrude and Ophelia are played by actresses with Indian ethnicity, Seeta Indrani and Tanvi Virmani. The Ghost is played by a Latino actor, Miguel Perez.
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Analysis
The imagery in <i>Hamlet</i> draws upon a white-is-good, black-is-bad trope yet, when viewed in terms of race, white people in <i>Hamlet</i> are shown to have some pretty major and systemic problems. The play is, after all, a tragedy, and much of the origin of the tragedy can be traced back to Northern European cultures of royalty and honor. The Show Must Go Online is clearly committed to racial equity in its casting, but how does that commitment work in light of <i>Hamlet</i> 's racial dynamics? Does The Show Must Go Online employ "color-blind casting" (which pretends that audiences can ignore the race of actors when imagining the race of characters in the fictional story told)? Or does TSMGO use "color-conscious casting" (where audiences are meant to use the race of actors as one way to make sense of and find meaning in character and plot dynamics)? Most importantly, how should we understand the dynamic in TSMGO in which many of the lead actors are white, while many of the supporting actors are people of color? Is that dynamic intended by the production, as a way to help audiences grasp power dynamics in <i>Hamlet</i> , or is it an unintended perpetuation of the color scheme that <i>Hamlet</i> draws upon for its imagery?

3. The Magic of Zoom

Evidence	
<i>SHAKESPEARE</i>	<i>TSMGO</i>
Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo. (1.2.165sd)	In the middle of 1.2, Hamlet and Horatio's handshake works as a "magic of theater" moment (32:52): we're paying attention to how cool it is that the actors make the moment work, rather than the story being told. There's another moment when they swear on Hamlet's sword. Interesting spatial weirdness when Hamlet lays her head on Ophelia's lap, but is in the Zoom box next to her. Fancy screen work during Hamlet's soliloquy while Claudius is at prayer. Pre-recorded performances are played alongside the live soliloquy. Had to get a picture of EC as Claudius printed so that KA could have it for, "Look upon this picture." Ros and Guil go on their mobile phones when searching for Hamlet. Provides a jittery feel. They use
Swear by my sword. (1.5.180)	
HAMLET Lady, shall I lie in your lap? (3.2.119)	

	<p>someone behind the camera to point a flashlight at them when Hamlet points it at the screen. The gravedigger set up his room so it looks like he is down in a grave, with dirt on the table behind him. KA sets up her camera so she's looking down at the gravedigger. KA's Hamlet went to a handheld cam for her death. KA's partner. Sometimes these technological layers of meaning weren't intended, but were still very powerful. There's a lot of hubbub when Claudius rises after the the Mousetrap. The Zoom glitches signifies the disorder in that moment. Ophelia's Zoom connection was choppy when she came back on for her mad scene (4.5).</p>
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Analysis

Often when watching The Show Must Go Online's *Hamlet*, you're thinking, "How did they pull that off": thinking about a feat of acting more than the story being told. You feel a little inspired by what others in quarantine can do, the creative ways they can outmaneuver the limitations of quarantine. I found myself repeatedly playing the game of asking how the cast and crew did this or that moment. Were they reading lines from their screen, or did they have them memorized? I literally rewound the video after Claudius's death to try to see how Emily Carding achieved the effect. The intermission, which answers questions about the technological wizardry, emphasizes how the focus of the production is the production choices themselves, not the story told. Does an audience's enjoyment of this production come more from seeing how the cast and crew tell the story than the actual story that Shakespeare wrote?