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of the *curia regis*. While The Merchant and the Millers are also charged with discourtesy by Merry Report,¹⁰ the failure to know whom to address (Merry Report directs The Gentleman to speak only to him and ‘let the reste alone’; 221) or how to proceed (The Gentlewoman does not know what to ‘do where so mych people is’; 767) is a striking and surprising facet of the noble characters’ entrances, suggesting that perhaps they are representatives of a regional aristocracy rather than worldly members of the royal household.

Methodology and collaboration

Such intricacies were revealed during an initial rehearsal process which took place in January 2009, six months before the second rehearsal period and the staging of *The Play of the Weather* at Hampton Court in August. This decision to divide the rehearsal process into two stages was made to facilitate further research into particular areas which had arisen as a result of the January rehearsal. However, we also resolved upon a research ‘signing-off’ point in May, when the project creative team was scheduled to take over completely, and the academic advisors retired from making their contributions to the project. The need for elucidation of various aspects of the text, early English theatre, and political history, demonstrated that rehearsal was a valid research methodology in itself, pointing up textual features or references which required further study in order to locate the range of meaning in the play. The rehearsal and staging of a play draws attention to aspects of the text that can easily be glossed over in a reading. When blocking *The Play of the Weather*, for example, it was startling how much quibbling took place over the correct use of courtly protocol in determining the spatial relations between the suitors and Jupiter; Merry Report approaching too ‘ny’ (101) to Jupiter when putting himself forward for the job being only the first instance of a number of breaches of conduct throughout the play.¹¹ The Ranger, for instance, attempts to bypass Merry Report’s mediating role in the granting of an audience with the god (438–9) and The Gentlewoman impertinently requests to be let in ‘the backe syde’ (770) to sue to Jupiter, instigating a ribald response from ‘god’s officer’. The intrinsic difficulties that arise from Merry Report’s management of the unruly suitors are elusive on the page, but the imperatives of blocking bring to the fore the three-dimensional spatial relationships between characters, of particular importance to this play.