



GLOBAL SHAKESPEARES

Shakespeare in Malawi

Power and Performance

Amy Bonsall



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Global Shakespeares

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This book is dedicated to the 14-year-old dyslexic me who was told that she did not understand Shakespeare by her secondary school English teacher, to my beloved children, Romy, Seren, and Nell, and finally, to Thlupego Chisiza (1983–2023).

I sincerely hope that this book honours the memory of Thlupego Chisiza, the original Prince Paris, and deeply mourned Malawian theatre star. You are missed by so many, and your loss is very deep.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have learned to write this section of my publications last; not because of any structural necessity, but because this is the opportunity to really consider and enjoy all the time, efforts, and energies that have gone into the writing of this book. This book may be a monograph, but it has not been a solo endeavour. As a dyslexic scholar and theatre-maker I rely on many people to support me in undertaking and completing my work (words for me are hard fought for), and it is a great privilege for me to be able to thank them here.

This book has been at least 12 years in the making. The genesis of this book goes even further back. My first real experience of Shakespeare in Africa was when I worked with Dame Janet Suzman on *Hamlet* in 2005/2006. She inspired me to challenge myself and to have faith in what I could accomplish, she taught me to never be proud in a rehearsal, and to always seek the advice of everyone else in the room when challenges presented themselves—the work and serving the audience is what matters, not any one person, not any ego. This is a lesson I have carried with me, along with Occam's razor—the simplest solution is usually the best...and Suzman and Ockham are spot on. But I also pause to remember and honour my dear friend Brett Goldin (1977–2006) who has always been a part of this journey, and to his mother D, he would be so very proud of you.

Getting this work to publication has been very challenging. The research and the creative practice have all been amazing and joyous experiences (largely), but the process of getting it to publication has not been so straightforward. To this end I want to express my enormous thanks to Alexa Joubin, the series editor of *Global Shakespeares* and champion of international Shakespeare across the world, also to Eileen Srebernik of Palgrave Macmillan. They have both shown patience, care, and respect, and despite the false start, I sincerely hope that you are as proud of getting this book to publication as I am; I remain indebted to you for your belief in this project.

It is difficult to write a book that is part theory, part methods, part practice as research, and part history, but in taking on this challenge I have further understood how important detail is when engaging in any discussion about live theatre. It is within the detail or the immersive experience of being, doing, and witnessing, that we can better understand others and ourselves. Shakespeare's plays can provide a rich frame for this as long as the plays are treated with appropriate irreverence and cultural localisation.

I must thank Professor Jane Plastow of the University of Leeds, my PhD supervisor, who supported me through the first iteration of some of this work. Kate Stafford, Stanley Kenani, Misheck Mzumara, Fumbani Phiri Jnr, Professor Mufunanji Magalasi, and Hussein Gopole have all been fantastic supporters of my work and of this project, and I am honoured to consider them my friends. Without them this book and much of its contents would not exist and I am indebted to their expertise and creativity. To my writing partner on other projects and my sometimes research collaborator and always friend, Dr Zindaba Chisiza, thank you always for your support, your unwavering optimism, and your unfailing energy. I am so fortunate to be able to write with you.

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work will provide Shakespeare in Malawi with a global audience, it is so deserved.

To Kirsty Cottrell, Meg and Mary, Kelly Pickard-Smith, Eleonora Belfiore, Jennifer Leigh and the rest of my 'Us Friends', my WiASN and Coven support, Laurence M and Zoe P, you have kept me going and you always will. Thank you so so much.

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To my family, Mum, Dad, my brothers and nieces and nephews, Michael, and most especially to my girls, my Romy, Seren, and little Nell, everything I do is for you all, always.

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