ENGLISH STUDIES IN AFRICA
2025, VOL. 68, NO. 1, 65–83
https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2024.2424116

WITS UNIVERSITY

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS
Check for updates

‘I knew her, Horatio’: Legacies of Shakespearean Performance in South Africa

Marguerite F. de Waal

ABSTRACT
This article argues for the importance of recognizing the various histories reflected in performances of Shakespeare, and for the critical work this requires. South African productions have often illustrated the bedevilments of Shakespeare as a product within a neo-colonial cultural economy. However, despite the prominence of productions staged locally and abroad in collaboration with British theatre institutions, they should not be understood as representative. I suggest that a more expansive account of local productions is needed, using a virtual production of *Hamlet* (2021), adapted and directed by Neil Coppen and staged for the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK), as a starting point. Within a broader history of Shakespeare on post-apartheid stages, *Hamlet* (2021) is one of several local productions that have, formally and thematically, undermined the symbolic, spectacular and general in favour of the personal, ordinary and specific. To illustrate, I provide a list of productions staged between 1994 and 2021 along with analyses of productions of *King Lear* (2002) and *Julius Caesar* (1994, 2001–2002). My discussion demonstrates that the generative complexities of *Hamlet* are not new, but resonate with existing, overlooked legacies of local performance. To further develop the perspectives afforded by such legacies, I argue that scholarship must pursue more detailed theatre histories that engage with and expand existing archives.

KEYWORDS
adaptation; *Hamlet*; *Julius Caesar*; *King Lear*; performance; Shakespeare; South African theatre; theatre history

Introduction

Hamlet, directed by Neil Coppen and staged as part of the virtual Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) in May 2021, is a significant entry in the history of South African performances of Shakespeare. Its uniqueness was forced partly by circumstance. COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were still in place at the time, which meant Coppen’s *Hamlet* had to be live-streamed in the style of a video call. This was not how the production had first been envisioned. Originally slated for performance at Cape Town’s Fugard Theatre in June 2020, it had been put on hold for almost a year before finding a makeshift home on the virtual platform provided by the KKNK.

The loss of physical presentation notwithstanding, Coppen, with associate directors Bianca Amato and Buhle Ngaba, tried to retain something of the original vision for a

CONTACT Marguerite F. de Waal marguerite.dewaal@up.ac.za

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

full-scale production. Voiced-over directions expressed a detailed production concept and stage design, locating *Hamlet* in a very particular time and place: the suburb of Saxonwold in Johannesburg during the 2010s. As the location of one of the previous mansion estates of the Gupta family, it often featured as the backdrop to news stories related to the underhanded dealings and undue influence of private corporate interests over state agents and enterprises – now recognized as constituting state capture – during and after Jacob Zuma's presidency. This setting, along with a series of highly recognizable local allusions, signalled that Coppen's *Hamlet* would hold a mirror up to recent intrigues of country and government.

The production was not only concerned with present-day political failures, however, but also with the power (and problems) of political memory. To this end, it foregrounded how the characters of the text are haunted by the past. Hamlet's situation at the beginning of the play is defined by the death of his father, the Old King Hamlet. Coppen's production emphasized the dual nature of Hamlet's loss, as one which straddled both public and personal spheres, by opening with a state funeral reminiscent of the burial of Nelson Mandela. The scene established the influence of symbolism by opening on the image of a coffin draped in the South African flag, described as being raised on a plinth centre stage with a mounted kudu head – a royal, dignified icon – hanging above it.[1] The stage directions then indicated the actors entering as part of a funeral procession, underscoring the occasion's pageantry in the assemblage of government officials, traditional leaders, and national military (the pallbearers). While the scene started by drawing attention to the elaborate political performance surrounding the old king's passing, it did not end there. The description of the procession followed Hamlet (Anelisa Phewa) to his father's gravesite, providing a final image that bypassed outward demonstrations of mourning to reveal the prince's unalloyed grief:

> *[D]ressed in a black suit with freshly shaven head … crouching down and gathering a handful of earth before rising again … he contemplates the dust in his open palm before looking over at the empty grave. The gravedigger gestures solemnly towards the pit. Hamlet lets the dust pour through his fingers. As he does so, his impassive expression crumples into a mask of despair, and he lets out a cry that rings out to the back of the theatre.*

The tension between emblematic exhibitions and individual experience remained central to the production. In the scenes after the funeral, following the wedding between Claudius and Gertrude and the advent of Claudius's reign, the kudu head, representing the old king, was replaced with a buffalo head: a less regal icon to match the new, corrupt ruler. (David Dennis's mannerisms in playing Claudius underscored an association with Jacob Zuma. However, current President Cyril Ramaphosa, known for investing in wild game, is also popularly associated with the image of the buffalo. Claudius thus became representative of more than one post-Mandela president and the associated failures of the African National Congress as the ruling party.) With this juxtaposition forming the basis of his new reality, Hamlet subsequently encountered his father as an ancestor who demanded that his son should honour his memory and avenge his murder. For Hamlet to remember his father was thus framed as a matter of political and familial duty. However, as much as the ancestor king represented an ideal past against which the distortions of the present were thrown into sharp relief, this was not sufficient to inspire a resolute response from Hamlet. In keeping with literary and theatrical tradition, Phewa's Hamlet remained wary, conflicted, and contrarian in the wake of his father's revelation. The inclusion of ancestor

veneration in this production thus provided more than a convenient equivalent for the original text's Early Modern ghost; it also became an interpretive cornerstone through which it could question the kind of remembrance that drives present action. This was not limited to the relationship between Hamlet and his father. The ancestral realm was constantly evoked in the actions of a range of characters: not only in the prince's pouring out of a drink in remembrance of his father and in his conversation with his spirit, but also in Ophelia's madness and in Claudius's guilty prayer. The imperatives to remember and to act, called upon by the memory of the dead, an intergenerational community of the living was faced with the imperatives to remember and to act. The (im)possibilities of responding formed the key points of conflict around which Coppen's *Hamlet* revolved.

I will elaborate on how the production was concerned with how the spectres of past performances – various forms of legacy – make claims upon the characters of the present, and how they respond in turn. For now, though, I want to propose that it similarly, and more broadly, reflected the various performance legacies that shape the relationship between artists and the complex heritage of local Shakespeare. This self-reflexive engagement is what makes 2021 *Hamlet* an ideal starting point for expanding the view of what South African artists do with Shakespeare and why it matters. To illustrate the expectations typically associated with productions of Shakespeare, I briefly contextualize *Hamlet* in reference to its own production history as well as within the picture provided by larger, more visible productions of other Shakespeare plays.

As a counterpoint, I then present accounts of productions of *King Lear* (2002) and *Julius Caesar* (1994, 2001–2002), two of which have received no critical attention until now. To support the broadened range and possibilities of local Shakespeares suggested by the *Lear* and *Caesar* productions, and as a starting point for further research, I offer a list of productions in the post-apartheid era in Appendix A that I have collated from various archival sources. In doing so, I want to suggest that scholarship on Shakespeare and South African theatre would benefit from an awareness of the many worlds contained in past performances, some of which have been neglected until now, and which cannot be encompassed by the incomplete histories that focus only on the most visible and immediately accessible representations of Shakespeare on stage. This is not to negate the artistic value or lived experiences represented by the latter category. No matter how well-documented a production is, writing about theatre cannot account for all the infinite meaning-making potential contained in the ephemeral moment of a performance and in the relationship between actors and audience. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that both theatre-artists and literary scholars have developed narratives to sketch a general history of local theatre and of local performances of Shakespeare. The resulting picture has tended to be dominated by resourced institutions and familiar names and has felt increasingly limited and limiting, especially following a renewed focus on decolonization in the late 2010s. What this article aims to do is to give voice to lesser-known histories and to consider what these might do to rebalance and reframe the legacies of performance that influence theatre-making today.

Bad Beginnings?

Starting in pre-production, *Hamlet* stirred up the artistic, institutional and socio-political legacies that local theatre-makers confront when performing Shakespeare. In 2019,

when it was still envisioned as a full-scale, in-person event, Coppen's *Hamlet* became a topic of discussion at a workshop titled 'Making Shakespeare' hosted at the Fugard Theatre in Cape Town. Since the production was set to run at the Fugard the following year, the prospect of '*Hamlet* 2020' functioned as a shared point of departure in sessions. *Hamlet* also bookended the event, which closed with a roundtable discussion of the planned production. Participants expressed mixed feelings about this future Shakespeare, influenced particularly by what was then the still recent memory of the 2015 and 2016 student protest movements. These movements' calls for decolonization, alongside their opposition to economic and epistemological inequalities (typified in the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall hashtags), had clear effects on the critical paradigms of theatre-makers. For some, the idea of *Hamlet* as an opportunity for something new in a post-fallist landscape evoked cautious optimism. To others, decolonial theatre-making would be theatre-making that did not involve Shakespeare at all.[2]

Also underlying this resistant position was a wariness of the kind of large-scale production which held purchase in the history of Shakespeare on South African stages. The legacy of such productions loomed particularly large as *Kunene and the King*, a two-hander starring John Kani and Antony Sher, opened at the Fugard during the run of the workshop. An original play staged in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), it depicted a volatile friendship between Jack (Sher), a terminally ill Shakespearean actor preparing to play King Lear, and his carer, Lunga Kunene (Kani). Shakespeare is a key point of discussion for the two men, who become mouthpieces for a history of Shakespeare and Shakespeare in South Africa. Despite its own didacticism, *Kunene* did demonstrate a degree of complexity. Through original dialogue, Kani-as-Lunga had the space to respond to Jack's privilege and ignorance. Nevertheless, as Thurman notes, the play's 'marketing material and paratexts' summarized the uncomplicated version of this story: 'Shakespeare helped two men from opposing South African racial camps to overcome their differences. Recognising their respective versions of Shakespeare led them to recognise their shared humanity. "Universal" Shakespeare is triumphant' (87).

Kunene and the King thus reiterated themes of previous large-scale Shakespeare productions on several fronts. The use of Shakespeare as a master-key to reconciliation, the evocation of national archetypes, the involvement of Sher and the collaboration with RSC all recalled both *Titus Andronicus* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2009). *Titus Andronicus* (1995), starring Sher and directed by Greg Doran, mirrored late apartheid-era conflicts by portraying the Andronici as white Afrikaner nationalists (Sher played a Titus inspired by Eugène Terre'Blanche, a right-wing extremist) and the Goths as a group of coloured, black and poor white characters. Counterintuitively, while emphasizing the violence of *Titus* as one of Shakespeare's bloodiest revenge tragedies, Sher and Doran also attempted to project an agenda of political reconciliation onto the play. In a similar vein, *The Tempest* (2009), also starring Sher and Kani and directed by Honeyman, combined post-colonial and post-apartheid allegories, and activated associations with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) against the backdrop of a bright Pan-African aesthetic. In this, Sher-as-Prospero represented the white colonizer who, at the end of the play, sought the forgiveness of Kani-as-Caliban, the black colonized.

The participants at the 2019 Making Shakespeare workshop who expressed reservations about *Hamlet* may well have been wary of precisely this kind of symbolism and

reflection of national politics. Given the resistance to this type of Shakespearean production in light of the drive towards decolonization, many of the workshop's theatre-makers seemed to wonder whether this was badly begun 'and worse remain[ed] behind' (*Hamlet*, 3.4.200). The connection between *Hamlet* and past productions was borne out in its aesthetic vision, if not in its virtual execution. The elaborate stage directions and descriptions of production design suggest that, if it had played to a live audience, *Hamlet* would likely have deployed similar levels of visual illustration as *Titus* and *The Tempest* to invest in its local concept. The problems with such representations can be summarized in Njabulo S. Ndebele's oft-quoted theorization of the 'spectacular' literary expressions that reinforce the symbolic and binary at the expense of the 'ordinary': the specific, complex, and nuanced business of everyday life. In a series of essays written in the 1980s ('The Rediscovery of the Ordinary,' 'Turkish Tales' and 'Redefining Relevance,' all of which appear in his 1991 collection *The Rediscovery of the Ordinary*), Ndebele prioritizes the lived experiences of the oppressed, protesting how their lives are delimited, and how injustice is reinscribed in symbolic depictions of their oppression. Motivated particularly by a lack of representation of rural life in South African literature, Ndebele proposed a radical affirmation of ordinary experience, the variety and depth of which are denied by oppressive systems. Where spectacular demonstration is about the overt and the visible, the ordinary offers subtlety of thought. In 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary,' Ndebele argues that the spectacular is general: it 'establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge' (46) whereas the ordinary offers 'intimate knowledge' (46) and 'the honesty of the self in confrontation with itself' (53). In these terms, *Hamlet* plainly engaged the spectacular. Saxonwold hardly represents ordinary, rural life. Claudius as a composite of Zuma and Ramaphosa and Old King Hamlet as Mandela could be easily slotted into the assembly of Terre'Blanche-Titus, and the TRC-Prospero and -Caliban. The allegory was reinforced by blunt symbolism, tagging wildlife tourism – in the form of kudu and buffalo heads – onto the already seemingly overloaded combinations of political and Shakespearean signification.

Yet, while the production did recall the comparatively well-known tradition of Shakespearean spectacle on South African stages, it also reflected the concerns with the intimate, personal and less visible that can be detected in the somewhat overlooked productions and production details of local Shakespeares. I turn now to a discussion of such productions and the varied histories they represent.

Lear, Caesar *and Other Ancestors*

The list of productions staged between 1994 and 2021 in the attached appendix offers a starting point for contextualizing *Hamlet* and the handful of mainstream productions discussed so far. This list has been collated from various sources and represents a broad spectrum of activity: amateur theatre, professional theatre, university productions, for-schools productions, and productions for annual festivals. Repetitions in this list suggest key points of activity. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the texts that appear most often. Geoffrey Hyland, Fred Abrahamse and Roy Sargeant are regular directors. Cape Town's Maynardville open-air theatre and the Gqeberha's Manville theatre are well-represented, so are tertiary institutions, especially the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and Rhodes University. These

observations are not definitive, of course, because the list is not exhaustive and archival material for each production varies depending on institutional and arbitrary contingencies of record-keeping. Besides, the more interesting opportunity here is for identifying the unusual and unique or identifying gaps and absences along the margins of the general and repeated.

For example, it is worth paying attention to the female directors and directors of colour. Of the 66 directors listed, 29 women are responsible for directing about 40% of productions.[3] This observation can be followed through to more specific contexts. One useful exercise is to consider gender representation at Maynardville. The annual festival, which started with a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1956, did not have a woman in the director's chair until 1992 when Janice Honeyman directed *The Merchant of Venice*. Between them, the four women who have directed at Maynardville – Honeyman, Clare Stopford, Lara Bye, and Tara Notcutt – have directed only six productions since the festival's inception. These few instances are worth noting all the more for being rare: both Honeyman and Notcutt directed *The Shrew* (1995 and 2018 respectively), with Notcutt's version challenging decades of Maynardville tradition by presenting the first overtly ironic treatment of the text, resonating with the #MeToo movement. A similarly rich field of inquiry can be found in the work of directors of colour. In my records, there are seven names in total who have directed since 1994: John Matshikiza (*Julius Caesar*, 1994), Walter Chakela (*Julius Caesar*, 1995), Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom (*King Lear*, 2002), Warona Seane (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2007), Verne Munsamy (with Tamar Meskin, *As You Like It*, 2008), John Kani (with Sarah Roberts, *Othello*, 2009), Josias dos Moleele (*Diphoshophosho*: Plaatje's translation of *A Comedy of Errors*, 2005; *Umabatha*, 2016) and Thabiso Qwabe (*The Merchant and Veronica*, 2016). In the rest of this section, I want to draw particular attention to Grootboom's *Lear* (2002) and Matshikiza's *Caesar* (1994). With some reference to other productions of these plays, I suggest that Grootboom, Matshikiza and others have used the texts to explore both the personal and political in ways that go beyond previously suggested frameworks.

Local theatre-makers working with *King Lear* have often charged their productions with political allegory: the play can be (and has been in scholarly writing) connected to transitions of power and the issue of land and land expropriation.[4] Yet when *Lear* has been produced – and this has not happened often since 1994 – theatre-makers have eschewed any overt reference to national politics. Of the six productions of *Lear* listed in the appendix, only three are not university drama school productions: the TakeAway Shakespeare Company (TASC) *King Lear* (1998) directed by James Whyle; a *King Lear* by the North West Arts Drama Youth Group (2001) directed by Grootboom; and The Mechanicals' *King Lear: This Time it Hurts* (2012) directed by Guy de Lancey. Of these three, Grootboom's *King Lear*, hailing from Mahikeng in the North West, has left the smallest archival footprint: I could find only a single review by Margot Beard (59).

My discussion here is based on interviews I conducted in 2021 (after finding Beard's review) with Grootboom as well as two actors: Presley Chwenyagae (Lear) and Loungo Masire (Goneril). Masire also generously shared a video recording of the production with me. While the TASC and The Mechanicals' alternative theatre productions were also comparatively small, they were bolstered by professional credits of all its participants. By contrast, Grootboom's *Lear* featured a group of young performers in a kind of community theatre production which labelled itself 'semi-pro' (Beard 59). In some ways, this is a

fair summation: the North West Arts Drama Youth Group consisted of school pupils trained by Grootboom as part of extra-curricular drama classes run during the 1990s under the aegis of the North West Arts Council (now the Mmabana Arts, Culture and Sports Foundation). The video recording shows a sparse design, borne out of practicality more than aesthetic aims. Modest presentation notwithstanding, the fact that Grootboom's *Lear* was presented at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda suggests that it was more ambitious than it might have seemed at first glance. In fact, the production was a formative event in the training of and collaboration between several artists who would go on to establish professional careers. Chweneyagae, who remembers *Lear* as one of the most important projects of his early career (2021), is well-known for playing the lead role in the Oscar-winning South African film *Tsotsi* (2005). Nqgobe starred in the same film alongside Chweneyagae; both actors have continued to work in roles for stage, film and television.

While Grootboom's *Lear* was not based on a South African or African 'concept,' it was rooted in local realities and centred the personal and specific through deep engagement with the language and experiences of its actors. Removed from the metropolitan centres of Johannesburg and Cape Town, where Shakespeare is most often produced, and by predominantly white creative teams, the North West *Lear* reflected a material reality removed by several degrees from either traditional or alternative productions. The group had limited resources, its performers were still at school and did not speak English as a first language. Grootboom and his actors combined the reading of the Shakespeare text in English with discussions in Setswana,[5] producing a steady stream of linguistic and narrative translations as a rehearsal strategy. The actors also worked with reference points centred in their lived experiences in rural North West to construct their performances. Chweneyagae explains that the very specific dynamics of traditional rule – of chieftaincies and the politics of rural villages – were easy and immediately available frameworks to apply to the play text. On a more personal level, he remembers his grandfather being an inspiration for Lear: he observed and adopted his voice and mannerisms for the role (*King Lear*, 2002). The recording shows directorial details that draw attention to the stripping away of power and illusions of order. At first, Lear appears strong and regal dressed in a greatcoat which becomes symbolic of his power. However, Chweneyagae uses his slow movements to both express gravitas and betray its illusions. As his situation deteriorates, he becomes more and more hunched over underneath the coat. Once he meets Poor Tom on the heath and removes the coat in solidarity with him, the Fool gratefully drapes the coat over his own shoulders, rendering both the coat and himself ridiculous. Lear's posture becomes more and more like that of his humbled and suffering companions. In his ennobled, mad state at Dover after the storm, Chweneyagae's Lear sits hunched on the ground offering to feed an imaginary mouse an imaginary piece of cheese. The final scene offers a stark contrast to the first: Lear, dressed in nothing but a dirtied gown, kneels next to Cordelia, moving his attention from her lips, searching for a sign of breath, to the audience, reaching out towards them, before collapsing.

The North West *Lear* thus incorporated the intonations, gestures and accents of rural life into a grand narrative about a king who becomes an ordinary man. The tragic mode emphasized the costs of this process. Lear's transformation required that he be confronted by his own shortcomings and losing comforts and outward signs of power. If this is a relatively straightforward interpretation of the play text, it is also effective. The theatre

of tragedy contains spectacle, but the limited resources of the North West *Lear* prevented it from indulging in the spectacular at the expense of narrative. Unattached to the bounds of explicit allegory or the implicit dynamics of working in a metropolitan environment, the group could construct their interpretation of the text with recourse to a shared language and the experience of their community.

Local productions of *King Lear* are noteworthy for veering away from broad political allegory in favour of the radically personal, but productions of *Julius Caesar* cannot do the same. The play is essentially a drama of the state and rulership. It is dominated by men and the statecraft that is their exclusive domain while their wives, and the domestic sphere they represent, are dismissed. *Caesar* also has a long history of theatre-makers and readers using it either to access their own political reality or appropriate that of other nations. This is as true of South Africa and Africa as anywhere else. Sol Plaatje translated the play to celebrate and legitimize Setswana culture and language during the early twentieth century; Greg Doran appropriated the history of the Robben Island Shakespeare to conceptualize an 'African' staging for the RSC. However, local theatre productions of *Caesar* offer counterpoints to the kind of generalizations that accompany the idea of the text as 'Shakespeare's African Play' (Morris). I want to draw attention specifically to a production at the Windybrow theatre in Johannesburg in 1994, directed by John Matshikiza. This was one of a series of *Julius Caesar* productions staged from 1994 to 1996;[6] incidentally, it took place in the same city and time period as Doran and Sher's *Titus Andronicus* (1995) at the Market Theatre.

For Sher, *Titus Andronicus* marked his return to South Africa after he left the country as a young man to study performing arts in London. Matshikiza also returned to South Africa in the early 1990s, having settled in Zambia with his family in 1961. Matshikiza and Sher both moved to London in 1968, and both received classical drama training, though at different institutions, and went on to work in productions by the RSC, among others. Like Sher, Matshikiza produced a Shakespeare play upon returning to the country of his birth while it was transitioning to democracy. However, Sher returned to the United Kingdom after the local failure of *Titus Andronicus*, while Matshikiza remained in South Africa, becoming a well-known journalist, actor, and director, though he did not achieve his plans for starting a local classical theatre company ('A Very South African Scenario' 136). Shakespeare remained a defining part of Sher's professional identity. Matshikiza, by contrast, is remembered primarily as a South African artist and intellectual, not a Shakespearean director or actor. Unsurprisingly, then, Matshikiza's *Caesar* has received no critical attention so far.

Matshikiza's *Caesar* engaged a different group of storytellers and kind of storytelling than Sher and Doran's *Titus*, with a different conception of who the main characters were in the South African political picture. The 1995 *Titus Andronicus* tied the journey of its white main character, somewhat disingenuously, to politically loaded notions of redemption. By contrast, Matshikiza's director's note (*Julius Caesar*, Theatre Programme) suggests that he completely passed over discourses about closure and reconciliation, instead focusing on the conflicts, uncertainties and moral ambiguities of a changing political dispensation. This included an implicit shift away from white experience as a focal point. At the beginning of the play, power is seemingly in the hands of Caesar, portrayed in this case by Afrikaans actor Louis van Niekerk, but as has often been noted, *Caesar*'s titular character is not the protagonist. This appears to have been borne out in

Matshikiza's production: according to the director's notes and the memories of those involved (*Julius Caesar*, Theatre Programme; Maake kaNcube, 2021), the focus was not on the psychology of Caesar as the political figurehead, but on the citizenry and main characters' responses to his leadership and assassination. The weight of the action would have been carried by Brutus (Owen Sejake), Mark Antony (Sello Maake kaNcube) and Octavius Caesar (Themba Ndaba), who vie for political power after Caesar's death.

In his director's note, Matshikiza uses *Julius Caesar* to look critically at the transition to democracy, noting that politicians, whether on the left or right, 'vie to manipulate the electorate and place themselves in undisputed authority,' all the while proclaiming themselves 'honourable men,' like Brutus. Yet, 'None of these politicians can control the violence that their words unleash. Furious mobs go rampaging on killing sprees in villages, townships, and right in the middle of Johannesburg, just as Mark Antony's funeral oration leads the Romans to lynching, riot and civil war' (*Julius Caesar*, Theatre Programme). In 2007, Matshikiza reflected further on the political resonances of *Julius Caesar* in the early 1990s:

> I had the extraordinary experience of teaching *Julius Caesar* at the Market Theatre Laboratory to a mixed group of students who were amazed that this play could give them some inkling of what the then unheard-of condition called 'democracy' was all about … . I later directed a production of *Julius Caesar* at the Windybrow Theatre on the eve of our first national election in 1994, in the wake of Chris Hani's assassination, and the potentially volatile instability that followed it. The play threw up many issues that were astonishingly pertinent to the times in which we were living. (136)

Some observations can be made about this apparent contradiction in Matshikiza's connection of Caesar with Hani instead of with the end of white authoritarian rule (suggested by the casting of Van Niekerk as Caesar). First, theatrical representation allows fluid points of comparison: in 1994, the assassination of Caesar could reflect both the death of the apartheid government and the death of an anti-apartheid revolutionary leader. At the same time, an interesting thing happens to the configuration of the production in retrospect: 'Caesar' becomes indeterminate. The narrative focus, in the memories of the theatre-makers, is not so much about Caesar as it is about the world in the aftermath of his rule and his death. Matshikiza's reflection on his past work aligns with a comment in the programme that the issues that Shakespeare dealt with 'recur, in different parts of the world, at different times, [showing] us the desires, the pain and the failings of humanity as they affect us all.' This amounts to a kind of universalism, but it strikes a specifically resonant note in this case. The staging of *Julius Caesar* at the Windybrow marks a significant moment in Matshikiza's career. He had just returned to his home country from England, where his working life was an 'ongoing battle [as a black actor] … to be free to exercise [his] classical training in any role … other than the odd doctor, or the third spear carrier from the left'; in this world, he was given a bit part in *Othello* while Donald Sinden played the title character in blackface ('A very South African Scenario' 136). This reflection provides important context for the first paragraph of his director's note: he quotes the 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen' speech and observes that these words have 'been conjured up by Marlon Brando, John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton,' but that 'today they are being spoken by a black actor [Maake kaNcube as Antony] in Johannesburg' (*Julius Caesar*, Theatre Programme). In

fact, the entire cast composition was a reversal of what a *Caesar* in England or Hollywood would have looked like, and what other South African productions of the time *did* look like. Instead of the peripheral presence of black actors in other productions that focused on the character arcs of white leads, Matshikiza's *Julius Caesar* portrayed a majority black political leadership and citizenry wrestling with the question of what constitutes a democratic society.

Other local versions of *Caesar* have also used the play to retrieve the complex experiences of those living in the realities created by symbols and political figureheads. Yaël Farber's *SeZaR*, first staged at the National Arts Festival in 2001 before performances in the UK and Johannesburg, is a particularly useful point of comparison and a precursor to Coppen's *Hamlet*. *SeZaR* is better known and documented than Grootboom's *Lear* or Matshikiza's *Julius Caesar* and may at first appear more akin to more spectacular Shakespearean products, driven as it was by an African concept which was subsequently presented to audiences at the Oxford Playhouse and elsewhere in the UK and Ireland. Aside from its visual and auditory adaptation of *Caesar* to an African context (including kwaito music and drumming,[7] Afro-Roman costuming, and dancing), the production also used traditional belief systems and violence to depict its African context. Most reviews, for example, make some reference to the bloody ritual in which Sinna (Siyabonga Twala), performing as a sangoma and reading the entrails of a slaughtered animal,[8] convinced SeZaR (Hope Sprinter Sekgobela) to go to the Senate. This moment is depicted on the front covers of both the NAF and Oxford Playhouse programmes, which show SeZaR holding a piece of raw meat aloft in triumph.

Yet the production also demonstrated reflexivity in its deployment of spectacle, balancing it with strategic attention to other details in the adaptation of the text. Farber intended *SeZaR* to address Africans' self-perceptions as well as the perceptions of outsiders (*SeZaR*, Production Proposal; *SeZaR*, Theatre Programme). Setting itself in the fictional state of Azania, *SeZaR* was in many ways a case study of an African state viewed internally and externally. International radio broadcasts framed and interspersed the action, expressing patronizing concern and censure; this flattening pessimism was contrasted with the immediacy of the political and personal conflicts presented on the stage. The adaptation of the text also went further than visual signalling; compared to most other productions of Shakespeare, a significant portion of *SeZaR* was translated. Plaatje's *Dintshontsho tsa bo Juliuse Kesara* appears again as a source, providing a foundation for workshopping translations by the cast into their own languages, including isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho and Tsotsitaal (Mabanga). Last, and perhaps most important, *SeZaR* countered the tradition of the play by centring female experience in an otherwise overwhelmingly masculine text.

Local reviewers Adrienne Sichel, Thebe Mabanga, Robyn Sassen and Gayle Edmunds all picked up on the fact that Farber's reworking of the play draws attention to the often-overlooked female characters on the periphery of the action. In Farber's version, Kalphurnia (Keketso Semoko) and Porshia (Mmabatho Mogomotsi) were joined by a third female character, Mashanela (Mary Twala). Mashanela combined the role of soothsayer and municipal street sweeper. The play opened on this character, whose warning to the triumphant SeZaR about the Ides of March goes unheeded. Mashanela acted as the leader of a group of female sweepers, whose presence was consistent throughout: they were cleaning the auditorium and stage before the play began, sat in the auditorium with the

audience during performance, and participated in the action as members of the citizenry. She later became a point of recourse to Kalphurnia and Porshia, each of whom asked the older woman to intervene in the impending crisis of state in which their husbands, SeZaR and Brutas, were entangled. Mashanela thus reappeared later in the play to warn SeZaR again against going to the Senate, only to be ignored once more. Mashanela's occupation as a street sweeper was symbolic: at the end of the play, 'the women move in to clean up the devastation' (*SeZaR*, Production Proposal).

Hamlet*'s Memory*

The engagements with ordinariness and spectacle in the productions of *Lear* and *Julius Caesar* went beyond the politics of reconciliation favoured by other post-apartheid productions. They thus offer alternatives through which to view contemporary performances of Shakespeare. Turning back to the 2021 *Hamlet*, I suggest that it did not simply dramatize the conflicts between political-historical symbols, but was concerned with the plight of characters who had to observe and respond to such symbols. This focus meant the production could pursue ideas that were potentially more radical: instead of presenting an established political narrative through Shakespeare, it used Shakespeare as a site to question the value and effects of political narratives. *Hamlet*'s treatment of figureheads, and its consideration of what is left after disillusionment and a loss of power, has precursors in the work of Grootboom, Matshikiza, Farber, and their casts. To return to the obvious contrasting of the old king of the past with the new king of the present, it is significant that the two most senior, powerful characters were associated with the mounted heads of animals: the two kings are represented by stuffed, lifeless images whose counterparts are, through either death or corruption, bound to distortion. (In a parallel, comic vein, Polonius needed no symbolic equivalent; he was his own caricature.)

As indicated at the beginning of this article, the incorporation of ancestors is a key avenue through which *Hamlet* questions the power invested in symbols. It also foregrounds the role of memory in either upholding or dismantling the established order (suppressing or accessing the ordinary). In one sense, ancestor veneration activates something of a spectacular mode, similar to including the supernatural elements of African belief systems in *SeZaR*. Of course, the sangoma's divination of entrails, suiting the gritty civil war aesthetic of *SeZaR*, would have been out of place in *Hamlet*'s affluent Johannesburg suburbs. Still, the ancestor king's appearance to Hamlet and the revelation of regicide were also kinds of spectacle, the events no less strange or extreme for a lack of blood and gore. But ancestor veneration in this case had a narrative function that transcended and undermined the spectacular. On the one hand, the ancestral realm allowed for the stripping away of illusions. Old Hamlet, the ancestor king, was the first to reveal the truth about Claudius's treason. Claudius himself was later shown confronting the false basis of his power in praying to his forebears. Seated 'on a carved throne upholstered in leopard skin' (Coppen 2021) and crushed by guilt, he poured out 'a bottle of his finest whiskey' as an offering to his ancestors. For Claudius, honouring his forebears and his brother's memory required that he give up all he had gained through the dishonest accumulation of power under the pretence of political legitimacy. That is, he would have had to become, in Ndebele's words, an 'ordinary' self 'in confrontation with itself'. On the other hand, the memory of the ancestor king functioned differently in Hamlet's

case, compelling the prince to kill his uncle. This would have meant the prince had to become an equal participant in the spectacular drama of the state. As Claudius was praying to his ancestors, unaware of his surroundings, Hamlet had the opportunity to fulfil this duty, gun pointed at his uncle's head. The failure of both characters suggests a gridlock of political and personal concerns. The figurehead was unwilling to divest himself of power, and the oppressed prince hesitated when he could have taken that power forcefully.

Claudius and Hamlet both had the ability to respond to their ancestral encounters but failed to act. A third kind of position in relation to the past was represented by Ophelia. Like Hamlet, Ophelia was depicted as a young character whose life is shaped by the demands of public and personal memory represented by the older generation. Like him, she contended with the dispensation created by Claudius their new king, as well as the influence of her father, Polonius – also an agent of the state – and the grief of losing him. However, her ability to act was more circumscribed due to her comparative powerlessness within a royal, political and traditional system that remained inherently patriarchal. The range of internal conflicts represented by Claudius, Hamlet and Ophelia pointed to the need for something beyond established frameworks of memory to negotiate a treacherous present. The production offered something like this by expanding the scope of the ancestral realm in a way that, in *Hamlet*, resonated with one of *SeZaR*'s most noteworthy interventions in the text of *Caesar*: the centring of female experience in an otherwise overwhelmingly masculine play.

Hamlet's father was not the only ancestor in the production, and his memory not the most powerful. A contrast to the ghost of Old Hamlet was presented in the scene towards the end of the play when Hamlet and Horatio speak to a gravedigger in a cemetery and Hamlet asks the gravedigger about an unearthed skull. In Shakespeare's text, this is the skull of a court jester called Yorick, whom Hamlet remembers fondly to Horatio. In the reconfigured scene, the skull belonged to Yonela, '*ugogo kaHamlet*': Hamlet's grandmother. As Hamlet remembered her, he spoke slightly altered lines to his friend, as stage directions indicated Yonela's appearance upstage:

> HAMLET. Yonela … I knew her, Horatio. A woman of infinite jest and most excellent fancy.
> *Isolated upstage by a faint pool of light, Yonela, with a babe, Hamlet, tied to her back with a blanket. She hums a lullaby to the child, rocking it sweetly to sleep. Strains of her song filter into Hamlet's memory*.
> HAMLET. She hath borne me on her back a thousand times. (Coppen 2021)

When the character is Yorick, the second line refers to Hamlet playfully riding on the jester's back. As Yonela, the line became a reference to familial intimacy, a habitual, everyday configuration of closeness, representative of maternal care and protection. Yorick's 'infinite jest,' his professional foolery, became Yonela's grandmotherly sense of humour, her 'flashes of merriment'. As an addition to the ancestral pantheon, Yonela functioned as a key contrast to male rulers in the lineage. While archetypal in her own right, she was assigned a different kind of significance to the public and political symbolism of the old king and Claudius. Hamlet's incidental remembrance of his grandmother's death was different in kind to his remembrance of his father: remembering her was to recall the private, the joyful and the ordinary. This happened at the exact moment that Hamlet confronted the plain realities of death: he was studying her skull. The most

affective act of memory occurred in a context that most disallowed euphemism and idealism.

This moment of clarity occurred just before another irreparable loss was revealed. In the text, what is unknown to Hamlet during his conversation with the gravedigger is that Ophelia is dead and that it is her funeral being prepared for. The scene directly preceding this showed Ophelia's death by suicide (an overdose). In parallel with Hamlet's experience, a female ancestor, this one unnamed, appeared during Ophelia's last moments. Narrated stage directions describe an upstage scene accompanying Gertrude's report of her passing:

> *The upstage floor is covered in a sea of bubble wrap, which the company holds on either side and undulate gently. Projected water patterns, shimmering moonlight and stars dance across the surface of it and complete the illusion.*
>
> *The singing of the female ancestor can be heard in the distance, calling Ophelia to the water. We can just make out this mysterious maternal figure on the opposite side of the river bank … . Ophelia begins to follow the call of her ancestor, wading into the water to reach her. She turns on her back, and lies suspended on the surface for a moment, staring up at the moon, the cast supporting her, unseen, from beneath the tides of bubble wrap sheeting … . Ophelia shuts her eyes, and surrenders to the call, vanishing beneath the surface of the water.* (Coppen 2021)

As in Shakespeare's text, Ophelia in Coppen's *Hamlet* is overcome by grief and mental distress at the death of her father and Hamlet's actions. However, this depiction of her death as a relational process is significant. In Shakespeare's text, Gertrude is the only other female character; she pities Ophelia, but she is not an active ally. Ophelia's brother, Laertes, is away, her father uses her as political bait, and she has no recourse to friendship or shared womanhood either before or during her madness. In the production, she is granted a greater context and a stronger familial line, which ultimately provides a tragic means of escape. The addition of Ophelia's ancestor to *Hamlet*'s cosmology was anticipated by the production's treatment of Laertes, who was cast as a sister instead of a brother to Ophelia. This significantly affected the tone of their interactions. Laertes's warnings against Hamlet (imagined as part of a sisterly chat in the ladies' bathroom at Claudius and Gertrude's wedding) are rendered more pragmatic than patronizing, based on her and her sister's shared experiences as women in a patriarchal system. Their relationship thus also contrasts with, rather than anticipates, Polonius's domineering attitude towards his daughter. Like *SeZaR*, *Hamlet* added and changed the genders of characters to establish a sense of female community. The sisters in *Hamlet* demonstrate similar experiences to the women of *SeZaR*. Mashanela and the street sweepers took up the responsibility of restoration by cleaning up Rome's physical and political mess after their warnings go unheeded. Laertes's vengeance, while more violent, also sought some form of restoration. Her single-minded pursuit of revenge for her father's murder and her sister's mistreatment, fuelled by her position as a daughter and loyal sister, diverges from the gendered expectations that align masculinity with action. In the original *Hamlet*, the realm of action belongs to men. In the original and in Coppen's *Hamlet*, the only way Ophelia managed to counter the political machinations of the state was through her own death. However, the adapted *Hamlet* represents another aspect of female experience. Laertes' more active opposition underscored the gendered

experiences of injustice even if, at the same time, her pursuit of revenge bound her to participate in the system against which she raged.

Conclusion

At the time of *Hamlet*'s production, the popular memory of 1994, full of the promises of democratic unification and equality, had become tainted when read against the immediate realities of socio-economic injustices and state corruption. Similarly, South African directors and UK theatre institutions often aligned popular models of Shakespeare with national conceptions that appeared to speak more to a generalized past than specific and current local concerns. *Hamlet* thus provided some counterpoints to political and theatrical narratives that appeared increasingly insufficient to the present moment. In its improvized COVID-era format, and through its intentional treatment of familial intimacy, personal duty and state spectacle, the production constituted a different kind of Shakespearean performance. This is not without precedent; *Hamlet*'s challenges to vested power and memory resonate with other, less-documented productions and production details. Paying attention to these histories establishes a more expansive, inclusive view of the work of local theatre-makers. As in *Hamlet*, we encounter two kinds of legacy. In the foreground, there is an abundance of overarching narratives and established symbols. But, with an adjustment of focus, there is also the spectre of the personal, singular and specific. I have attempted to demonstrate such multi-natured legacies with a handful of examples as a starting point. If local engagements with Shakespeare remain a scholarly concern, the development of critical work will depend on the scope of the legacies (and lived experiences) to which we pay attention. Specifically, when we think about the complex phenomenon that is Shakespeare, there is much to be learned from theatre artists who engage with it regularly. Considered with attention, their works are key reflections on the local experiences drawn into constellation with Shakespeare. The result is a variety of models for navigating the tumultuous relationship between past and present, text and context; in performance, the inherent contradictions and ambiguities of this relationship may be held (and observed) in creative tension.

Notes

1. A kudu is a type of large antelope native to southern and eastern Africa known for its regal beauty. Male kudu have distinctive long, spiralled horns. These horns can be fashioned into musical instruments: the *Hamlet* production refers to the sound of a kudu horn being used at key moments in the play.
2. This pre-production history is also provided in Marguerite F. de Waal's '*Hamlet* 2021's Outrageous Fortune'.
3. Of the 132 productions listed, 128 have directors named; of these, 44 were directed by women, and another seven by women working with men counterparts.
4. For example, in *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* (1987), Martin Orkin argued for a reading of *King Lear* alongside the history of the Natives Land Act of 1913. In 1998, Nicholas Visser revisited Orkin's topic in a book chapter titled 'Shakespeare and Hanekom, *King Lear* and Land,' referencing the work of Derek Hanekom, Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs at the time of publication. More recently, Geoffrey Haresnape (2020) uses *King Lear* to frame the ongoing, beleaguered attempts to establish reparative land policies in '*Lear*, Land and Expropriation without Compensation'.
5. Setswana is the dominant indigenous language used in the North West province.

6. The three productions of *Caesar* were produced during the first years of Walter Chakela's artistic directorship at the Windybrow, where he had been appointed in 1993. After Matshikiza's direction of the play in 1994, Chakela and James Whyle directed the play in 1995 and 1996 respectively.
7. Kwaito is a genre of upbeat dance music that emerged from South African townships in the 1990s. It was influenced by a variety of local styles including modern house, hip hop and jazz.
8. A sangoma (from the isiZulu word *isàngoma*) is a traditional healer and diviner.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on Contributor

Marguerite F. de Waal is a lecturer at the University of Pretoria where she works in the Unit for Academic Literacy. She holds a PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand, which she completed in 2022. She has published in literary studies as well as language education. Her research interests include theatre, theatre history, academic literacy and extended curriculum programmes in South Africa.

ORCID

Marguerite F. de Waal http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7895-0626

Works Cited

Beard, Margot. '*King Lear* – a Production of the North West Arts Drama Youth Group'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 14(1), 2002: 59–60.
Chweneyagae, Presley. Personal communication. 3 Feb 2021.
Coetzee, Marié-Heleen. 'Shakespeare and Decolonisation: #Shakespearemustfall?'. *The Theatre Times*. 2017. Accessed online on 20 Jan 2021.
Coppen, Neil, director. *Hamlet*. Live recording, 2021. *Dropbox*. Accessed online on 15 Jul 2024.
de Waal, Marguerite. '*Hamlet* 2021's Outrageous Fortune'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 34(1), 2021: 53–56.
Edmunds, Gayle. 'An African Take on Shakespeare'. *The Citizen*. 2002. Accessed online on 1 Sep 2021.
Farber, Yaël, director. *SeZaR* at The Market Theatre, Johannesburg. Programme, 2002. Amazwi South African Museum of Literature, Makhanda.
Farber, Yaël, director. *SeZaR*: An Adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar'. Production proposal, 2001. Amazwi South African Museum of Literature, Makhanda.
Grootboom, Mpumelelo Paul. Personal communication. 29 Jan 2021.
Grootboom, Mpumelelo Paul, director. *King Lear*. Live recording, 2002. Personal collection of Loungo Masire.
Haresnape, Geoffrey. 'Lear, Land and Expropriation without Compensation'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 33(1), 2020: 57–63.
Hyland, Geoffrey. Personal communication. 24 Jul 2019.
Luwes, Nico, Thys Heydenrych and Esté Strydom. Personal communication. 25 Jul 2019.
Maake kaNcube, Sello. Personal communication. 27 Jan 2021.
Mabanga, Thebe. 'Raw, Intense Afro Bard'. *The Mail & Guardian*. 2002. Accessed online on 1 Sep 2021.
Masire, Loungo. Personal communication. 15 Feb 2021.
Matshikiza, John, director. *Julius Caesar* and the Windybrow Centre for the Arts, Johannesburg. Programme, 1994. Amazwi South African Museum of Literature, Makhanda.

Matshikiza, John. '*Measure for Measure*: A Very South African Scenario'. *The English Academy Review* 24(1), 2007: 134–41.

Morris, Sylvia. '*Julius Caesar*: Shakespeare's African Play'. *The Shakespeare Blog*. 2012. Accessed online on 7 Jan 2024.

Ndebele, Njabulo. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. Johannesburg: COSAW, 1991.

Orkin, Martin. *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Orkin, Martin. *Shakespeare Against Apartheid*. Craighall: AD Donker, 1987.

Roberts, Sarah. 'Caesar Reconfigured: An Ensemble Presentation of Improvised Permutations'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 26(1), 2014: 27–57.

Robinson, Helen. *Shakespeare at Maynardville*. Cape Town: Houghton House, 2005.

Sassen, Robyn. '*SeZaR* – Tragedy of Blood and Murder'. *The Jewish Times*. 2002. Accessed online on 1 Sep 2021.

Sichel, Adrienne. 'Toyi-toying around the Corpse of Eurocentrism'. *Cue*. 2001. Accessed online on 1 Sep 2021.

Stead, Steven. Personal communication. 3 Sep 2021.

Thurman, Chris. 'Sher and Doran's *Titus Andronicus* (1995): Importing Shakespeare, Exporting South Africa'. *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 18(1), 2006: 29–36.

Visser, Nicholas. 'Shakespeare and Hanekom, King Lear and Land: A South African Perspective'. In *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. Edited by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin. London: Routledge, 1998. 205–17.

Whyle, James. Personal communciation. 25 Jan 2021.

Appendix

The lists in this appendix have been put together from various sources: the Amazwi archives; reviews in *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*; various entries on ESAT; Helen Robinson's *Shakespeare at Maynardville*; articles by Sarah Roberts and Marié-Heleen Coetzee; communication with Geoffrey Hyland of the University of Cape Town and Nico Luwes, Thys Heydenrych and Esté Strydom of the University of the Free State; and interviews with Loungo Masire, Steven Stead, Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, and James Whyle. I have not included the annual for-schools productions of *Othello* and *Hamlet* by ThinkTheatre, which have been running since 2003, but for which I do not have detailed records. (It is unclear if some years featured only one or both of the two plays in the repertoire.) While the Port Elizabeth Shakespearean Festival is also an annual event, I have included only those for which the play and the director are known. Future research and interviews could produce complete accounts of both the PE Shakespearean Festival and ThinkTheatre productions.

General Productions List

Year	Production	Director	Details
1994	*The Tempest*	Roy Sargeant	Maynardville
	Julius Caesar	John Matshikiza	Windybrow Theatre
	Much Ado About Nothing	Linda-Louise Swain	PE Shakespearean Festival
	King Lear	Andrew Buckland	Rhodes University
	The Tempest	Andrew Buckland	Rhodes University
	Hamlet	David Peimer	University of the Witwatersrand
1995	*Titus Andronicus*	Gregory Doran	Market Theatre
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Patrick Sandford	Maynardville
	Macbeth	Craig Freimond	PACT Drama
	Julius Caesar	Walter Chakela	The Windybrow Theatre
1996	*The Taming of The Shrew*	Janice Honeyman	Maynardville
	Julius Caesar	James Whyle	The Windybrow Theatre
1997	*The Winter's Tale*	Mark Graham	Maynardville
	Twelfth Night	David Alcock	Rhodes University
	Hamlet	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	Macbeth	David Peimer, N. Krowitz and M. Garden	University of the Witwatersrand
1998	*Twelfth Night*	Clare Stopford	Maynardville
	A Comedy of Errors	Jacky Vermaas	Natal Technikon
	King Lear	James Whyle	Take Away Shakespeare Company
	Othello	Megan Willson	University of the Witwatersrand
1999	*Antony and Cleopatra*	Themi Venturas	Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
	As You Like It	Keith Grenville	Maynardville
	Antony and Cleopatra	James Whyle	Take Away Shakespeare Company
	Hamlet	Tina Johnson	University of the Witwatersrand
2000	*Romeo and Juliet*	Clare Stopford	Maynardville
	Twelfth Night	Ralph Lawson	Natal Playhouse
	Romeo and Juliet	Malcolm Purkey	University of the Witwatersrand
2001	*Hamlet*	Themi Venturas	Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
	Othello	Keith Grenville	Maynardville
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom	NW Arts Drama Youth Group
	The Merchant of Venice	Helen Flax	PE Shakespearean Festival
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Malcolm Purkey	University of the Witwatersrand
2002	*Macbeth*	Patrick Collyer	Kwasuka Theatre Company
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Fred Abrahamse	Maynardville
	King Lear	Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom	NW Arts Drama Youth Group
	The Taming of The Shrew	Helen Flax	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Macbeth	Garth Anderson	The Actor's Co-operative
	Othello	Garth Anderson	The Actor's Co-operative
	Twelfth Night	Malcolm Purkey	University of the Witwatersrand
2003	*The Tempest*	Brian Pearce	Durban University of Technology
	The Two Gentlemen of Verona	Marthinus Basson	Maynardville

(*Continued*)

Continued.

Year	Production	Director	Details
	Twelfth Night	Paige Newmark	Rhodes University
	King Lear	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	The Taming of The Shrew	Malcolm Purkey	University of the Witwatersrand
2004	*Macbeth*	Geoffrey Hyland	Maynardville
	Twelfth Night	Linda-Louise Swain	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Hamlet	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	The Tempest	Malcolm Purkey	University of the Witwatersrand
2005	*Much Ado About Nothing*	Fred Abrahamse	Maynardville
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Helen Flax	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Richard III	Linda-Louise Swain	PE Shakespearean Festival
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Mervyn McMurtry and Tamar Meskin	University of KwaZulu-Natal
	Macbeth	Megan Willson	University of the Witwatersrand
	The Winter's Tale	Paige Newmark	Unknown
2006	*Twelfth Night*	Geoffrey Hyland	Maynardville
	Much Ado About Nothing	Linda-Louise Swain	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Much Ado About Nothing	Sarah Roberts	University of the Witwatersrand
2007	*Romeo and Juliet*	Fred Abrahamse	Maynardville
	As You Like It	Paige Newmark	National Arts Festival
	Hamlet	Paige Newmark	National Arts Festival
	As You Like It	Helen Flax	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Hamlet	Garth Anderson and Claire Mortimer	The Playhouse Company
	Othello	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	Romeo and Juliet	Warona Seane	University of the Witwatersrand
2008	*The Merchant of Venice*	Roy Sargeant	Maynardville
	Othello	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	As You Like It	Tamar Meskin and Verne Munsamy	University of KwaZulu-Natal
2009	*Coriolanus*	Deborah Lutge	Durban University of Technology
	As You Like It	Geoffrey Hyland	Maynardville
	Romeo and Juliet	Helen Wilkins	PE Shakespearean Festival
	The Tempest	Janice Honeyman	Royal Shakespeare Company
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Mervyn NcMurty and Tamar Meskin	University of KwaZulu-Natal
	Romeo and Juliet	Nina Lucy Wilde	University of the Witwatersrand
2010	*Antony and Cleopatra*	Marthinus Basson	Maynardville
	Romeo and Juliet	Roy Sargeant	Siyasanga CT Company
	Othello	John Kani, Sarah Roberts	University of the Witwatersrand
2011	*The Taming of The Shrew*	Roy Sargeant	Maynardville
	Richard III	Fred Abrahamse	National Arts Festival
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Guy de Lancey	The Mechanicals
	Romeo and Juliet	Madelé Vermaak	Ubom! Drama Company
	Romeo and Juliet	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Greg Homann	University of the Witwatersrand
2012	*Comedy of Errors*	Matthew Wild	Maynardville
	King Lear	Guy de Lancey	The Mechanicals
2013	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*	Fred Abrahamse	Maynardville
	Richard III	Thys Heydenrych	University of the Free State
2014	*Richard III*	Lara Bye	Maynardville
	Titus Andronicus	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
	Hamlet	Thys Heydenrych	University of the Free State
2015	*Othello*	Fred Abrahamse	Maynardville
	Twelfth Night	Lesley Barnard	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Romeo and Juliet	Thys Heydenrych	University of the Free State
2016	*Much Ado About Nothing*	Deborah Lutge	Durban University of Technology
	Othello	Fred Abrahamse	Maynardville
	Coriolanus	Nikki Pilkington, Rohan Quince	National Children's Theatre
	The Tempest	Helen Flax	PE Shakespearean Festival
	All's Well That Ends Well	Geoffrey Hyland	University of Cape Town
2017	*Twelfth Night*	Geoffrey Hyland	Maynardville
	Much Ado About Nothing	Linda-Louise Swain	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Hamlet	Fred Abrahamse	Pieter Toerien Theatre
	Macbeth	Sean Redpath	Umoya Shakespeare Company
2018	*The Taming of The Shrew*	Tara Notcutt	Maynardville

(*Continued*)

Continued.

Year	Production	Director	Details
	Antony and Cleopatra	Neka da Costa	National Children's Theatre
	The Merchant of Venice	Helen Flax	PE Shakespearean Festival
	Macbeth	Fred Abrahamse	Pieter Toerien Theatre
2019	*Julius Caesar*	Thys Heydenrych	University of the Free State
	Richard III	Geoffrey Hyland	Maynardville
2021	*Hamlet*	Neil Coppen	KKNK Online

Productions in Translation

These are productions that were either fully or close-to-fully translated, whether into one language or several.

Year	Production	Director	Details
2005	*Diphoshophosho* (*A Comedy of Errors*)	Josias Dos Moleele	KKNK
2007	*Die Storm* (*The Tempest*)	Marthinus Basson	KKNK
2014	*'n Midsomernagdroom* (vir Kinders)(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)	Gerber and Marijda Kamper	University of the Free State
2015	*Macbeth: Slapeloos*	Marthinus Basson	Baxter Theatre
2016	*Mosiuoa* (*Hamlet*)	Unknown	UKZN #Shakespearemustfall? Festival
	Umabatha (*Macbeth*)	Josias Dos Moleele	UKZN #Shakespearemustfall? Festival
2019	*Umsebenzi Ka Bra Shakes*	N/A	Centre for the Less Good Idea
2021	*Macbeth*	N/A	Joburg Theatre

Adaptations

Year	Production	Director	Details
1994	*Shredded Shakespeare*	David Alcock	Rhodes University
2000	*Night Dream* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)	Andrew Buckland	Rhodes University
2001	*Leer* (*King Lear*)	Elsabe van Tonder	Rhodes University
	SeZar (*Julius Caesar*)	Yael Farber	National Arts Festival
2004	*Blood Will Have Blood* (*Macbeth*)	Ingrid Wylde	Ubom! Eastern Cape Drama Company
2005	*Hamlet Prince of Denmark*	Peter Krummeck	University of Cape Town
2007	*Hamlet Deconstructed*	Deborah Lutge	Durban University of Technology
2013	*Cardenio*	Roy Sargeant	Maynardville
	The Julius Caesar Project	Sarah Roberts	University of the Witwatersrand
2016	*The Past is Prologue*	Tamar Meskin	UKZN #Shakespearemustfall? Festival
2017	*DCoriolanus*	Myer Taub	University of Pretoria
2019	*Kunene and the King*	Janice Honeyman	RSC/Fugard Theatre