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0521477344 - *Players of Shakespeare 3: Further Essays in Shakespearian Performance* by
Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company

Edited by Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood

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This is the third volume of essays by actors with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Thirteen actors describe the Shakespearian roles they played in productions between 1987 and 1991. The contributors are Roger Allam, Simon Russell Beale, Brian Cox, Gregory Doran, Penny Downie, Ralph Fiennes, Deborah Findlay, Philip Franks, Anton Lesser, Maggie Steed, Sophie Thompson, Harriet Walter and Nicholas Woodeson. The plays covered include *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure* and important theatrical rarities such as *Cymbeline*, *Titus Andronicus*, *King John* and the *Henry VI* plays in the Royal Shakespeare Company's highly successful adaptation retitled *The Plantagenets*. The result is a glimpse into the working methods of a major theatre company as well as a stimulating commentary on the plays themselves. A brief biographical note is provided for each of the contributors and an introduction places the essays in the context of the Stratford and London stages and of the music and design for the particular productions.

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To the memory of our dear friend MAURICE DANIELS (1916–1993),
who died while this book was in proof and whose work with the
Royal Shakespeare Company did so much to bring academic and
theatrical Shakespearians together and thus to make possible
the *Players of Shakespeare* series, this volume is affectionately
dedicated.

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We are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce illustrations: The Shakespeare Centre Library: Joe Cocks Studio Collection for photographs nos. 2–7, 10–20, 25; Richard Mildenhall for 1, 21; Ivan Kyncl for 8, 9, 27, 28; John Haynes for 22, 23; Sarah Ainslie for 24; and Stephen Macmillan for 26.

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Preface

Explanations and excuses grow the more superfluous and transparent the more often one repeats the activity that originally provoked them. Readers of a third volume of RSC actors' essays on Shakespearian roles will thus no longer expect those responsible for bringing them together to account for their actions. This collection, like its predecessors, offers the actors' perspective on a series of roles presented in some recent RSC productions of Shakespeare's plays. The years covered by the volume are 1987 to 1991. The actors had all talked about their performances in courses at the Shakespeare Institute or the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford. As will be apparent, we have offered a cross-section of performances from the period covered, though with some attempt on this occasion to represent productions of rarely performed plays: *King John*, the *Henry VI* trilogy, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Cymbeline*. As in preceding volumes, a brief biographical note on the contributors, with emphasis on their Shakespearian work, appears at the beginning of each essay; at the end of the volume we provide a list of credits for the productions covered. In spite of the likelihood of being accused of inconsistency, we have departed from the practice of previous volumes of keying quotations to the Riverside Shakespeare, which is not an edition much used by actors. The text issued to RSC players in the rehearsal rooms is the New Penguin, and all quotations and references are therefore to these editions; in the case of *Titus Andronicus* and *Cymbeline*, two plays not yet available in the New Penguin series, references are to the new Arden texts.

We are grateful to the editors of *Shakespeare Quarterly* for permission to repeat in the Introduction to this volume some material that appeared first in the pages of their journal. We are grateful too, as ever, to colleagues at the Shakespeare Institute, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre for their help in the preparation of this book. We owe a particular debt to Sonja Dosanjh, the RSC Company Manager in Stratford, whose graciousness and efficiency do so much to create the

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PREFACE

appropriate circumstances for the friendly co-operation that exists between the Royal Shakespeare Company and Stratford's academic institutions.

R.J. R.S.
Stratford-upon-Avon