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978-0-521-79416-9 - *Players of Shakespeare 4: Further Essays in Shakespearian Performance* by
Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company

Edited by Robert Smallwood

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Players of Shakespeare 4

This is the fourth volume of essays by actors with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Twelve actors describe the Shakespearian roles they played in productions between 1992 and 1997. The contributors are Christopher Luscombe, David Tennant, Michael Siberry, Richard McCabe, David Troughton, Susan Brown, Paul Jesson, Jane Lapotaire, Philip Voss, Julian Glover, John Nettles, and Derek Jacobi. The plays covered include *The Merchant of Venice*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth*, among others. The essays divide equally among comedies, histories and tragedies, with emphasis among the comedies on those notoriously difficult 'clown' roles. 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.

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Preface

This collection, like its three predecessors, brings together a series of essays by members of the Royal Shakespeare Company. The essays discuss thirteen performances in eleven productions between 1992 and 1997 and the actors who write them had all talked about the roles with members of the programme of courses jointly run by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham at the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford. All but one of the roles (as well as five of the plays) are new to the *Players of Shakespeare* series and the exception (the title role in *Richard III*) has not previously been considered in a production of the play independent of the *Henry VI* trilogy. The essays divide equally among comedies, histories and tragedies, with emphasis among the comedies on those notoriously difficult ‘clown’ roles which have figured little in earlier volumes in the series. The four essays on histories concentrate their focus on two plays, in each case contrasting the perspective of the titular character with that of his principal female antagonist. Among the essays on the tragedies are two on Roman plays which have not previously featured in *Players of Shakespeare* volumes. As in the preceding volume, references and quotations are from the New Penguin edition of the plays, the text normally issued to actors in RSC rehearsal rooms. A biographical note on the writer, with emphasis on work for the RSC and on Shakespearian roles elsewhere, appears at the beginning of each essay, and at the end of the volume there is a list of credits for the productions covered.

I am grateful to the editors of *Shakespeare Quarterly* and *Shakespeare Survey* for permission to repeat in the Introduction to this volume material that appeared first in the pages of their journals. I am grateful also to colleagues at the Shakespeare Centre and the Shakespeare Institute for their support, and particularly to Sylvia Morris of the Shakespeare Centre Library for generous assistance with the illustrations, to Margaret Walker for remarkable patience with some difficult manuscripts and to Paul Edmondson for help with one of the essays. Sonja Dosanjh,

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PREFACE

the RSC Company Manager, still finds time, among all her other responsibilities, to organize, with unfailing friendliness and efficiency, the elaborate programme of involvement of members of the RSC in university courses at the Shakespeare Centre from which the essays in this volume ultimately derive. To her, once again, my grateful thanks.

R.S.

The Shakespeare Centre
Stratford-upon-Avon