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978-0-521-86234-9 - Shakespeare and Amateur Performance: A Cultural History

Michael Dobson

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PERFORMANCE

From the *Hamlet* acted on a galleon off Africa to the countless outdoor productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that now defy each English summer, *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance* explores the unsung achievements of those outside the theatrical profession who have been determined to do Shakespeare themselves. Based on extensive research in previously unexplored archives, this generously illustrated and lively work of theatre history enriches our understanding of how and why Shakespeare's plays have mattered to generations of rude mechanicals and aristocratic dilettantes alike: from the days of the Theatres Royal to those of the Little Theatre Movement, from the pioneering *Winter's Tale* performed in eighteenth-century Salisbury to the *Merchant of Venice* performed by Allied prisoners for their Nazi captors, and from the how-to book which transforms Mercutio into Yankee Doodle to the Napoleonic counter-spy who used *Richard III* as a tool of surveillance.

MICHAEL DOBSON is Professor of Shakespeare Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London. He comments regularly on Shakespeare for the BBC, the *London Review of Books* and other publications, and he has written programme notes for the RSC, Shakespeare's Globe, the Old Vic, the Sheffield Crucible and Peter Stein. His books include *The Making of the National Poet* (1992), *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (with Stanley Wells, 2001, winner of the Bainton Prize in 2002), *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (with Nicola Watson, 2002) and *Performing Shakespeare's Tragedies Today* (2006). Between 1999 and 2007 he reviewed every major English production of a Shakespeare play for *Shakespeare Survey*.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

John Whaley Berriman (1902–1981)

OF THE MIDDLESBROUGH LITTLE THEATRE AND THE STOKESLEY AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY,

June Dobson née Berriman (1932–2003)

AND

Derek Dobson (1927–2009)

OF THE STOKESLEY AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY AND THE SOUTH KINSON PLAYERS.

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