

## Shakespeare for Freedom



*Shakespeare for Freedom* presents a powerful, plausible and political argument for Shakespeare's meaning and value. It ranges across the breadth of the Shakespeare phenomenon, offering a new interpretation not just of the characters and plays, but also of the part they have played in theatre, criticism, civic culture and politics. Its story includes a glimpse of 'Freetown' in *Romeo and Juliet*, which comes to life in the 1769 Stratford Jubilee; the Shakespearean careers of the Leicester Chartist, Cooper, and the Hungarian hero, Kossuth; Hegel's recognition of Shakespearean freedom as the modern breakthrough; its fatal effects in America; the disgust it inspired in Tolstoy; its rehabilitation by Ted Hughes, and its obscure centrality in the 2012 Olympics. Ultimately, it issues a positive Shakespearean prognosis for freedom as a vital (in both senses), unending struggle.

*Shakespeare for Freedom* shows why Shakespeare has mattered for four hundred years, and why he still matters today.

EWAN FERNIE is Professor at the Shakespeare Institute (University of Birmingham) in Stratford-upon-Avon. He is joint editor of the *Shakespeare Now!* series and his books include *Shame in Shakespeare*, *Spiritual Shakespeares*, *Reconceiving the Renaissance*, *Redcrosse: Remaking Religious Poetry for Today's World*, *The Demonic: Literature and Experience*, *Thomas Mann and Shakespeare*, and the novel he co-authored with Simon Palfrey, *Macbeth, Macbeth*, which the philosopher Slavoj Žižek called 'a miracle, an instant classic'. In 2011, he co-wrote a civic liturgy for St George's Day which was performed in major cathedrals; and he is currently co-writing a play after Shakespeare's *Pericles* about immigration and sexual politics for the Royal Shakespeare Company. He is also working on the forgotten challenge of progressive culture in nineteenth-century Birmingham.

# Shakespeare for Freedom

## Why the Plays Matter



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*For Theo and Kirsty*

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