

The Springfield College Shakespeare Productions

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Introduction

Springfield College of Education was a teacher training college in Durban during the apartheid years. It was intended as a college for Indian students and it opened in 1951. A remarkable tradition of Shakespeare production developed at the College during the next twenty years. The College finally closed in 1999, following a merger with other colleges of education. This whole history takes place against the background of apartheid.¹ Springfield was originally a training college for Indian and 'coloured' students, but the coloured students were re-located to Bechet High School and Training College in 1956 (*Springfield Training College Magazine [STCM]* 1.4 7). This was in accordance with the Nationalist policy of 'separate development'.² Originally the college came under the control of the United Party dominated Natal Provincial Administration and formed part of the Natal Education Department, under the same Director of Education as the white government schools in Natal. In 1966, control of Springfield College transferred to the Director of Indian Education (*Aurora* 2.4 1). Henceforward, there were some controversial political appointments to senior positions in Indian Education.³

Rohan Quince, in his book on Shakespeare performance in South Africa during apartheid, dates the beginning of Indian Shakespeare productions in South Africa to David Horner's *The Comedy of Errors* at what was to become the University of Durban-Westville in 1968 (Quince 82). As we shall see, these beginnings go back to the Springfield Shakespeare productions from the 1950s, although Thayalan Reddy has dated Indian Shakespeare productions in South Africa to even earlier, to productions at Sastri College in the 1930s.⁴

The ethos of the College

Three figures stand out in this history: Charles Shields, Rosalie Farrant and Rhoda Rowlands, all of whom were lecturers at the college. Shields was a lecturer in History, Farrant in English and Rowlands in Art Education. In each case, they became Senior Lecturers and Heads of their respective departments. They shared an interest in the theatre and particularly in the works of Shakespeare. Between them, they mounted ten Shakespeare productions in which either Shields or Farrant acted as producer, with Rowlands as designer and sometimes co-producer. It is from Rowlands's detailed records that this history is drawn. They include a large collection of production photographs (which would be worth publishing separately). Other members of staff also gave their active support to the productions, including Joyce Bullen, Arthur Galway, Ben Persad, Mrs. I. Dunster, Mr. M. Mathir, Mr. T. Seebadri and Mr. R.D. Locke.

Here we should also mention Alex Levine, the Vice Principal from 1951-1954 and the Principal and Rector from 1954-1969. Levine took great personal interest in the productions. In his record of the history of Springfield College, he pays tribute to the producers, recalls with appreciation the 1952 Old Vic production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (which was performed at the college) and gives an example of his own involvement in a production of *The Merchant of Venice*, when the actor playing Shylock was injured and he arranged for him to have specialist treatment so that he was able to go on with the evening performance (Levine [A] 6). He was a man of liberal principles and in his account of Springfield College, written in the early 1980s during his retirement, he asked: "Will the day come, I wonder, when all the Universities and Colleges of Education will be fully and harmoniously integrated, all educating for a multi-faceted South African Nation?" (Levine [A] 1).

During the first twenty years of the college's existence, Shakespeare featured in some way or another in virtually every year, for even in those years when full productions were not mounted, selected scenes were produced. For example, in 1954 and 1963, programmes of extracts from Shakespeare were directed by Shields, while in 1965, Shields directed scenes from *Julius Caesar* that were mounted in tandem with T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (directed by Devi Bughwan).⁵ The entire production was entitled *Murder Most Foul*. In 1962, Mitchell Girls High School performed *Twelfth Night* at the College (*STCM* 1.10 5), while in 1965, "Professor E. Sneddon's Players" presented *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Brochure* [A] 8). A production of *Twelfth Night* performed by the Transvaal College of Education (a sister college for Indian teachers) was brought to Springfield in 1970 by Patricia Lee (Mohideen n.p). The students also saw films of Shakespeare's plays.⁶ Issues of the college Magazine indicate that there was a fair amount of other activity relating to Shakespeare: various performances of excerpts from plays, Shakespearean readings and at least one lecture, given by Rosalie Farrant, to celebrate "Shakespeare Day" on the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964 (*STCM* 2.2 5).

The question arises as to whether this was a case of English lecturers imposing their tastes on Indian students – yet the evidence seems to suggest that this was not the case. In the collection of programmes, photographs and memorabilia relating to the productions, there are numerous letters of appreciation from members of the casts. The plays were mounted by the Dramatic Society and membership of the society was voluntary.⁷ Furthermore, the production photographs give evidence of the huge involvement of the Indian students. In one photograph from *As You Like It*,



Figure 1. *As You Like It*, dir. Rosalie Farrant (1957)

taken during a performance, members of the cast are seen backstage, watching with enjoyment the performance of the actors onstage. The productions could not have been mounted without the enthusiastic support of the students.

Early productions: the 1950s

The first Shakespeare production at Springfield was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Charles Shields, in June 1952. Unfortunately there is very little record of this production, apart from some telling photographs which show members of the cast in the College grounds. There's a good photograph of Puck, who is bare-chested and in tights, with a garland on his head. Theseus wears a Grecian helmet, while one actress appears to be distinctive in that she has been photographed separately, although it is not clear whether she is Hippolyta or Titania. In some productions, these two roles are played by the same actress, but two actresses were cast in this production. Shortly afterwards, in August 1952, the Old Vic Company presented their own professional production of the play at the College. The Old Vic production had been directed by Tyrone Guthrie and was one of three Shakespeare plays which the company brought to South Africa during their 1952 tour, the others being *Othello* and *Macbeth*.⁸

Another director involved in the early years of the college was Roy Warriner. He directed programmes of one-act plays in 1952 and 1953, while in 1954 he directed Shaw's *The Man of Destiny* (a substantial play, one act or not). These productions stimulated interest in the theatre and helped in developing Springfield's tradition of performance. It is significant too that the

emphasis on Shakespeare was counter-balanced by plays of a more contemporary vintage. According to Thayalan Reddy, Warriner had previously been a central figure in the performance of Shakespeare plays at Sastri College in the 1930s.

In 1953, Charles Shields directed *Romeo and Juliet*. P.H. Naidoo wrote in the first issue of the College magazine: “A Shakespearian play never fails to interest the audience and this production was no exception.” (*STCM* 1 16) On one evening, the audience included “the Administrator of Natal, Mr. D.G. Shepstone and the Director of Education and Mrs Booyesen”. Earlier in the year, Warriner had produced his programme of one act plays. Naidoo comments, “A feature of both productions was the superb costumes and excellent stage properties, for which Miss Rowlands, the producers and their helpers were responsible.” An amusing story is recounted in the *Special Commemorative Brochure* of 1999 concerning the opening night of *Romeo and Juliet*. The officer in charge of the Fire Department forbade the use of flaming torches inside the hall. An argument broke out between Shields and William Anderson (the first Principal of the College – he had previously been the Principal at Sastri), but eventually a compromise was reached. According to this account, “Shields invited the Fire Chief for drinks after the show!” (*Brochure* [B] 16).

In 1956, Rosalie Farrant directed *The Tempest*. A report in the College Magazine of that year, entitled “Behind the Scenes – Backstage”, written by L. Pillay, details some of the anxieties of the production (for instance, when the actor playing Caliban only arrived at the last moment for a performance). There were technical worries as well: “The music recorder was a source of much anxiety. It was temperamental and did exactly as it pleased, always catching someone on the wrong foot. It seemed bewitched – bewitched! Well, didn’t it belong to Prospero’s magic isle?” (*STCM* 1.4 24) The photographs give evidence of a fairly conventional production, elegant rather than darkly dramatic, which is what one would expect of an English production of this period. The emphasis is on costume rather than spectacular illusion, which would have been beyond the scope of the Springfield Hall. ⁹



Figure 2. *Romeo and Juliet*, dir. Charles Shields (1953). John Prakasim as Romeo and Sakunthala Perumal as Juliet
Photographer: Dennis Govender

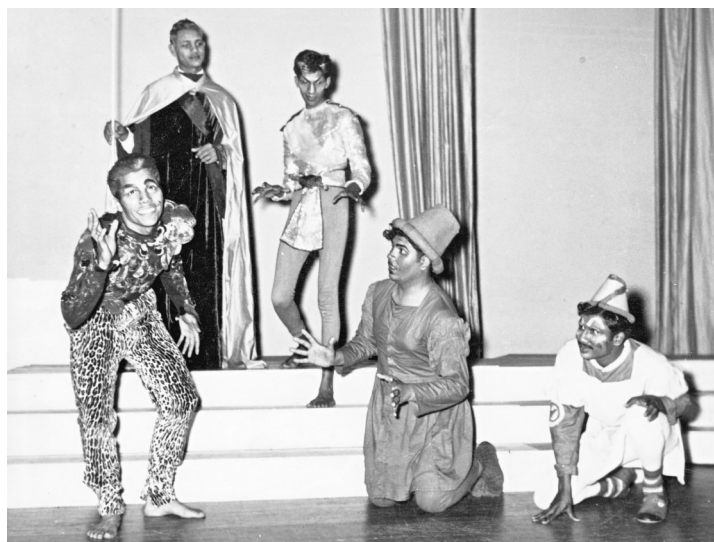


Figure 3. *The Tempest*, dir. Rosalie Farrant (1956)
Photographer: John Desmond

The following year, Rosalie Farrant directed *As You Like It*. M.E.J. Peters wrote:

We went to the ‘country’ on this year’s play, and the ever green freshness of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* certainly drew crowds of the townfolk there as it has been doing for over three hundred years. Abandoning themselves to helpless laughter or solemn contemplation alike they gave every indication that they enjoyed it ... almost as much as we did.

(*STCM* 1.5 27)

The production was, however, not without its ‘moments’. As recounted by “B.D.S.”, in a piece entitled, “How Sour Sweet Music is”, on the final night, when Hymen was preparing to sing, the tape recorder (again) refused to co-operate: “While the operator and others off stage murmur to each other, Touchstone seems suddenly to acquire the wit Shakespeare intended him to have – and begins to put Audrey’s hair into ‘court order’ – holding the audience’s delighted attention.” (*STCM* 1.5 29-33)

Shields interspersed these Shakespeare productions with other costume dramas including James Elroy Flecker’s *Hassan* in 1955. He and Rhoda Rowlands produced Edward Knoblock’s *Kismet* in 1958. These productions brought an ‘Eastern’ flavour to the developing theatrical tradition. In many of the productions, the emphasis on historically correct costumes and designs was of importance, as indicated in the visual record.

Productions in the 1960s

These productions were a foretaste of what was to come. With the approval of audiences, students, colleagues and the principal, Shields and Rowlands mounted their most ambitious project in 1960, *The Life and Death of King John*. Shields was an historian who wrote several school history text books.¹⁰ It is inevitable that he found the historical aspects of Shakespeare most interesting. In the College magazine of that year, a report on the English Dramatic Society appeared, written by the secretary, G.V. Thatiah:

Mr. Shields and Miss. Rowlands brought to life Shakespeare’s historical play, *The Life and Death of King John*. Over two thousand five hundred children and adults witnessed this our centenary production and were treated to a feast of superb acting, colourful costumes and gay scenery. The play was a tremendous success and was highly acclaimed by the live-theatre-loving public.

(*STCM* 1.8 52)

The promptbook for the production, belonging to M.R. Rowlands, is based on the Penguin Edition of 1957. It indicates a number of cuts, beginning in Act 1. Occasional lines and phrases are cut and words are sometimes changed. Hence, “diffidence” becomes “suspicion” (1.1.66), while extra words are sometimes added, for example, “her son” becomes, “her son, Arthur” (1.1.34). Each time the King is mentioned, the promptbook adds which King it is, for example, “King Richard” (1.1.103). These changes and additions tend to ignore the notion that the lines are written in blank verse and that any extra beats, or shortening of lines, upsets the rhythm. As the scene progresses, the cuts become more numerous and the entire last section of the scene, which includes the Bastard’s soliloquy, is omitted. This long section includes the scene with Lady Falcounbridge. Hence, in Shields’s production, “Brother adieu, good fortune come to thee” (1.1.182) becomes the last line of the scene – a pity, for Phillip the Bastard is one of the most interesting characters in the play and anticipates Edmund in *King Lear*.

Another example of Shields’s amendment of Shakespeare’s text comes in King John’s speech, beginning, “Sirrah, your brother is legitimate ...” (1.1.117-130). The following lines are considerably altered:

....tell me, how if my brother
Who as you say took pains to get this son,
Had of your father claim’d this son for his,

Insooth, good friend, your father might have kept
 This calf, bred from his cow from all the world:
 Insooth he might: then if he were my brother's,
 My brother might not claim him, nor your father
 Being none of his, refuse him: this concludes ...

King John's speech here is an incredibly long and convoluted sentence, so Shields changes the lines quoted above to read: "had your father so wished he could have forced my brother to take his own, since he did not, he cannot now disown him" (*Promptbook* [A] 29). The speech then concludes with the last two lines of Shakespeare's original (1.1.129-130). In the second act, the opening speech of Lewis the Dauphin (the Dolphin in this edition) is re-allocated to King Phillip while 40% of the speech that follows is excised (2.11-17). This may strike one as quite a cavalier way of approaching Shakespeare. Speeches cannot simply be re-allocated because each of Shakespeare's characters has a distinctive way of speaking, although perhaps this is more the case in his mature work than in earlier plays. There may, however, have been pragmatic reasons for this directorial choice.

Thatiah gives an account of the play which emphasises its historical importance:

King John depicts life during the thirteenth century, which was one of the greatest periods of medieval history: an age of knights clad in chain mail, of the beginning of heraldry, of long bows, of political marriages, of great cathedral buildings, of the beginning of the demand for democratic liberties that have now become recognised the world over. It is also the period of the Crusades and the zenith of the power of the Papacy. The pageantry and papal eminence are reflected in the play.

(*TSCM* 1.8 52)

This paragraph, which comes directly from the Programme, would have been written by Shields. The account concludes with a tribute to the producers of the play: "Working under them was a pleasure and an education" (53). Members of the audience also expressed their appreciation; for example, a Standard Six pupil from Hillside Indian School wrote to the Principal on behalf of the class, saying that their teacher, "had already read the play to us and we had no difficulty in understanding it". She remarks on some actors' performances, including Queen Elinor, King John, Prince Lewis and Arthur, but especially singles out the actress playing Queen Constance for praise: "Her portrayal of a mother's part was so natural that we were moved by her speaking. She portrayed a real mother's feelings."¹¹ Joan Ross, a prominent educationist, wrote to Levine saying, "We felt that the production completely maintained the high standard that is usual in these plays, and that the costumes, if anything were even more beautiful than ever before, quite agreeing with your statement that in that respect Miss Rowlands is a genius." (Ross n.p)

In 1962, Shields directed *The Merchant of Venice*. In the Programme notes, the director writes that some actors and critics portray Shylock "as an inhuman wretch, incapable of pity" while others, "like ourselves, see in his sufferings and failings a great plea for toleration" (*Programme* [A] n.p). Sathiaprem Pillay wrote in the College magazine: "The production was well received and we believe that the lesson of tolerance which it sets out to teach was understood by most" (*STCM* 1.10 43). Just as the phrase, "democratic liberties" had a resonance in the college report on *The Life and Death of King John*, so the word "tolerance" had a special meaning in South Africa in 1962. It is interesting too that a play dramatising a conflict between Christians and Jews should have been staged at an Indian Teacher Training College (with a Jewish Principal), where a great many of the students were from Hindu or Muslim backgrounds. This was an early example of 'inter-cultural theatre'.

In 1964, Shields directed another ambitious historical production, *Henry IV Part One*. The promptbook for the production belonging to M.R. Rowlands uses French's Acting Edition as a basic text. Once again, as in the promptbook for *The Life and Death of King John*, some rather curious methods of cutting are in evidence – for example, the very opening lines of the play: "So shaken as we are, so wan with care ..." (1.1.1-4). The play effectively begins with, "No more the

thirsty entrance of this soil ...” (1.1.5-9) and the first sentence of the King’s speech is omitted, yet these are some of the most memorable lines of the play, framing the action. These lines also link the play with the desolate tone of the final scene of *Richard II*. Further lines in the speech are omitted, including some striking images: “meteors of a troubled heaven”, “intestine shock” and “civil butchery” (1.1.10-18). In this first scene, we also notice Shields’s penchant for substituting names: “That ever-valiant and approved Scot”, becomes, “That ever-valiant Earl of Douglas” (1.1.54), while throughout the play references to “Percy” are changed to “Hotspur”. As the play progresses, the rationale for the cuts becomes more comprehensible; for instance, the entire scene at the Inn Yard in Rochester (2.1) is omitted, but this makes sense in a shortened version. Indeed, French’s Acting Edition indicates that the scene can be completely cut out (*Promptbook* [B] 17).

The production was mounted to celebrate the quatercentenary of Shakespeare’s birth. According to the College magazine, “In all, about 4000 persons were entertained, which is a not inconsiderable achievement” (*Aurora* 2.2 23). The writer singles out the costumes for special praise:

Working in close collaboration with Mr. Shields and responsible for the magnificent costumes and much of the scenery was Miss Rowlands. In years past Miss Rowlands has achieved miracles but this year she surpassed herself in her planning and execution particularly of the suits of armour. Teams of young people worked for weeks under her guidance and were themselves amazed at the results. Experienced theatre goers, who have seen professional productions in many parts of the world said that never before had they seen such convincing suits of armour.

Again, this report is corroborated by a letter to Rhoda Rowlands from Maureen Wright:

You are not the sort of person to hurl thoughtless adulation at but believe me I think your production a great and fascinating success. When I think of the struggle, the ingenuity and the personal effort you lavish on these productions I am appalled. But you do not get satisfaction merely from the vast effort but from the most obvious splendid result. I am certain your perfectionist standards were not reached in *your* opinion but your audience was delighted. The heartiest congratulations...

(Wright n.p)

Rosalie Farrant directed *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1965 and *Macbeth* in 1966. The photographs for the production of *Much Ado About Nothing* are some of the most dramatic in the collection belonging to M.R. Rowlands. This may be thanks to an excellent photographer or to the quality of the performance itself.¹² All the actors look thoroughly engaged by their roles, while the acting looks realistic. The costumes, which would not have been out of place in a Renaissance court, are extremely beautiful, while the actors are actually acting and not posing for the camera. This is true too of some, but by no means all of the other Springfield Shakespeare productions. There are also some fine dramatic photographs of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, but the photographs of *Much Ado About Nothing* are superior to all of them.



Figure 4.1 *Much Ado About Nothing*, dir. Rosalie Farrant (1965)

In the same year as that *Much Ado About Nothing* production, Shields gave an address, entitled “Producing Shakespeare”, which was later published in *The Mentor* (a periodical of the Natal Teachers’ Society). He begins by recommending French’s acting editions of Shakespeare and then goes on to talk about casting. He notes the difference between acting and speech: “To my mind, casting is a two-fold problem, the problem of *acting ability* and the problem of the *perfect voice*.” (Shields [A] 9) After discussing the problem in relation to cinema and opera, he explains how he solves the problem: “I tackle the voice first, after which acting ability more or less decides itself on the assumption – not always a safe guide mind you – that if a person can say the word properly which implies understanding, gesture more or less comes naturally with the aid of a few simple rules”. He begins by holding auditions and asking the volunteers to sight read a relatively easy passage from the play:

It is essential that it be *sight-reading*; for in this way I sort the goats from the sheep; defects are immediately indicated: lack of articulation, proper pronunciation, lack of enunciation, lack of word rhythm, shibboleths, canting voices, the loud but unmelodious voice; the *tenor*, the *baritone*, the *soprano*, the *contralto*; for my aim is to pick a *vocal symphony*: heroes and heroines being tenors, baritones and sopranos, while the villains are bass and contralto.

(Shields [A] 9-10)

As the auditions progress, so the passages are made more difficult until “an orchestra of voices” has been assembled. He then turns his attention to the question of acting and quotes extensively from Hamlet’s advice to the Players, with variations of his own: “Speak the speech, I pray you, as Shakespeare wrote, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief the Liverpudlian boys spoke his lines.” (Shields [A]10)

It will be recalled that in 1965/6, the Beatles were taking the world by storm, much to the disapproval of many in the older generation. Shields then discusses the question of staging and pays tribute to his designers. He writes, “I might add that costume implies archery, armour, fencing, dancing, hair styles, make-up, period furniture, regalia, jewellery, footwear, head gear, ritual and sorcery.” (Shields [A] 11). Finally he turns to the question of lighting and writes with insight about the different kinds of lighting which Shakespeare’s plays require. Of course, the Springfield Hall was very



Figure 4.2 *Much Ado About Nothing*, dir. Rosalie Farrant (1965)



Figure 5. The principal actors from *The Merchant of Venice*, dir. Charles Shields (1962)
Photographer: Bala Govender

limited in terms of lighting facilities and modern theatres allow a much wider range of options. However, he is most perceptive in noticing Shakespeare's use of natural light, especially torches and candles, and believes that Shakespeare's greatest scenes are by candlelight. He concludes by giving several examples from *The Merchant of Venice* and ends with this quotation of Portia's lines:

That light we see is burning in my hall.
How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

(*The Merchant of Venice* 5.1. 89-91)

When Shields retired in 1967, he was presented with a scroll, which celebrated his interest in English History and Literature. The scroll, with finely crafted medieval style lettering, takes as its basic idea the notion of a Knight going on a pilgrimage and refers to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, yet it also includes many quotations from the Shakespeare productions Shields had directed.¹³ The art work for the scroll was carried out by Rhoda Rowlands and the text was prepared by Jessie "Det" Glynn, a distinguished figure in her own right (she was involved in the anti-apartheid struggle and, after leaving Springfield, lived in London, where she was a highly active member of the exiled African National Congress).

Rosalie Farrant continued the Springfield Shakespeare tradition with a production of *Twelfth Night* in 1969. A review in the College magazine of that year included this account:

Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek and the Jester seemed to share their conspiracies and mirth with the audience and the last-mentioned created real empathy with both his humorous and lyrical songs. Maria introduced a feminine note into this general glee and her gulling of Malvolio brought the house down. Perhaps it was Malvolio's misplaced vanity that touched a chord of sympathy in the audience and made him 'the hero' of the play.

(*Aurora* 2.7 33)

Farrant retired in 1972 and, on the occasion, Alex Levine (in retirement in Israel) wrote a tribute to her which included reference to her Shakespeare productions: "None who took part in, and few who witnessed, her staging of a Shakespeare play will ever forget the experience. The great master was approached with understanding and reverence." (Levine [B] 10)

Wider influence and the literary record

A question arises as to whether there is any link between these Springfield Shakespeare productions and Mr. Sonny Venkatrathnam's interest in Shakespeare, which resulted in the much-celebrated "Robben Island Bible". As far as I can ascertain, Mr. Venkatrathnam was not directly associated with the Springfield College Shakespeare productions. According to Ashwin Desai, "Venkatrathnam's interest in Shakespeare was sparked by an extended essay he wrote in his final year at the University of Natal that focussed on Shakespeare's jesters" (Desai 14). Nevertheless, English literature was highly valued among educated Indians during this period. This appreciation went far beyond Shakespeare. For instance, in 1963, a professional company of Indian actors, the Durban Academy of Theatre Arts, founded by Krishna Shah, produced Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* in Durban under the direction of Doreen Donnelly. Obviously, there was an audience to support such ventures. The high value placed on theatrical works of a literary nature is also reflected in the various productions of plays by Rabindranath Tagore during this same period.¹⁴ If any broader influence of the Springfield College Shakespeare productions is difficult to substantiate, they certainly had an influence among students and staff. This is reflected in several pieces of writing inspired by Shakespeare and published in the College magazine. These range from an essay entitled "Why Shakespeare in 1967?" by R. Mather (*Aurora* 2.5 33-35), to a number of poems, sometimes published "With Apologies to Shakespeare" or simply "With Apologies".¹⁵

These pieces were in some instances prompted by the productions, and often took the form of parody, for example, R. Mackerdhaj's "Applied Quotations" uses lines from *As You Like It*, applying them to members of the cast of that year's production of the play (*STCM* 1.5 27-29). There's a delightful parody of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" speech, entitled "Open Wider, Please", by E.A. Haffejee, although it's not possible to tie this in to a particular production. Hamlet's opening line becomes, "To have it out or not – that is the question" (*STCM* 1.10 35). In the same year, an untitled poem by K. Chengia appeared, parodying the song from Act Four of *Cymbeline*, which becomes, "Fear no more the Science Master's fury..." (65). A poem by J.S. Maharaj entitled "A Warning (with Apologies)" urges students to attend to their studies and refers to five students who did not read their *King Lear* and had to repeat the year (65). H. Sayed's poem, "Despair (with apologies to Shakespeare)" parodies Macbeth's "Is this a dagger I see before me..." which, related to examinations, becomes, "Are these the questions I see before me?" (*Aurora* 2.3 39). Again, one cannot tie it to a particular production as *Macbeth* was produced only in the following year. In 1969, R. Vawda and R. Mather wrote "A Skit on the S.R.C. (With Apologies to Shakespeare)", which is also a parody, this time of the opening Chorus from *Henry V* (*Aurora* 2.7 15). Unfortunately, the poem is rather cryptic and difficult to follow, without knowing more about the circumstances of the time. Perhaps these poems will one day find their way into an anthology of South African Indian writing inspired by Shakespeare.

Whether or not the productions directly stimulated the writing, students were clearly thinking about Shakespeare for, even in essays on other topics, an idea suggested by Shakespeare may appear; for example, H. Bindapersad's essay, "Man: the Psychological Being" expresses an idea about the relationship between personality and body type, stimulated by Caesar's observation of Cassius (*STCM* 1.10 13-15). Finally, Mather's essay, "Why Shakespeare in 1967?" is worth discussion as it gives insight into the popularity of Shakespeare among both staff and students at the college. Mather writes, "Shakespeare's works reveal a mind rich in the knowledge of his fellow creatures with their greatness and their faults; he understood men and women and the motives that lie behind their actions." (*Aurora* 2.5 33) The writer gives examples of characters from the plays, arguing for Shakespeare's universality: "It is universally recognised that his characters partake of that nature which belongs to all men." She also refers to Shakespeare's women: "Shakespeare's women are all universal women, not necessarily English. But they are individuals, not types. These women belonging to the world of poetry and romance, have the warmth and vitality and naturalness of ordinary women..." (35). The idea of Shakespeare's "universality" has fallen into disfavour today but it should be remembered that in 1967 it was a notion that ran counter to the ideology of apartheid, which promoted not the universality of human nature but the differences separating the race groups.

Conclusion

After Alex Levine's retirement, there was a striking decline in the number of Shakespeare productions at the college; during the 1970s, Shakespeare went out of favour (although *Romeo and Juliet* was produced in 1977 under the direction of M.F. Cassim). There was still lots of theatrical activity, and many other plays were produced under various directors.¹⁶ Worthwhile modern plays were produced – like Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1970), Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1973) and Anouilh's *Antigone* (1976), all directed by T. Seebadri¹⁷ – but there was a noticeable decline in the frequency of such productions. Instead, musicals, theme programmes and variety shows (all valuable in themselves) became the order of the day. Why this should be the case is difficult to assess. It seems to be in line with a general 'dumbing down' of culture throughout the country during the 1970s. Many intellectuals were leaving the country. The cultural boycott against South Africa was taking effect. Television, which was introduced in 1975, was competing with theatre, as had not been the case previously. An important factor was that Indian Education had come under direct government control and Shakespeare was less highly regarded than before. Perhaps the government did not

think that performing Shakespeare was a priority for Indian teachers. A further factor may have been the opening of the Asoka Theatre at the University of Durban-Westville in 1972. Indian Shakespeare productions could be much better staged at such a theatre than at the Springfield College Hall. The fact that the Shakespeare tradition did not continue at the college into the 1980s and beyond should not, however, cloud our sense of the educational achievements of Springfield College during the 1950s and 1960s, and the rich legacy of Shakespeare performance which developed under these dedicated teachers.

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NOTES

1. The early history of Indian education in Natal goes beyond the scope of this article, but an important source of information is "Indian Education 1860-1950" in a commemorative brochure entitled, *Silver Jubilee 1925-1950 Natal Indian Teachers' Society* (1950: 9-17).

2. However, "In the late 1950s and 60s, Coloured students were allowed to register for Matric + 2 years (M2) and Matric + 3 years (M3) diplomas as these were not offered at Bechet College for Coloureds" (*Special Commemorative Brochure* 13). The evidence seems inconsistent here, but this may reflect an inconsistency in the implementation of government policy

3. For instance, the appointment of G.Krogg as Director of Indian Education in 1975, resulted in an article entitled "Appointment of Krog Storm" in *The Daily News*. Amichand Rajbansi voiced his anger at the lack of consultation, while Y.S. Chinsamy of the SAIC is reported as saying, "This appointment has been made against the wishes of the Indian community" (*The Daily News* 1st May, 1975).

4. This insight was expressed by Thayalan Reddy in his Keynote Address, "An Afro-Indian Perspective of Shakespearean productions in KwaZulu Natal", *A Shakespeare Retrospective*, The Indian Cultural Centre, Consulate General of India, Durban, 26 October 2012.

5. In 1954, a scene from *The Life and Death of King John* was performed at the College. In 1963, extracts from *Henry V* and *Hamlet* were performed together with two one-act plays. This proved to be a popular programme and "some 5000 persons saw the show" (*STCM* 2.1 32-33). The programme was also performed in Pietermaritzburg.

6. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, was screened in 1960 – although the College magazine does not specify which film of the play was screened (*STCM* 1.8 11).

7. There were a number of other cultural and sporting activities at the college. One A.K. Asmal was a student at the college in 1953-54. He was the Secretary of both the Cultural and Debating Society and the Cricket Club. He won the prize for public speaking in 1953 (*STCM* 1.2 30). He played a small role as "Watch" in the production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1953. He was, of course, later famous as Professor Kader Asmal, international opponent of apartheid and Minister of Education in the African National Congress government.

8. See "Current Theatre Notes" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4.1 (1953), 61-75, which make reference to the Old Vic tour. The Programme of *The Old Vic Company's South African Season* (1952) provides further details.

9. One actor stands out in the photographs: Y.Moodley, who played Ariel. He later went on to study acting in England and wrote to Rhoda Rowlands about his studies.

10. These include *Our Early Age* (undated), *Some Makers of the Modern Age* (1960), *The Age of Sail 1415-1806* (1963), *Young South Africa* (1963) and *The Making of a Nation 1820-1910* (1964).

11. Letter from a pupil from Hillside Government Indian School to the Principal, Springfield Training College, 23rd October 1960, in the collection of M.R.Rowlands.

12. Unfortunately it is difficult to identify who the photographer was, but he was undoubtedly a professional. Other photographers who can be identified include Dennis Govender, who took a memorable photograph of the Balcony Scene from *Romeo and Juliet* (1953); John Desmond, who photographed *The Tempest* (1956); and Bala Govender, who took a well-composed photograph of the principal actors in *The Merchant of Venice* (1962).

13. After the death of Charles Shields in 1982, the scroll was returned to Rhoda Rowlands (1922-2011) and is now in the author's care. It is a beautiful work which gives testimony to the high esteem in which Shields was held by his colleagues. The scroll is worth preserving for posterity as, indeed, are many of the other items in this collection.

14. The Durban International Club presented *Natir Puja*, but the programme does not give the date. The producer was Pauline Morel and the Assistant Producer was Charles Shields. Pauline Morel also produced Tagore's *Mukta-Dhara* for the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1960, which was performed at the Orient Hall. A number of actors associated with Springfield College appeared in the production, such as Rad Thumbadoo and T. Seebadri. Devi Bughwan, who later went on to become Professor of Speech and Drama at the University of Durban-Westville, played the role of Abhigita. She also performed in another Tagore play in Durban, *King of the Dark Chamber*, produced by Krishna Shah in 1961. See Roy Christie's article, "Durban actress to play in London production".

15. Students also wrote poems "with apologies" to a number of other poets including Chaucer, Shirley and Wordsworth. See Edward E. Pratt's "Composed on the Approach of Examinations (With due apology to Wm. Wordsworth)", which is the earliest example (*STCM* 1.2 11).

16. There were original works too, such as Ben Persad's *The Half-Naked Fakir*, a programme which commemorated the centenary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi in 1969. Levine gave his full support to the production and wrote in the programme, "The life of the Mahatma lights a path which all should seek to tread" (*Programme* [B] n.p.).

17. Rhoda Rowlands designed costumes and decor for the productions of *Six Characters in Search of An Author* and *The Crucible*. She also designed for many other Springfield College productions, apart from those already mentioned. She retired from the college in 1977.

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