Exploring Intercultural Shakespeare Production for a 21st Century Malawian Audience

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her/their own, except where work which has formed part of jointly authored publications has been included. The contribution of the candidate and the other authors to this work has been explicitly indicated below. The candidate confirms that appropriate credit has been given within the thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

The Donor Dependency Syndrome: The politics of theatre funding structures in Malawi

By Zindaba Chisiza and Amy Bonsall for Platform Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts 10.2: Theatre and Crisis. The sections about Nanzikambe Arts on pages 5-7 of the paper included elements found within Chapter Two of my thesis. The historical context at the start of this paper and the final section *Towards a sustainable funding model* were conceived and written together.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated with love to the 14-year-old dyslexic girl who was told she didn't understand Shakespeare, to my incredible parents Rosemary and Stephen Bonsall, to my wonderful husband Michael Redston, to my beloved girls Romy and Seren Redston, who were so tiny when I began this journey, and to the memory of my dear friend Brett Goldin (1977-2006).

Abstract

This study explores the processes undertaken to make an intercultural production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* meaningful for a contemporary Malawian audience. I consider the notions of global, universal, intercultural and postcolonial Shakespeare, and through the examination of *Rei Lear* (Cape Verde, 2003), *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* (Nigeria, 2012) and *Toufann* (Mauritius, 1999) I demonstrate how the influences of colonialism, language politics and education created a complex matrix of factors that have affected the development of drama and Shakespeare in production in various African nations. This analysis created a framework for how a translation and production of *Romeo and Juliet* could be researched and realised through theatrical practice.

Examination of the genesis and development of Shakespeare in production in Malawi, using surveys, interviews, scholarly articles and archival research, situated where my production fitted within the country's contemporary theatre landscape. Practical workshops aided my investigations as to how the translated script could be meaningfully realised by Malawian performers and how the play could be relocated to Malawi. I engaged in a three-week rehearsal period where students from Mzuzu University produced a full production of the play. *Romio ndi Julieti* was performed in three public venues: Luwinga Secondary School, Mzuzu University and Chingalire village. DVDs of workshop/rehearsal excerpts and the final production of *Romio ndi Julieti* at Chingalire village (9 April 2016) form part of this practice-led research thesis.

Among the findings of this study I have shown that translating *Romeo and Juliet* into a vernacular language and using contemporary Malawian performance styles meant that the production had a greater impact on both the performers and the audience than if it had been performed in English. Working in Chichewa freed the actors, some performing in the language for the first time, to showcase Malawian performance forms, including physical comedy and dance, within the parameters of an 'elitist' production. My observations and survey and interview feedback showed that this intercultural theatre encounter had a positive impact on both performers and audience.

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GLOSSARY

Blocking – The early 'sketched' physical moves of actors in a play before the detailed physicality is developed. In Western rehearsals this is often the second stage of rehearsal after the initial read through of the play.

Chitenji – a colourful, patterned cloth usually 2 meters x 1 meter in size. Used for clothing, head-wraps, slings but most commonly worn as a skirt by women in Malawi.

Creatives – used as a collective term, comprising of the director, the designer, the assistant directors, fight director etc.

Embodiment - 'it is this – the cultural coding of the *soma* and its behaviours, the way it reproduces, modifies or challenges inherited formulations' or in its most simple terms 'the modern study of the body in performance'.[1]

Know how – Robin Nelson describes this as close up, insider knowledge held by the practitioner/ researcher.[2]

Know what – 'The tacit made explicit through critical reflections', 'outsider distant knowledge'.[3]

Malawian National Wear – Dresses and skirts for formal occasions are tailored from Chitenji cloth to form a two-piece outfit often finished with a head-wrap of the same material. The walls of tailors' shops are covered with patterns of clothing trends that customers can choose from.

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[1] Colin Counsell, 'Introduction', in *Performance, Embodiment and Cultural Memory*, ed. by Colin Counsell and Roberta Mock (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 1.

[2] Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), p. 37.

[3] Ibid.

Off Book – actors have learnt their lines and blocking for a production and no longer need to hold their script

Warm Up – Physical and vocal exercises undertaken by the cast at the start of a rehearsal to prepare the mind and body for the intensity of rehearsal.

ABBREVIATIONS

ATEM – Association of Teachers of English in Malawi
BCA - British Central African Protectorate
CHANCO – Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba
MCP – Malawi Congress Party
MSCE – Malawian Secondary Certificate of Education
MUTAG – Mzuzu University Theatre group
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
VSO – Voluntary Services Overseas

General Note: The modern name 'Malawi' will be used throughout this thesis; however, from 1891 to 1964 the geographical area was known as 'Nyasaland'[1] and that term may occur when quotations are used in relation to that period. The name 'Lake Malawi' will be employed, however it was formerly known as 'Lake Nyasa'.

[1] Desmond Dudwa Phiri, *History of Malawi: From Earliest Times to the Year 1915* (Christian Literature Association in Malawi, 2004), p. 213.

INTRODUCTION

The aims of this study are threefold. The first is to investigate the origin and development of Shakespeare performance in Malawi. The second is to examine whether Malawian performers and audiences who, prior to my work had largely only had the opportunity to see or study Shakespeare in English, might better access his work by the mounting of one of his texts devised specifically for them in a vernacular language. Thirdly, I aimed to explore the performance styles and issues that arose from two intercultural theatre encounters that used *Romeo and Juliet* as their frame. Using survey results and interviews, I analyse how the audience received the resulting performance. This study will show that a contemporary local-language and intercultural production can resonate with its audience as serious drama, which is important because, before this production, Shakespeare in Malawi had been almost exclusively performed in English. Given these aims, this dissertation and the accompanying DVDs will attempt to answer the following research questions, and in so doing will seek to contribute to the discussion of whether and how Shakespeare can continue to be meaningful within postcolonial African cultures.

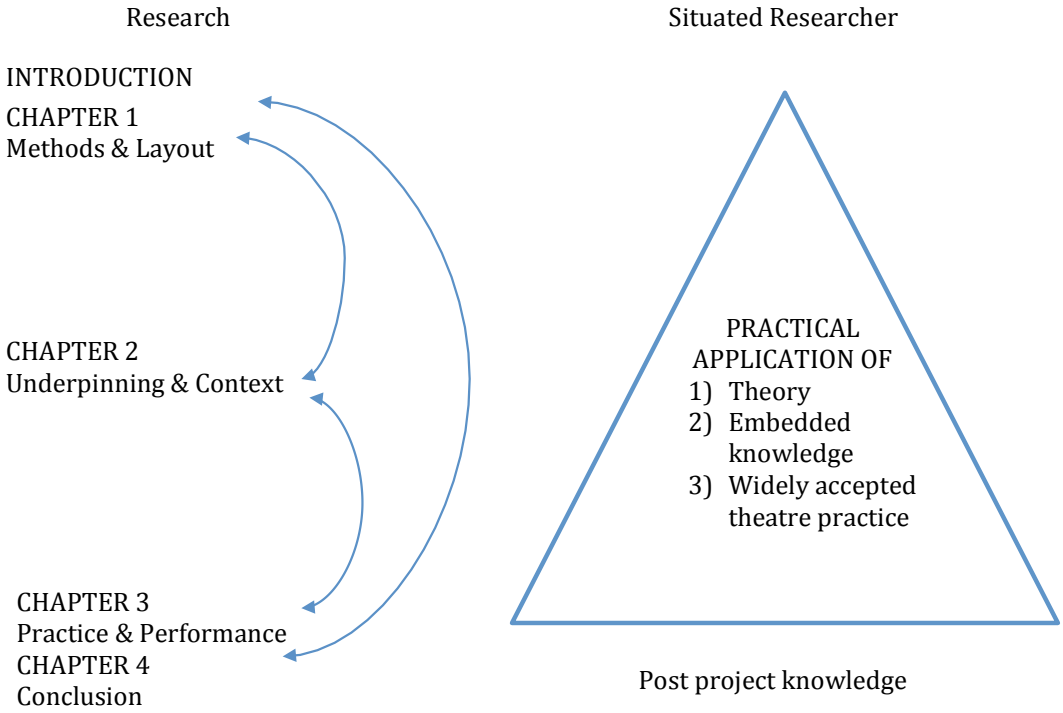
Research Questions

1) What is the wider context of Shakespeare's works in translation and performance in African languages and how might this environment be relevant to contemporary Shakespeare production in Malawi?
2) What is the history and context of Shakespeare performance in Malawi?
3) Can Shakespeare's plays be translated into Chichewa and produce an effective performance text with which Malawian actors can work?
4) What form and aesthetic might intercultural Shakespeare performance in Malawi employ and why?
5) How do Malawian audiences respond to Shakespeare production in Chichewa?
6) Is there a place for Shakespeare production in contemporary Malawi?

This is a Practice-Led PhD, and the academy recognises that practitioner-researchers have unique ways of working. This introduction sets out how I have undertaken my research and how and why the discursive dissertation and the accompanying DVDs have been realised in their current form. The textual component of the dissertation is presented in three sections. To create this structure I have modified Robin Nelson's multi-mode epistemological model for Practice as Research (PAR) to describe my own system of working.[2] Søren Kjørup proposes that art as research, in this instance a theatre production, can be viewed thus:

> We can justifiably speak of artistic research ('research in the arts') when that artistic practice is not only the result of the research, but also its methodological vehicle, when the research unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing. This is a distinguishing feature of this research type within the whole of academic research.[3]

As such, the theatre production *Romio ndi Julieti*, performed on the 8-9 April 2016, should be considered as simultaneously part of my research methodology and as the artistic conclusion to the practice element of my research.



[2] Nelson, p. 37.
[3] *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. by Michael Biggs, Henrik Karlsson, and Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2010), p. 46.

(*Fig 1*: Flow of Knowledge)

Figure 1 depicts how my knowledge has developed over the course of this investigation. The illustration on the left shows the three phases of the research. The triangle represents me, the practitioner-researcher. The apex of the triangle marks my starting point, the situated researcher - the increasing volume of research gradually decreases the gap between myself and the theory, research and practice until ultimately the two are in close proximity. The arrows represent the flow between the two narratives.

The full dissertation comprises this written document, the filmed excerpts of the workshops and rehearsals and the final live performance of *Romio ndi Julieti* in Malawi. The theoretical, contextual, analytical, discursive and reflective elements of the research are captured within the written dissertation. The practical, exploratory, experiential and artistic components were the workshops, rehearsals and performances. Edited examples of this work are captured on two DVDs, which include embedded, informative slides. The DVDs are the documentary evidence of the workshops and rehearsals (DVD 1), and one of the performances (DVD 2) which underpin the discussions within this document. The workshops were undertaken on 16 – 25 June 2015. The rehearsals ran from 21 March – 7 April 2016. The three performances took place on 8 – 9 April 2016.

The Written Dissertation

This research, in line with the structure established above, is set out over three chapters. To situate my research within wider intercultural and African language Shakespeare discourse, chapter one analyses recent productions of *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest,* which were translated into and performed in African languages in Cape Verde, Nigeria and Mauritius respectively. This analysis encompasses how language and theatre development in each of these countries contextualised each production. Chapter two is concerned with the development of Shakespeare performance and production, and of drama in Malawi. It is divided into three parts. The first discusses the geographical and historical features of Malawi, before examining missionary and colonial education and the early

development of drama and Shakespeare production. The second part focuses on Malawi's independence (1964), up to Malawian multi-party democratic elections in 1994, and how the politics of the dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda impacted on the development of drama and cultural positioning of Shakespeare. The final part examines three international productions of Shakespeare plays that came to Malawi, and discusses the establishment and development of Malawian intercultural theatre company Nanzikambe Arts. Chapter three charts and analyses the three fieldwork journeys I undertook to Malawi. Focus is placed upon the second and third trips during which the workshops and productions were undertaken. The conclusion and two DVDs form the written and practice conclusions to the research. Within chapter three I suggest when the DVDs can be usefully accessed to support my discussions.

Below I set out a three-section research context that explains the framing of this thesis; it deals with the fundamental issues of the situated researcher, my theoretical framework, including relevant thinking about audiences, and finally my research methodology.

The Situated Researcher

As a director and researcher educated exclusively within the UK, my practical and academic practices have been heavily influenced by British educational paradigms. I am arguing that these continue to assume the supremacy of almost all Western arts, particularly over African culture.

At undergraduate level I interrogated drama through a blend of written and practical theoretical exploration that was complemented with practical performance training methods. The curriculum had international elements, particularly looking at American political theatre and the Brazilian Augusto Boal's training and performance methods. Practitioners such as Berthold Brecht, Alfred Jarry, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Stephen Berkoff, Joan Littlewood and Konstantin Stanislavski additionally illuminated how theatre is essentially linked to the cultural, social and political time that it inhabits. The study of such practitioners

demonstrated to me that theatre has the potential to be simultaneously artistically innovative and socially significant. However, these examples also highlight a perpetuation of Western-centric and text-based methodologies, with the single exception of Boal's practices. I was introduced to no Asian or African theatre. My theatre practice and education were built upon Western-facing text-based performance.

My first encounter with international Shakespeare production was in South Africa when I worked with Dame Janet Suzman on her production of *Hamlet* in 2005 and 2006. I gave no consideration as to why Shakespeare was being performed in a country thousands of miles from the UK. I was in awe of being part of such a large and high profile international project, and my concerns lay with working with Suzman to ensure that her vision of a colour-blind production with a South African heart was achieved. It was only when I discovered that school children from the townships were being bussed in to see the production that I began to wonder if those children felt that the production was relevant to them and, if so, how and why? I believed the answer would be found in the 'universality' of Shakespeare's themes, the spotlight he places upon the human condition and, of course, his extraordinary use of language.[4] It did not occur to me that English was likely to be the children's second or even third language and that English culture might be similarly alien.

The murder of my close friend and company member in 2006 left me questioning everything I had previously believed about the purpose of theatre. The public dress rehearsal in South Africa, performed with a new actor and presented just 48 hours after my friend's body was identified, remains the most appalling and important theatre production I have witnessed. I felt that the production should have been cancelled entirely, but the audience was the most attentive, pained and engaged I have encountered before or since. Within those three hours, Shakespeare was depicting a South African human experience. The multi-racial

[4] Innocent Ngulube, 'Appropriation of Shakespeare's Plays in the Postcolonial World: The Case of Malawian Education', *Postcolonial Interventions*, 1.2 (2016), 76–106 (p. 77,78).

South African cast were performing through their grief; carrying on in the face of violence is a common experience for the majority of South Africans. I had returned to South Africa to re-rehearse the production before it transferred to the UK, but when I returned home the production was unrecognisable to me. The brutal violence, deaths and grieving within *Hamlet* were no longer stories played out on the stage, they were depicting the real-time grief of an entire company, myself included. I felt immense anger at that production being performed for the middle-class audiences of Stratford upon Avon. At the time I felt that, outside South Africa, the production could be little more than an international, voyeuristic curiosity. This deep personal trauma would lead me to interrogate ideas of Shakespeare's universality and ultimately to this PhD.

In 2011 I began working with Bilimankhwe, a British theatre company regularly co-producing work with Malawian partner Nanzikambe Arts. This was the starting point for my work in Malawi. I had very little knowledge of the country other than its unenviable position as one of the world's poorest.[5] However, it quickly became apparent that Nanzikambe was sustaining itself through international funding streams and was, therefore, able to engage in international partnerships. Malawi was clearly a more vibrant and diverse country than the media reported.

The significance of language choice and its impact on aesthetic and audience reception was highlighted during my first directing role with the company. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust commissioned Bilimankhwe and Nanzikambe Arts to produce *Romeo and Juliet* for a UK performance and Malawian tour. At the beginning of the three-week rehearsal period the cast and I began to explore creating the production using the local languages of Chichewa and Yao, keeping English text only for the lines of Romeo and Juliet. The cast wished to retain the English for these characters, maintaining that it would aid Malawian school audiences in accessing the narrative for the purposes of the MCSE (Malawian Certificate of Secondary Education – equivalent to a UK A level) examination. They said that there was no vernacular translation of the play. I facilitated the request

[5] 'Malawi: Oxfam International', *Oxfam.org* <https://www.oxfam.org/en/countries/malawi> [accessed 10 February 2016].

within rehearsal, and I was openly reliant upon the actors to create a production utilising both British and Malawian performance styles. All of the cast were multi-lingual, but debates continued throughout rehearsals as to how particular parts of the text should be translated - there was not enough time to undertake a considered translation.

The language of the production became a focal point for debate at the discussion after the open dress rehearsal. I knew little of the scholarly discourse that surrounded intercultural theatre production, and less about the debates concerning Malawian languages, including English. Michael Walling (a British theatre-maker) questioned why we had privileged English by retaining it for the two central characters. The company and I explained our rationale, stating that we had never intended English to be elevated over the other languages. The comment forced me to consider my ignorance in relation to pertinent discourses that were highly relevant to the cast.

I was also asked about my position as a white British director leading a black Malawian cast. An exchange ensued between the cast and an Irish academic who had been in the audience. The dynamics of power within the rehearsal room were hotly interrogated. A day later, Walling wrote a blog about the discussion, in which he considered how the performance he had seen sat in relation to the post-performance discussion. He paid particular attention to the 'issue' of white British-led African-performed work, and he concluded that the collaboration was, in this case at least, acceptable 'because the world needs what they can make in collaboration - something much bigger than they could make alone'.[6] I understood Walling to mean that the work the company and I made was something different, something that could engage audiences in both the UK and Malawi, and that this type of work could only be realised through international collaboration. The cast agreed with his statement (I shared the blog with them) and so did I. However, I did not fully *understand* why I agreed, nor could I sufficiently contextualise my

[6] Michael Walling, 'The Great White Director', *Border Crossings Blog*, 2012 <http://bordercrossingsblog.blogspot.co.uk/2012_08_01_archive.html> [accessed 8 June 2015].

positioning as a practitioner and my practice to those who might challenge the legitimacy of my work. My own response about a fully collaborative process felt fudged - because it was. I began to feel the need to research intercultural theatre.

I became determined to discover if *Romeo and Juliet* could be translated into a Malawian language, and a production transposed thoughtfully into a Malawian context. It was evident that, without considerable scholarly research, a project where a white British director instigates a Malawian production of *Romeo and Juliet* in Malawi, and in a local Malawian language, would be setting itself up to attract criticism. If the project was to be a feasible intervention within the Malawian theatre landscape then an intellectual framing of the project was crucial. It was clear that the realisation of the production, the practice, would be central to the research, but theoretical research was also necessary.

Theoretical Framework

I was interested in how the nationality of prominent intercultural directors, in relation to the target culture, impacted the preparation and delivery of their practice. Kenneth Pike, quoted in Victor Turner's *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), said:

> Descriptions of analyses from the etic standpoint are 'alien', with criteria external to the [social or cultural focus of the research] system. Emic descriptions provide an internal view […] with criteria chosen from within the system. They represent the view of one familiar with the system and who knows how to function within it himself.[7]

He is talking here about anthropological research, but I, like Turner, who used this definition within his own work, suggest that the notions of the 'etic' or 'emic' are important considerations when investigating intercultural theatre practice and how such practices are presented as productions (artworks) and written theory. Directors engaging in intercultural practice in countries and cultures other than their own create theatre from a culturally 'etic' positioning. I would be working from a mildly etic position in Malawi as I had worked with a Malawian cast before and had some familiarity with Malawian theatre practice. I was curious to see how

[7] Victor W. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Performance Studies Series, 1st v (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), p. 65.

a Malawian/British intercultural theatre process and the resulting works, both performative and written, would manifest.

To arrive at the point of 'intercultural production', however, it is essential to consider what is meant by such a term. In Malawi, words like 'ritual', 'theatre' and 'drama' are fluid, interchangeable and context-dependent due to the colonial legacy of European terminology for such discourse.[8] Schechner says the 'phenomena called either/all "drama," "theatre," "performance"'[9] prevailed in some form in all the world's cultures from the earliest days researchers have evidenced.[10] In the earliest guise of performance, at page 38 Schechner talks of Palaeolithic 'unliterate cultures' who left cave paintings and sculptures that were not 'symbols (word likeness)' as we, in a literate contemporary society, would read them; rather, they represented 'doings'. He says that these very early ' "scripts"… are patterns of doing, not modes of thinking' and they existed to pass such patterns on through time. As human literacy developed and writing became a form of communication additional to speaking, Schechner points out that 'drama arose as a specialized form of scripting', and that with Greek drama 'scripts' no longer represented specific instructions for patterns of 'doing', instead they were 'understood "abstractly," a movement in the lives of men'.[11] He says that the growth in literacy that occurred after the Renaissance 'inverted' the relationship between 'script' and 'doing', meaning that, from then on, Western drama was focused upon how 'the doings' of a particular production became the way to re-present the drama.[12] This formulation helps in understanding why there might be issues of context and presentation to consider when creating a production utilising performance forms that have developed quite differently.

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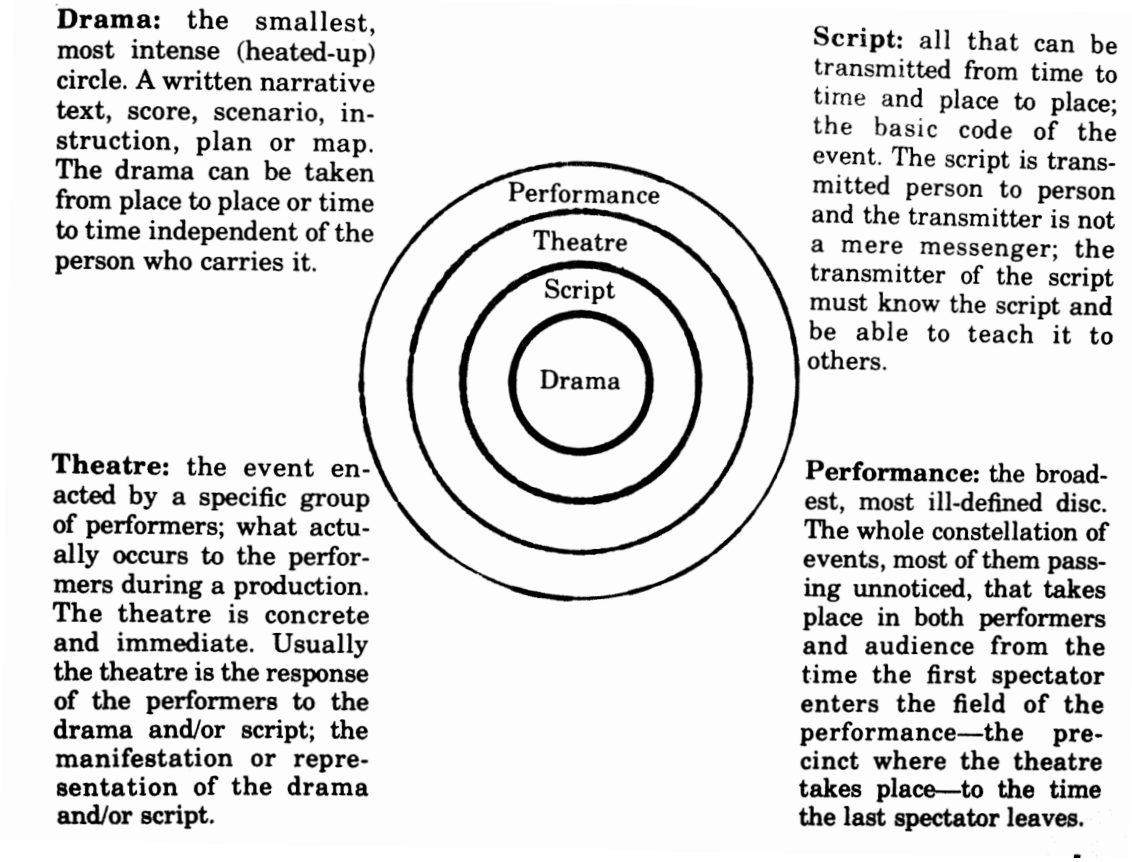
[8] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, 'Drama and Theatre in Malawi: A Study of Their Development and Directions' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Malawi, 1980), p. 3; David Kerr, *African Popular Theatre: From Pre-Colonial Times to the Present Day*, Studies in African Literature (London : Portsmouth, N.H. : Nairobi : Cape Town : Harare: J. Currey ; Heinemann ; EAEP ; D. Philip ; Baobab, 1995), p. 1.
[9] Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory, 1970-1976*, 1st ed (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), p. 36.
[10] Ibid, pp. 36–37.
[11] Ibid, p. 38.
[12] Ibid, pp. 38–39.

In the useful diagram below, Schechner uses concentric circles, which overlap each other, to explain how these terms relate to each other:

> The increase in size is meant literally, in time/space, and conceptuality in the idea-area covered. Generally speaking, though not in every case, the large disk contains all those smaller than itself.[13]



(*Fig 2*: Concentric Circles)[14]

> To summarize thus far: the drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; the theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; the performance is the whole event, including the audience and the performers (technicians too, anyone who is there).[15]

Theatre, then, is the performance mode this thesis is primarily concerned with, yet further clarification is needed to accurately define the process that led to the realisation of my British/Malawian production *Romio ndi Julieti*.

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[13] Ibid, p. 39.
[14] Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory*, p. 44.
[15] Ibid, p. 44.

In 1996 Julie Holledge and Joanne Tomkins provided a clear definition of intercultural theatre, saying, 'Interculturalism is the meeting point of performance of two or more cultural traditions, a temporary fusing of styles and/or technique and/or cultures'.[16] I agree this is an apposite definition of intercultural theatre, in the most simplified terms. Schechner (1989) stated optimistically that developments in disseminating global information could result in a positive interculturalism that might ultimately transcend imperialism and the binary trope of 'us' and 'other', or local versus international – but also warned that 'we have not yet learned how to balance these two levels of social existence'.[17] Theorist Daryl Chin was particularly concerned by the dangers of categorising performance using such terms as intercultural at all, feeling it opened the potential for cultural misinterpretation, particularly if the performance fell on the wrong side of the invisible line into cultural imperialism.[18]

The Intercultural Performance Reader (1996) was a further addition to developing scholarship in the area. Patrice Pavis investigated the notion of 'intercultural theatre' by examining debates concerning the term 'culture' (which I will not enter into here), and critiquing various terminologies and theoretical perspectives, including the terms 'syncretic', 'multicultural' and 'postcolonial theatre'. These were being used somewhat interchangeably to describe the encounter that we now term intercultural theatre. In so doing, he both defined each term and highlighted how the terms were related to each other and influenced by factors such as colonialism, economic prosperity and the global hegemony. However, I find his definition of intercultural theatre rather opaque:

> In the strictest sense, this [intercultural performance] creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas. The

[16] Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance* (Routledge, 2002), p. 7.
[17] Richard Schechner, 'Intercultural Themes', *Performing Arts Journal*, 11/12 (1989), 151–62 (p. 160).
[18] Daryl Chin, 'Interculturalism, Postmodernism, Pluralism', *Performing Arts Journal*, 11/12 (1989), 163–75 (pp. 171–74).

> hybridization is very often such that the original forms can no longer be distinguished.[19]

This definition seems to render an intercultural performance a potentially rootless offspring of two or more hitherto identifiable performance forms, and one that marks intercultural performance as a practice that consumes (other performance forms) as a result of producing something entirely new. To me, this might be construed as an early indication of one of the major ongoing criticisms of intercultural theatre practice, that it is (predominantly) Western-facing and that it is the West that benefits from such cultural appropriation whilst offering little in return. I was trying to do something different by celebrating certain aspects of Malawian performance culture, both the traditional and the contemporary, while not necessarily losing the original form of my chosen play.

Holledge and Tompkins (2002) highlighted the uneven power dynamics that they argued have generally existed within intercultural production. They stated that 'Intercultural theatre projects that originate in the West tend to focus on aesthetics first and politics second, almost as an after-thought or superficially.'[20] Whilst recognising that this is a generalisation, it is troubling that it remained a significant criticism of contemporary intercultural theatre practice. It implies a persistent contextual focus on Euro/American artistic concerns by theatre-makers which, to me, suggests that the power hierarchy of such projects is still with the Western parties. Pavis revisited his theories about intercultural theatre in 2010 and claimed:

> The denomination 'intercultural theatre' is falling out of use. The term 'intercultural performance' would be more suitable to signal from the outset the opening to very different 'cultural performances'.[21]

Indeed, conferences of recent times at Roehampton University (2012), Amherst College (2015), and The Globe Theatre (2016) discussing intercultural Shakespeare have used the term 'performance' rather than theatre as a

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[19] Patrice Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (Psychology Press, 1996), p. 8.
[20] Holledge and Tompkins, p. 1.
[21] Patrice Pavis, 'Intercultural Theatre Today (2010)', *Forum Modernes Theater*, 25.1 (2013), 5–15 (p. 8).

descriptor.[22] But to my mind, this is reflective of the vastly increased role recorded media holds in the area of contemporary performance, rather than being reflective of theatre as a form of performance. Theatre productions from mainstream venues are routinely recorded and made available to audiences who might not be able to access live performances. I would argue that, when considering a specific instance of 'live' intercultural performance, the term 'intercultural theatre' remains a more accurate descriptor.

There is little scholarly discourse scrutinising intercultural theatre practice in Malawi. Malawian theatre practitioner Thokozani Kapiri, in 2013, touched on the matter. He warns of:

> The inorganic imposition of traditional forms of performance on the European adaptations [which], in the long run, only sufficed to generate what Kerr calls a sort of thinness … too simplified and too literal.[23]

In a Malawian context, then, contemporary intercultural performance is still developing practices that can offer Malawian cultural forms an equal weighting alongside their Western counterparts. The reasons for this are multiple, but primarily rooted within the entrenched privileging of Western performance forms as a result of British colonialism, and through considerable and complex problems of access to arts funding and training, which has affected how drama in Malawi has developed.[24]

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[22] 'Intercultural Shakespeare Performance Symposium, Shakespeare's Globe 22 April 2016', *Shakespearesglobe.com*, 2016 <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/uploads/files/2016/04/programme_intercultural_shakespeare_symposium1.pdf> [accessed 30 June 2016]; 'Intercultural Shakespeare Symposium', *University of Roehampton*, 2012 <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/drama-theatre-and-performance/news/intercultural-shakespeare-symposium/> [accessed 30 June 2017]; '2nd International Shakespeare Conference | UMass Amherst | September 18-20, 2015', *Umass.edu*, 2015 <http://www.umass.edu/shakespeare/schedule.html> [accessed 30 June 2017].

[23] *Theater in Afrika - zwischen Kunst und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit / Theatre in Africa - between Art and Development Cooperation: Geschichten einer deutsch-malawischen ...*, ed. by Nadja Keller, Christoph Nix, and Thomas Spieckermann, 1 edition (Verlag Theater der Zeit, 2013), p. 58.

[24] Zindaba Chisiza and Amy Bonsall, 'The Donor Dependency Syndrome: The Politics of Theatre Funding Structures in Malawi', *Platform: Postgraduate Journal of Theatre Arts*, 10.2 (2016), 79–89.

In order to frame my work, below I set out examples of the practice of Peter Brook and then Rustom Bharucha. I chose these practitioners because I was interested in looking at both a Western practitioner who had engaged with an African culture as part of their work from an etic perspective, and also a practitioner who had engaged with intercultural theatre from a moderately emic position. Bharucha, who is Indian and has worked both in his home country and in Western nations, speaks from a moderately emic perspective when discussing his work made in India, albeit as someone from a different ethnic heritage. I came across the following comments by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins in *Post Colonial Drama* (1996), which resonated with me considerably:

> Not all intercultural theorists are ethnocentric: Rustom Bharucha (1993) and others are acutely aware of the political ramifications of failing to acknowledge a country's historical, political and cultural specificity. Bharucha attacks critics and practitioners such as Schechner, Barba and Peter Brook for mining 'exotic' - and usually 'third world' – cultures for theatrical raw materials. … As well as ignoring the differences among and between peoples who have been colonised, the anthropological approach to theatre also moves perilously close to a universalist criticism whereby a text is said to speak to readers all around the world because it espouses, for example, universal principles of life. Texts which apparently radiate such 'universal truths' have usually been removed from their social and historical setting. Although it is a favourite catch-cry of theatre critics, the 'universal theme' allows for no appreciation of cultural difference.[25]

This thesis seeks to explore if intercultural theatre practice in Malawi can challenge the trope of intercultural theatre production being dominated by the Western appropriation of 'other' cultures for its own benefit and can instead place Malawian performance forms at the heart of its practice.

Peter Brook

In 1987 Peter Brook was described as 'the most consistently innovative director at work in western theatre'.[26] After a highly successful British directing career he relocated to Paris, establishing the Centre International de Créations Théâtrales in

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[25] Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 10.
[26] Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point: 40 Years of Theatre Exploration ; 1946 - 1987* (London: Methuen, 1988), inside cover.

1970, where he could explore 'what theatre is … and what it could be'.[27] His theatrical enquiries, which were at the front of Western intercultural theatrical experimentation, led to the creation of lauded productions such as *The Ik* (1975), *The Conference of Birds* (1975) and *The Mahabharata* (1985).[28] *The Ik* is significant in this context because it was a European/African encounter.

Colin Turnbull's book *The Mountain People* (1972) was the anthropological study of a remote, struggling Ugandan mountain community, the Ik, who had endured extreme poverty and social breakdown resulting from a government ban on hunting in the area they inhabited. This book formed the basis of Brook's production - a production that used the suffering of the Ugandan mountain people to serve as the foundation for a metaphor for the disintegration of contemporary Western society (as Brook saw it in 1975).[29]

In 1972 the company had toured Nigeria, Mali and Benin for three and a half months to connect with African audiences and further the group's understanding of what 'theatre is and could be'.[30] Their experiences in Africa formed part of the preparation for the production. Photographs of the mountain people were used as a basis for extremely detailed character performances, the aim being that the actors should capture the shared humanity 'of a very particular people', rather than produce a direct imitation.[31] Rituals were created, for example tea-making, and movements were sparse, organic and fluid with moments of significance illustrated either by all the actors performing together in a section or by single actors highlighting individual suffering.[32]

The company may have visited three separate countries in Africa, but these countries were not Uganda. Endeavouring to explore the lives of 'a very particular

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[27] Albert Hunt, *Peter Brook* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 4.
[28] Ibid, pp. xiv–xv.
[29] Ibid, p. 204.
[30] Margaret Croyden and Peter Brook, *Conversations with Peter Brook, 1970-2000* (London: Faber, 2004), p. 87.
[31] Hunt, p. 204.
[32] Ibid p. 205.

people' without having met said people or having visited their country is disingenuous. It risks the creation of a stereotypical hybrid construct of the 'African'. A review of the production notes the physical journey that the performers made to Africa, yet the only mention of anything as identifiably 'African' was that the 'actors clearly absorbed something of its (Africa's?) rhythm'.[33] This statement is so nebulous as to be redundant, highlighting the inherent danger of the decontextualisation of source material in theatre performance.

Brook's production was theatrically innovative; it was a pioneering piece of intercultural work, but it was a flawed process in my opinion and those of Bharucha and David Moody. The latter explores the implications of the work in his 1995 article 'Peter Brook's Heart of Light: "Primitivism" and Intercultural Theatre'.[34] The people whose story was being told lacked any agency over the creative process. Hunt says that Brook described Turnbull's book as 'the point of departure';[35] so the real people whose story inspired the production were reduced to source material in the name of theatrical experimentation. However, the production did form part of the wave of practice that led to theatre theorists taking intercultural theatre seriously and giving it intellectual space. In this regard, it remains a significant example of early intercultural experimentation between the continents of Europe and Africa. I use this illustration of Brook's practice as an example of a methodology which I modify, or even contradict, within my practice-led research, as I have been seeking to work with, not referring to, an African culture.

Rustom Bharucha

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[33] Bernard Weinraub, '"The Ik," Staged by Brook In London, Puzzles Many', *The New York Times*, 28 January 1976 <http://www.nytimes.com/1976/01/28/archives/the-ik-staged-by-brook-in-london-puzzles-many.html> [accessed 21 November 2016].
[34] David Moody, 'Peter Brook's Heart of Light: "Primitivism" and Intercultural Theatre', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 11.41 (1995), 33–39.
[35] Hunt, p. 204.

In *Theatre and the World* (1993), Bharucha interrogated intercultural theatre from the viewpoint of the Developing World rather than the Western. Within this thoughtful and provocative book one point in particular resonated with me:

> Not one of the artists that I have alluded to so far in this essay including […] Grotowski and Schechner has turned to India to explore the existing cultural conditions in the country. What concerns interculturalists is not our contemporary or colonial heritage but our 'tradition' from which they derive material and sources to feed their theories and visions.[36]

In light of this statement, it seemed to me important to ensure my process in Malawi was open to both contemporary and traditional performance forms. I was interested in finding out how Bharucha worked in India in order to use some of his work as a starting point for my own theatrical experiments. In 'Negotiating the "River": Intercultural Interactions and Interventions' (1997), Bharucha interrogated methods he had employed when working *with* and *in* another culture. Bharucha was working on *Peer Gynt* (1995) in India, in Kannada, but in a different culture, in a language he did not speak. He explored two highly significant questions that would be a part of my own process and practice: 'I am often asked: how do you work in theatre in different cultural contexts when you don't know their language?' He goes on to reframe this question by posing his own, stating:

> I am rarely asked: how do you prepare for an intercultural encounter? Here, one has to avoid the traps of "omniscience," in assuming that one's existing knowledge of theatre is adequate for an encounter with any culture in the world. At the other extreme, one has to avoid succumbing to naivete of imagining oneself to be some kind of blank sheet to be impressed upon by the other culture. Both perspectives are a pretext to not doing one's homework as a director.[37]

Seeking to avoid the 'traps of omniscience' was at the heart of what my practice was aiming to achieve in Malawi. I wanted to acknowledge that I brought to the rehearsal room my own performative 'toolkit' and that this would influence the resulting work, but without resorting to imposing a thematic directorial concept from my individual and distant book-based research on to a production set in, performed by and for, Malawians. Equally, I did not seek to place a text in front of a

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[36] Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (Routledge, 2003), p. 39.
[37] Rustom Bharucha, 'Negotiating the "River": Intercultural Interactions and Interventions', *Tulane Drama Review*, 41.3 (1997), 31–38 (p. 34).

group of Malawians and leave the creativity solely to them. I sought to explore how a practice that sat between these two ends of a spectrum might be realised within a Malawian/British context, and what the performative results might be.

Bharucha stated his pre-production research focused upon accessing the literature from the culture with which he was planning to work, particularly fiction.[38] When working with a company with whom he did not share a common language, he used nonverbal improvisations in early rehearsals, accessing the spoken word later in the rehearsal process.[39] He used everyday objects as props for improvisations to explore and reveal cultural relationships with potentially significant objects and he would 'enter' the improvisations with questions, ideas or thoughts. He says, 'this is how I tend to work in theatre, drawing on ordinary actions and objects and transforming them through shifts in consciousness'.[40]

His words hint at a rehearsal process concerned with nurturing and developing theatrical ideas from the micro level, rather than arriving with broad themes for exploration. This seemed to me to be an appropriate practice with which to engage in my own project. A crucial difference between Brook and Bharucha was that Brook was creating work that drew on Africa but for a Western audience. Bharucha, in contrast, was making work in and for the Indian community which he was serving. Who makes the work and where the work is to be shown is, of course, a key consideration. I would be operating in a manner analogous to that of Bharucha rather than to the work of Brook since I wished to work with and for Malawian communities.

An intercultural director should be alert to the real cultural sensitivities that may be inadvertently provoked by imaginary encounters within the rehearsal room. Underpinning Bharucha's work was his view of his role within the rehearsal room,

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[38] Ibid, p. 34.
[39] Ibid; Rustom Bharucha, 'Under the Sign of the Onion: Intracultural Negotiations in Theatre', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 12.46 (1996), 116–129 (p. 120).
[40] Bharucha, 'Negotiating the "River"', p. 35.

as a self-defined catalyst for exploration rather than as a director dictating the artistic terms of the rehearsal and production.[41]

> If we exploit more than we need, or, if we demand what is not there, or if we envision "masterpieces" which are of no use to anybody, or if we attempt to rejuvenate ourselves through nourishing sources from other cultures, then we could be perpetuating the violence around us by contributing at infinitesimal levels to the imbalances of our cultural ecology.[42]

As I was working from an etic positioning myself, as were those practitioners Bharucha challenged, questions of exploitation and my own positioning to the work were central to the construction of my practical methodology (outlined below) and continued to inform my practice throughout the entire project. In my opinion, Bharucha desired intercultural theatre directors to engage in theatre considering the ethics of both its context and its practice, and wanted Western directors to recognise their unique and privileged position within both the theatrical structural hierarchy and global hegemony.[43]

While this thesis's attention is primarily focused on the concerns of intercultural theatre practice, its positioning in relation to postcolonial theatre is significant. Before engaging with postcolonial performance theory, I need to define postcolonialism through Alan Lawson in Gilbert and Tompkins (1996):

> Politically motivated historical-analytical movement [which] engages with, resists and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural-political, pedagogical, discursive, and textual domains.[44]

This definition encompasses the cultural, educational, linguistic and political concerns of performance. It also allows for a framework that is flexible and that recognises the fluidity and responsiveness of culture and performance within a postcolonial frame.

In *Theory/Theatre* (2002) Mark Fortier offers recent thoughts on how postcolonial theory relates to theatre. He moves away from the binary 'us' and 'other' discourse,

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[41] Ibid, p. 35.
[42] Ibid, p. 37.
[43] Rustom Bharucha, 'A Reply to Richard Schechner', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 1.2 (1984), 254–60 (p. 255).
[44] Gilbert and Tompkins, p. 2.

suggesting that artistic postcolonial works can be a challenge to the dominant Western forms with options ranging from 'outright rejection to reappropriation and reformulation'.[45] This theory accepts a range of possible models of theatrical engagement while retaining a defining feature of recent postcolonial theatre theory – that work can be challenging of the Western artistic canon, but colonial links do not necessarily define the resulting work. My project could be described as a reformulation of Shakespeare, and the language chosen for the performance was an example of this. I opted to have *Romeo and Juliet* translated into Chichewa specifically to see if this would aid Malawian audiences in accessing the play; furthermore, it enabled me to explore the possibilities of intercultural *performance* and resulting aesthetic using *Romeo and Juliet* as a frame. In so doing, I was consciously challenging the existing convention, rooted in Malawi's colonial past, that drama exploring serious issues was not often performed in Chichewa. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says, in his highly significant *Decolonising The Mind* (1981), 'Language, any language has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture'.[46] As I wanted to engage with my project as an intercultural enterprise that prioritised the 'Malawian' over the English, it was evident that a vernacular language would be better placed to, as Schechner said, guide our 'doing'.

Audience

My investigations into Malawian audiences are best described as experimental. I was interested in exploring how homogeneous or diverse theatre audience reactions might be to my production in Malawi. I was interested in whether factors like the kind of audience (school pupils or a village community, for example), or location (a university auditorium or an outside space), or indeed familiarity with the source play, might make a noticeable difference to reception of the production. I also sought to discern how Malawian audiences engaged with performance, for example whether they used clapping, laughing, talking or other physical reactions in response to plays. I wanted to discover what impact my production might have

[45] Mark Fortier, *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2016), p. 194.
[46] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Oxford: James Currey, 2011), p. 13.

on individual members, and if any wider cultural conclusions could be drawn from such reactions.

There is very little research focused on understanding African audiences and none dedicated to audiences of Malawian commercial drama. In one of the few relevant papers, 'Preliminary Notes on Audiences in Africa' (1997), Karin Barber stressed the importance of understanding the context of a performance before attempting to draw conclusions about those attending. Her paper stimulated this area of research and 'help[ed] to develop an enquiry into African audiences which is long overdue'.[47] She reminds us:

> Audiences are not all the same, just as much as performances. They are a historical product. There are different ways of convening, and of experiencing reception, whether collectively or in dispersal, which are deeply connected to the nature of social life of the age and place.[48]

In order to investigate the connections referred to by Barber, I resolved to garner more information about Malawian audiences from the participants of my workshops considering how I might focus my approach to this area of my study further. I also knew I would need to get feedback from my audiences directly because the primary focus of this thesis was to explore intercultural Shakespeare production in Malawi. I could only find out if my intercultural experiment had in any sense 'worked' if a significant proportion of audiences engaged with and enjoyed it.

Insight into how a theatrical production has been received by its audience has historically been gathered using the methods indicated below, but due to limited resources and time my sample was statistically insignificant and the results could only be indicative of wider trends.

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[47] Karin Barber, 'Preliminary Notes on Audiences in Africa', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 67.3 (1997), 347–62 (p. 362).
[48] Barber, p. 347.

- Post performance questionnaires conducted with individuals can provide some general insights into the demographic of an audience and patterns of opinion of the production.[49]
- Gaining detailed knowledge is possible through post performance interviews; though for any significant conclusions to be drawn the number of interviews needed would be substantial, as Ben Walmsley's 'Why people go to the theatre' (2011) demonstrates.[50]
- 'Written impressions' of an audience can also provide some insights into how a production has been received.[51]

It must be noted that these methods have been developed in relation to mainstream, Western audiences. However, I found that these techniques allowed me to gain useful insights into how Malawian audiences interacted with and viewed my production.

Research methodology

My practice-led research methodology was multi-modal.[52] The methods used were drawn from theatre practitioners and theorists, as discussed above, working in areas that concern aspects of this thesis, as well as from my own experiences as a practitioner - my 'procedural knowledge'.[53] Some of the methods were adapted to suit the specific nature of my investigations into intercultural theatre practice in Malawi.

The early stages of my research utilised books, articles and interviews to investigate the sociopolitical, colonial and postcolonial history of Cape Verde, Nigeria, Mauritius and Malawi, before investigating the development of literature and drama and then later Shakespeare production in these four countries. This

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[49] Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, 2nd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 87; B. A. Walmsley, 'Why People Go to the Theatre: A Qualitative Study of Audience Motivation', *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 10.4 (2011), 335–51 (pp. 4,8,9).
[50] Walmsley, p. 10.
[51] Bennett, pp. 90–93.
[52] Nelson, pp. 98–99.
[53] Ibid, p. 42.

method is in line with Bharucha's, whereby he engages with the fictional literature of the culture engaged with, though what I undertook deviated from Bharucha, as my concerns lay with the historical and sociopolitical and not the fictional.

I searched the Malawi National Archives to access primary source material on education and curriculum policy in relation to Shakespeare in colonial Malawian schools to evidence my mapping of the development of Shakespeare in Malawi from a wide variety of external and Malawian sources. I created questionnaires for three target groups of Malawians – secondary school students, Nanzikambe Arts actors and academics/international scholars from Chancellor College, University of Malawi (CHANCO) – to ascertain their thoughts about a potential translation of *Romeo and Juliet* into the vernacular. 21 surveys were completed (Appendix A). I endeavoured to establish if there was interest from Malawians before the project was instigated; the results showed that there was. I commissioned a translation of *Romeo and Juliet* into Chichewa. I took this decision in response to the answers from the questionnaires and the interviews I conducted in Malawi and the analysis of productions discussed in chapter one. To give the resulting text the optimum opportunity of being relevant to Chichewa-speaking Malawians, I consciously did not offer the translator, Stanley Onjezani Kenani, any instruction other than to translate it into Chichewa. The decision to undertake a close translation of the text, rather than produce an adaptation of the play, was his alone.

At CHANCO in June 2015 I conducted two weeks of practical exploratory workshops. A group of ten fourth-year Fine Arts students and I explored the translated text through practical exercises and discussions (Appendix B). I did not consciously impose any particular aesthetic or method upon the workshops because part of the research investigation was to work dialogically with the actors. The purpose of the workshops was to develop ways of working with the group. I am aware that during the workshops my existing knowledge as a practitioner and my prior theoretical research were deployed. It is important to state that, in the fast moving environment of a theatre workshop, I made comments and suggested exercises as a result of my instantaneous analysis of how my practical knowledge

could be usefully employed in our performative explorations of the text.[54] The practitioners whose ideas I was conscious of using at various points were Augusto Boal, Berthold Brecht and Konstantin Stanislavski. Workshop exploration is a common form of research, either when developing a new play or when experimenting with technique. Brook used workshops when preparing for his production of *The Ik*; however, his workshops were conducted in Paris with a cast who, while international, were not from Uganda. Bharucha engaged with the fictional literature of the culture he was going to work with and used practical modes of exploring the text before engaging with the script. I adapted and then deviated from these models to explore the text, engage with local performers and to acquaint myself with the culture so that the work on the final performance was, as far as possible, rooted within contemporary Malawi.

For the final practice element of the research, conducted in early 2015, I engaged Misheck Mzumara, a professional actor and teacher from Mzuzu University, to aid my setting up the infrastructure required for the rehearsals and final performances. This formed part of my attempt to minimise the 'us vs them' binary. In working together I hoped to create a rehearsal room where the balance of power was reasonably even, which would, in turn, facilitate intercultural encounters that would offer more freedom for Malawian cultural performance modes to emerge.

I edited the text to a running time of 60 minutes, to negate the need for an interval – a common practice in both English-language touring/festival and foreign-language productions of Shakespeare's plays and a convention in Malawi. I created an abridged version of the play, the process of which I discuss in chapter three, which retained as many characters and scenes as possible in order to best serve the requirements of the English Literature component of the MSCE, which requires students to have a grasp of the major themes, characters and overarching narrative, and to give general audiences an overall immersion within the play as a unit.

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[54] Ibid, p. 9.

Through lessons learnt on my previous two visits to Malawi, I knew that I would have to arrive fully equipped with the resources to conduct the surveys because printing and photocopying had proved extremely difficult in the past. I was always keenly aware that, while school or university audiences might speak English, rural audiences might not and so the surveys would need to be accessible and clear. The most significant information I needed to ascertain was whether the production was positively or negatively received, so I created a visual survey with smiling faces ranging from 'Very Happy' to 'Very Sad', which could be ticked (Appendix A). Smiling is a positive visual sign in Malawi and so I knew the implication would be clear. To be sure, I made certain that those conducting the survey clearly explained that the survey was asking about the personal response to the production and not whether they thought the content of the play was good/happy or bad/sad. The results I gathered after the shows indicated that this was understood.

I had intended to develop my work at CHANCO by returning to rehearse and produce the full production with the same group there. After consultation with Magalasi I was told this would not be possible. No reason was given. My former colleague, Mzumara, had taken up a position as a drama lecturer at Mzuzu University and he invited me to come and work with 13 students from the Mzuzu University Theatre Group (MUTAG) (Appendix C).

I used the UK theatre industry model of a three-week rehearsal period leading straight into three performances. The time within the rehearsal room was curtailed by the cast's commitments. I created a rehearsal schedule ensuring every scene in the play was blocked before we began to run longer sections of the production. We were able to run the production in full three times before the first performance. I also employed modes of rehearsal that would allow me to gain as much time with the actors as possible:

Summary of Practical Rehearsal Methods:

- Myself, Hussein Gopole (musical director, choreographer and senior performer) and Mzumara created our own system of parallel rehearsals. We worked in large spaces, allowing three scenes to be worked on

simultaneously. Whole group rehearsals were conducted at dusk. During the day Gopole and I worked with small groups/individuals, affording us the opportunity to develop a closer working relationship with some members of the cast.

- We operated an open rehearsal room to allow free access to interested parties.
- As a senior performer in the group, Gopole often led the warm-ups at the start of rehearsals.

To investigate the impact of the performance on a range of Malawian audiences, Mzumara and I arranged for performances at Luwinga Secondary School (8 April), Mzuzu University (8 April) and Chingalire village in Lilongwe (9 April).

I filmed sections of the workshops where I felt we were making exciting performative discoveries or where useful evaluations were occurring. Through daily diary entries I tracked moments of significance and recorded my reflections on the process.[55] The DVD recording facilitated retrospective analysis of individual performance in more detail than was possible during live rehearsal or performances. A professional Malawian company undertook the filming of the performance in the village.

I devised simple post-show questionnaires to gain insight into how the audience had viewed the production. Short post-show interviews with audience members were also conducted (see relevant appendices). There were not enough questionnaires or interviews to draw firm conclusions about the entire audience or draw suitably reliable datasets. However, these responses provided evidence of the impact on individuals. After the final performance, recorded interviews with some of the actors captured their thoughts about the methods that had been used in rehearsal and performance, and how they felt the process of rehearsal and performance had impacted on them (Appendix I).

[55] Ibid, pp. 86–92.

My analysis of the process and resulting production of *Romeo ndi Julieti* has been undertaken within the parameters of the theoretical framework set out earlier in this chapter, namely considering issues of intercultural theatre production and postcolonial performance.

CHAPTER ONE: A Consideration of Shakespeare Productions in Africa

Shakespeare Performances In Cape Verdean Creole, Yoruba And Mauritian Creole

Introduction

This chapter examines the wider context of Shakespeare performance in translation in Africa, by considering *Rei Lear* (2003), translated by João Branco and Fonseca Soares in Cape Verde, Chief Ayantade Ipadeola's Nigerian *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* (2012) and Dev Virahsawmy and Nisha and Michael Walling's Mauritian *Toufann* (1999), primarily through an intercultural theatre lens.

I will also be considering the contentious terms 'global' and 'universal' when applied to Shakespeare's works. 'Global Shakespeare' in its most simplified form asserts that Shakespeare 'belongs to no single language or culture',[1] implying a body of work which is not constrained by considerations such as language, cultural specificities or, most importantly, any cultural imperialism associated with the source nation. Sandra Young uses Ben Johnson's assertion that 'Shakespeare was "not for an age but for all time" ' to frame her book chapter 'Shakespeare without Borders' in *South African Essays on Universal Shakespeare* (2014), in which she interrogates the 'politics of literary production today'. She pays particular

[1] 'Sharing Shakespeare's Differences', *University of Warwick: Global Shakespeare* <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/activities/projects/globalshakespeare/aboutus/> [accessed 13 August 2015].

attention to the importance of the historical and political in understanding artistic choices within Shakespeare productions.[2] She concludes:

> Instead of vacillating between the two poles of resistance and appropriation, our engagement with multiple 'Shakespeares' may open up new avenues of thought and offer new registers within which to explore human experience from this location, recognising that having travelled this far, Shakespeare has become wonderfully, productively, unhinged.[3]

Whilst I agree with the sentiment, I find the term 'unhinged' problematic in this instance. It implies a degree of the *accidental,* the *unbalanced* or the *mad*, which rather undermines the preceding statement. While she may be celebrating the transgressive, there remains a hint of illegitimacy in comparison to those productions that stick closely to the source.

I seek to contextualise *Rei Lear, Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* and *Toufann* by examining how language and performance politics interact with and impact on the conception and delivery of contemporary translations and productions of Shakespeare's text. Furthermore, seeking to understand the process of production and the final aesthetic of a work is essential to understanding *if* intercultural Shakespeare can, or indeed *should*, move beyond the Western-facing hegemony that is so prevalent within productions and scholarly discourse. I show that, far from being 'unhinged', the translations I examine are logical and deliberate performative acts. They are neither passive nor accidental, and each production is productive and moves intercultural discourse and possibility forward.[4]

Rei Lear [*King Lear*] was presented at the Cape Verde Mindelact International Theatre Festival, directed by the Portuguese director João Branco in Cape Verdean Creole (or Kriolu or Crioulo), following a Portuguese version of the original English text.[5] *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* [*The Winter's Tale*] was presented in Yoruba at The Globe Theatre in London by Nigeria's Renegade Theatre, directed by Wole Oguntokun.

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[2] *South African Essays on 'Universal' Shakespeare*, ed. by Christopher Thurman (Farnham, Surrey ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 39, 46–49.
[3] Ibid, p. 52.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Christina S. McMahon, *Recasting Transnationalism Through Performance: Theatre Festivals in Cape Verde, Mozambique and Brazil* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 141.

Toufann [*The Tempest*] was originally translated/adapted into Mauritian Creole (Kreole) by Dev Virahsawmy and published in 1991. It was then translated back into modern English by (British) Michael and (Mauritian) Nisha Walling, and directed by Michael Walling for production in London in 1999. These relatively recent productions provide the basis upon which I contextualise the challenges and concerns that may arise when producing a Shakespeare play in an African language for a contemporary audience.

Background to Cape Verde, Nigeria and Mauritius

Cape Verde

Cape Verde is a small country comprising of ten islands some 370 miles off the Senegalese west African coast.[6] The 1456 arrival of the Portuguese on the uninhabited islands, followed by west African slaves being brought to work, resulted in a contemporary population of mixed European and African descent. Although the resident population only numbers 520,502, it has more than doubled since 1960.[7] The Portuguese colonised the island for 500 years before Cape Verde won her independence in 1975.[8] While the country has made progress in developing its economy, it is still a 'poor' nation with issues such as sanitation and access to safe, clean water hindering its prosperity.[9] The influence of Portuguese culture upon Cape Verde remains significant; many of the islands' religious festivities can be traced back to its former coloniser. Only in relatively recent times, from the early 1900s, have the literary and theatre scenes emerged.

Nigeria

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[6] Raymond A. Almeida and Patricia Nyhan, 'Cape Verde and Its People: A Short History, Part I [And] Folk Tales of the Cape Verdean People.', 1976, p. 8 <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED137152> [accessed 28 November 2015].
[7] 'The World Bank - Data', *The World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL> [accessed 21 August 2016].
[8] Almeida and Nyhan, p. 8.
[9] 'Cabo Verde: Overview - Worldbank Page', *Worldbank.org* <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/caboverde/overview> [accessed 8 July 2017].

Situated on the west coast of Africa, Nigeria is the continent's most populated country with over 186,000,000 recorded citizens in 2016.[10] There are some 250 ethnic groups.[11] Since the earliest days of human existence people have lived, worked and traded in Nigeria, as numerous significant archaeological finds have proved.[12]

In 1914 the British Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria amalgamated under the rule of the British. Independence was finally granted in 1960 with the Republican constitution being adopted in 1963.[13] Nigeria has since suffered from significant political instability and ethnic tensions, largely attributable to the European-designed geographical boundaries imposed during the nineteenth century that neglected existing ethnic borders. This disregard for ethnicity within the region resulted in a post-independence bloody civil war whereby 'domination and disadvantage' nearly saw the country fragment.[14] Progress was made through a 'federal system' that allowed for governance not reliant on ethnicity, while the oil boom of the 1970s paved the way for economic growth and educational development through universities.[15] Culture and performance in Nigeria have ancient roots, but significant to this chapter are the Yoruba people, from Ife in the south of Nigeria, who established the 'Kingdom of Oyo' in the 1700s where 'the promotion of cultural performances' formed a part of their prosperity and developed 'social and political systems'.[16]

Mauritius

Settlers sent by the Dutch East India Company in 1638 were the first inhabitants of the small Indian Ocean island of Mauritius. By the late 1700s the island's

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[10] 'Nigeria', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017 <http://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria> [accessed 2 June 2016].
[11] 'Nigeria'; National Geographic Society, 'Nigeria Facts, Nigeria Flag -- National Geographic' <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/nigeria-facts/> [accessed 7 July 2017].
[12] Martin Banham, *A History of Theatre in Africa*, 1st edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 138.
[13] 'Nigeria'; Martin Banham, Errol Hill, and George Woodyard, *The Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 67.
[14] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 67.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Banham, p. 139.

population comprised of '200 Dutch colonists and 500-1000 slaves'.[17] The French ruled between 1722 and 1810 when Mauritius came under British rule until independence was gained in 1968.[18] African slaves had been brought to the island by the French and British, and when slavery was abolished by Britain in 1834 Indian 'indentured labourers were brought in'; the diversity of the population and their cultures was initially used by the European colonisers to subjugate and separate communities.[19] However, post-independence, while social divisions were a harsh reality, one platform where social cohesion was explored was culture.

Language and the Development of Theatre in Cape Verde, Nigeria and Mauritius

Language is a fundamental part of human interaction and the specific language spoken, the dialect or accent, provides significant cultural indicators about the speaker.[20] This chapter is concerned, amongst other things, with how daily life, language and culture have interacted and impacted Shakespeare in performance in postcolonial Cape Verde, Nigeria and Mauritius.

One of the vital functions of language *is* the cultural exploration and expression of daily living.[21] People have historically developed forms of cultural expression and performance as part of their lives. I argue that it is reasonable to assume that people largely conduct these pursuits in 'the language of everyday life'.[22] How this manifests in countries where the spoken language of the majority of the population has forcibly been suppressed is highly relevant to how theatre developed within Cape Verde, Nigeria and Mauritius. All three of the productions I examine take a source play text written by Shakespeare and create a performance text and then

[17] Wolfgang Lutz and Anne Babette Wils, 'People on Mauritius: 1638–1991', in *Population — Development — Environment*, ed. by Wolfgang Lutz (Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 1994), pp. 75–97 (pp. 75–76).
[18] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 63.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Katherine Carter and Judy Aulette, 'Creole in Cape Verde Language, Identity and Power', *Ethnography*, 10.2 (2009), 213–36 (p. 215).
[21] *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Culture*, ed. by Farzad Sharifian (Routledge, 2014), p. 6.
[22] Carter and Aulette, p. 214.

production intended to use the daily language of its local audience (recognising that the multi-sensory nature of theatre requires more than translated words for performance).

Cape Verdean Languages

Pidgin languages were developed by the diverse African populations enslaved by European traders from the late 1400s onwards, and were typically used between these two groups as lingua francas for trading and business communication.[23] To allow effective communication between the numerous parties, African languages and colonial languages – Portuguese, in the case of Cape Verde – merged to form unique Creole vernacular languages, which were used within communities and not as languages of commerce.[24] This is an important point to stress, as the suppression of vernacular languages impacted the development of theatre in Cape Verde as I discuss below.

This complex colonial and linguistic history resulted in a nation where the current official language is Portuguese but the majority of Cape Verdeans speak Crioulo, or as Marcia Rego states:

> In Cape Verde people speak a language they rarely read or write (Kriolu or Crioulo), while they read and write in a language they mostly do not speak (Portuguese).[25]

This can be partly attributed to the state-sanctioned suppression of Crioulo throughout the colonial period. Publication of literature in the language was prohibited until just before independence, and there was a ban on its use by workers in government buildings.[26] Portuguese was also the language of education. Linguistic suppression created a 'diglossic speech community', where Portuguese or 'high' language is used for formal purposes, education and literature, while the 'low' language, Crioulo, is used informally or as daily

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[23] Ibid, p. 216; 'Pidgin | Linguistics', *Encyclopedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pidgin> [accessed 16 June 2017].
[24] Carter and Aulette, pp. 216, 217.
[25] Márcia Rego, *The Dialogic Nation of Cape Verde: Slavery, Language, and Ideology* (Washington DC: Lexington Books, 2015), p. 1.
[26] Carter and Aulette, p. 214.

parlance.[27] Francois Lionnet contextualises prevailing attitudes towards Creoles as a 'literary' language in stark terms:

> Creole literatures are not usually studied as technically innovative interventions capable of pushing the existing boundaries of genre and the parameters of literary analysis.[28]

Portuguese remained the language of instruction within the Cape Verdean school system at every level until 2009.[29] In 2010, however, the government made strides towards achieving universal education and allowed Crioulo to be used within all schools.[30]

The Development of Theatre in Cape Verde

The colonisers had quashed local performance traditions.[31] Those cultural performance traditions that remained had substantial connections with religious ritual: *Romaria* (pilgrimage), a form of pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint on their feast day, is a simultaneously secular performance and religious celebration.[32] An amateur theatre group was active in Praia on the island Santiago and another was active in the port city of Mindelo on São Vincente in the 1960s and 1970s,[33] but only after 1975 did cultural performance reclamation begin through the work of theatre companies such as *Korda Kaoberdi* and *Juventude em Marcha,* whose productions blended popular comedy and traditional performance.[34] In the absence of established Cape Verdean theatre traditions, contemporary mainstream theatre has been significantly shaped and developed by Portuguese director João Branco, with mainstream theatre practice being mainly produced in Mindelo on

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[27] Ibid, pp. 214, 216.
[28] *Minor Transnationalism*, ed. by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 202.
[29] Carter and Aulette, p. 214.
[30] Jose Manuel Marques, 'Cape Verde: An Overview, Trends and Futures', in *Education in West Africa*, ed. by Emefa Takyi-Amoako (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), p. 102.
[31] Eunice S. Ferreira, 'Crioulo Shakespeareano & the Creolising of King Lear', in *Shakespeare in & out of Africa*, ed. by Jane Plastow and Martin Banham, African Theatre, 12 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), p. 112.
[32] Banham, p. 399.
[33] Ibid, p. 401.
[34] Ferreira, p. 112.

São Vicente: the Mindelact theatre festival being the focus of theatre production in Cape Verde.[35]

Eunice Ferreira credits the emergence of Shakespeare performance in Cape Verde to João Branco, with productions of the Bard's work being produced and directed by either Branco himself, or his alumni.[36] Herlandson Duarte is the only other director in the country to have directed 'formal' Shakespeare.[37] Duarte, who was taught by Branco, directed a 'free adaptation' of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* entitled *Julietas* (2005) for Teatro Solaris and *Sonho de uma noite de verao* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2005).[38] Notably, the mechanicals scene from *Sonho de uma noite de verao* criticised the 'structures of authority' that supported the festival and the audiences that attend it.[39] This is an indication that the dominance of the festival's work in Cape Verde is not nationally supported, and is a fascinating insight into the subversive use of Shakespeare performance.

Shakespeare in Cape Verde

In Cape Verde, the significant cultural influences were historically Lusophone. British writers such as Shakespeare have not been a significant literary or theatrical force. Shakespeare was not taught in Cape Verdean schools under colonisation, and this probably explains the late introduction of his plays to Cape Verde in 1998 with *Romeo and Juliet* in a Crioulo translation by Mario Matos, directed by Branco.[40]

Branco is a significant figure in Cape Verdean theatre. Born in Paris to Portuguese parents, both of whom were artists,[41] he became a theatre director before settling in Cape Verde in 1990. In 1995 he founded the International Theatre Festival of Mindelo – Mindelact – which his website boldly claims is 'a festival today considered the most important African theater event'. His body of work includes

[35] Banham, p. 401.
[36] Ferreira, p. 113.
[37] Ibid, p. 127.
[38] McMahon, p. 131.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ferreira, pp. 112–13; Carter and Aulette, p. 213.
[41] Ferreira, p. 116.

productions of plays by Shakespeare, Lorca, Molière and Beckett as well as Christian religious stories. Significantly for the dominant festival in the country, work emanating from Cape Verdean sources makes up a minority of the productions.[42]

By 2014 Branco was credited with having directed three translated Shakespeare productions – *Tempestad* (*The Tempest* 2013), *Rei Lear* (*King Lear* 2003) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1998).[43] Branco has coined a term for his work: *crioulizaco,* described by Ferreira as 'taking universal classics of theatre and "make[ing] them our own", with translation into Crioulo as the primary adaptive strategy'.[44] Branco explains that it is the changes to the structure, the place, language and narrative of the plays he adapts that allow them to be defined as 'distinctly Cape Verdean'.[45] However, because of the status of Branco, 'Cape Verdean' should be treated with some caution, and McMahon critiques him thus:

> He [Branco] has also used his position as artistic director to cultivate rules of theatre spectatorship and set norms of taste for festival audiences.[46]

In contrast to McMahon, Ferreira has described Branco as a 'galvanising force in Cape Verdean theatre'.[47] Clearly, his practices and his influence have divided opinion.

Branco's adaptations of Shakespeare and other Western writers into Crioulo demonstrate that Cape Verde is capable of producing theatre of international quality.[48] However, Mindelact receives productions from all over the Lusophone world and the festival has been described as 'staging a burgeoning Lusophone

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[42] 'Web Page - About João Branco', *João Branco* <http://joaobranco.weebly.com/about.html> [accessed 21 August 2016].
[43] 'João Branco', *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia* <https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.co.uk&sl=pt-BR&u=https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo%25C3%25A3o_Branco&usg=ALkJrhhUUTD_ZNx0OtAkAGJ54so9rZEg4Q> [accessed 25 June 2016].
[44] Ferreira, p. 116.
[45] McMahon, p. 136.
[46] Ibid, p. 138.
[47] Ferreira, p. 116.
[48] Ibid.

transnationalism'.[49] McMahon talks of a linguistic and cultural solidarity where the festival can act as a focus for Lusophone theatrical celebration.[50] The danger of a focus that is out-facing to the wider Portuguese speaking world, rather than a more introverted effort to nurture and develop a Cape Verdean theatre tradition, is that efforts by local groups seem not to be prioritised or developed. Indeed McMahon illustrates this with an example where a local troupe was all but abandoned by the Mindelact audience because the aesthetic of the work was not in line with audience expectations of an international festival.[51] There have been Cape Verdean theatre practitioners who claim that they had been unable to get funding for their projects because of the domination of Mindelact, for there is an assumption on the part of local councils that, by funding one major festival, other smaller enterprises would directly benefit.[52] This effective if inadvertent silencing of local culture is concerning. Arguably the festival could be seen as feeding into wider postcolonial Portuguese culture that is dictating the contemporary Cape Verdean theatre aesthetic.

Nigerian Languages

'But can language be separate from nation?'[53] Susan Bennett and Christie Carson pose this question within their analysis of the Globe Theatre's Cultural Olympiad celebrations, which required companies to produce work in a vernacular language.[54] Some languages can be separated from their nation, specifically colonial languages such as English, French and Portuguese, and are therefore global. However, it is deeply problematic, with neo-colonial overtones, to insist a multilingual nation such as Nigeria bring a production to a stage of global interest, but to only be able to undertake the performance in one spoken language.

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[49] McMahon, p. 1.
[50] Ibid, pp. 2–4.
[51] Ibid, p. 2.
[52] Ibid, pp. 135–36.
[53] Susan Bennett and Christie Carson, *Shakespeare Beyond English* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 5.
[54] Dominic Dromgoole and Tom Bird, 'Globe to Globe - O for a Muse of Fire' <http://globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com/archive/2012/> [accessed 21 August 2016].

English is the official language of Nigeria, though it is a vast country with a multiplicity of cultures, languages and dialects, with Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo being the most widely spoken local tongues.[55] Nigeria's linguistic journey is deeply complex for it has been a multilingual hub for more than a millennium.[56] British colonialism interrupted local language development through the imposition of English, as it was the language of instruction in Nigerian colonial schools, though only the privileged few among the indigenous population could access this education.[57]

In a country as linguistically diverse as Nigeria it is essential to illustrate some contemporary issues concerning language in the country. In 2001 Wale Adegbite researched the language attitudes of students attending Obafemi Awolowo University, in Ife.[58] He asked students to specify a preference for their mother tongue or for English in a variety of situations. They then attended a series of lectures in different languages within the English Department, before being asked again what their language preferences for university lectures were. The majority opted for English as the preferred language for teaching and learning before the lectures, but their mother tongue after the lectures. Consequently, participants suggested effective improvements such as English being supplemented with local languages as an alternative to the exclusive use of English.[59] Adegbite suggested that the dominance of English over indigenous languages was directly linked to the linguistic tastes of the powerful 'policy making' elite and that multilingualism is a significant part of Nigerian identity.[60] In the context of the Globe Theatre commission then, a production that is restricted to using only one language in the vernacular is problematic if the vernaculars are multiple.

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[55] Don Rubin, *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Africa* (Taylor & Francis, 1997), p. 220.
[56] Nick Faraclas, *Nigerian Pidgin* (Routledge, 2013), p. 2.
[57] Andrew Simpson, *Language and National Identity in Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 179.
[58] Wale Adegbite, 'Enlightenment and Attitudes of the Nigerian Elite on the Roles of Languages in Nigeria', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 16.2 (2003), 185–96 (p. 188).
[59] Ibid, p. 188.
[60] Ibid, pp. 188–89.

The Development of Theatre in Nigeria

In this summary of the history and development of Nigerian theatre it would be impossible to mention the vast number of different cultural performance forms and styles and their development. *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* was rooted in both Nigerian Yoruba performance culture and colonial European popular theatre tradition; I will, therefore, focus on these two forms.[61]

Small 'city-states', belonging to one of 25 kingdoms, made up the Yoruba territories in the south west of Nigeria.[62] Ritual and cultural practice linked the peoples of the Yoruba state together, and significant features included faith in:

> Gods and deities, belief in predestination and reverence for the ancestors, particularly through their earthly representatives, the Ifa priest (*babalawo*), and their symbolic presence in the Egungun masquerade: (symbolic in the sense that male members of the Egungun cult don the mask to represent the ancestors.)[63]

Ogun (god of war) and Sango (god of thunder) are highly significant within Nigerian literature. These gods were fundamental to Yoruba culture and were:

> Represented in drama by the passage-rites of hero-gods, a projection of man's conflict with forces which challenge his efforts to harmonise with his environment physical, social and psychic.[64]

Soyinka described their role as that of 'an intermediary quester […] [an] explorer into territories of "essence–ideal", around whose edges man fearfully skirts.'[65] Egungun was an atavistic cult from the fifteenth century that used improvised masquerade performance/ritual form and stock masked characters for satirical performances.[66] From these performances developed Alaranjo theatre (during the middle of the seventeenth century), which began as courtly entertainment under the patronage of the ruling Alaafin.[67] Over the next 100 years it developed into a

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[61] Banham, p. 139.
[62] Oluseyi Ogunjobi, 'The Visual Languages of Duro Ladipo's Theatre in Oba Moro, Oba Koso and Oba Waja' (University of Leeds, 2011), p. 6.
[63] Adesola Adeyemi, 'Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn, The Winter's Tale', in *Shakespeare in & out of Africa*, ed. by Jane Plastow and Martin Banham, African Theatre, 12 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), p. 49.
[64] Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Kerr, *African Popular Theatre*, pp. 11–13.
[67] Ibid, p. 12; Ogunjobi, pp. 1–2; Banham, p. 141.

more professional form, and other theatre 'troupes' developed under the support of their respective rulers. The modes of performance became more structured, a particular feature being a chorus who sang commentaries connecting with the audience directly.[68] Yoruba professional theatre developed out of this popular theatre movement throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and became a highly developed and influential performance form.[69]

Colonial theatre was developed through local collaboration with the Church Missionary Society and British colonialism, which produced an elite of economic settlers and leaders who had been given Western education. The missionary churches programmed concerts and Victorian-modelled music hall entertainments to promote European culture and arts, the first of which took place in October 1866.[70] The church began to use the concerts to gain new congregations, mixing European and traditional Nigerian performance forms to promote their competing missions.[71]

Nigerian 'total theatre' developed when performances were devised that incorporated farce as well as 'songs, chants, dance and music' taken from their use within Protestant church services during the late 1900s.[72] The form utilised elements of Yoruba operatic theatre, which shares elements of its 'Renaissance-derived European "ancestry" by employing indigenous chant and songs as well as dialogue, an echo of 'librettos, arias and scores'.[73] The theatre work of Hubert Ogunde during the 1950s was groundbreaking for 'he withdrew the theatre from the direct patronage of the court and church and gave it to the people'.[74] This

[68] Kerr, *African Popular Theatre*, p. 12.
[69] Ogunjobi, p. 2; Banham, p. 141.
[70] Banham, p. 144.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, p. 146.
[73] Ibid, pp. 146–47.
[74] Ebun Clark, *Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre* (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. ix.

fusion of forms created the 'syncretic theatre aesthetic' so linked to Yoruba theatre and the successive Nigerian literary theatre movement.[75]

Shakespeare in Nigeria

Shakespeare was a significant feature of the Nigerian colonial curriculum.[76] In 'The Living Dramatist and Shakespeare' (1987) Gibbs examines how contact with the Bard's plays through secondary and university education during the 1940s and 1950s influenced the writing of Nobel Prize-winning Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka. For example, Gibbs draws parallels with Soyinka's *Dance of the Forests* (1960) and Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606). In 'Shakespeare and the Living Dramatist' (1983) Soyinka explores the connections between the Arabic world and Shakespeare's plays; in so doing he highlights how significant his early contact with the Bard's works was.[77] To date, Nigeria's education system continues to incorporate Shakespeare in its mandatory, British-styled A-level exam curriculum.[78]

Ibadan University was the home for productions of Shakespeare during the early 1960s, when the comedies *The Taming of The Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were presented by the Ibadan University Travelling Theatre.[79] Prominent playwright Wale Ogunyemi penned a one-hour version of *Macbeth* entitled *A'are Akogun* (1968), which was performed in Yoruba and

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[75] Banham, p. 148; Olu Obafemi, *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision* (Bayreuth University, 1996), XL, p. 13.
[76] James Gibbs, 'The Living Dramatist and Shakespeare: A Study of Shakespeare's Influence on Wole Soyinka', in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. by Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 169–78.
[77] Wole Soyinka, 'Shakespeare and the Living Dramatist', in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. by Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–10.
[78] Bennett and Carson, p. 242; 'Shakespeare in Other Worlds', *Folger Shakespeare Library*, 2012; S.O. Labo-Popoo, 'The Place of Literature in the Teaching of English Language as a Second Language', *The Social Sciences*, 5.1 (2010), 49–54 (p. 50).
[79] Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 298.

English.[80] Shakespeare's works were more recently used for community education purposes – *Makbutu* (*Macbeth,* 2000) by Chuck Mike and the Nigerian performance Studio Workshop in Lagos.[81] Evidently, his plays have retained a foothold within the Nigerian theatre landscape.

Mauritian Languages

Language choice and its social associations in Mauritius are complex. Raja–Carrim states that the 12 languages on the island are a mark of 'ethnic and/or religious groups' and broadly divide into three categories – the lesser spoken 'ancestral languages (Indian and Chinese)', the two 'colonial languages (English and French)' and, thirdly, the lingua franca '(Mauritian Creole/Kreol)'.[82] The development of Kreol is summarised thus: 'Kreol is a French-lexified plantation creole that evolved in the eighteenth century at the time of French colonisation'.[83] Kreol lacks 'set orthography' and this, in conjunction with its historical 'association with Afro–Mauritians' who are viewed as part of the lower social order, resulted in resistance against the incorporation of Kreol as part of the national identity.[84] Language, and specifically Kreol, was central to the decolonisation and political struggle in Mauritius from the 1960s.[85] From 1983, Kreol's position was recognised officially as the national language; however, this classification was perceived by some as posing a 'threat to development and progress'.[86] Kreol remained a signifier of race and class because English was retained as the language of administration, governance and the language of instruction in schools.[87]

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[80] Ibid, pp. 292–94.
[81] Ibid, p. 297.
[82] Aaliya Rajah-Carrim, 'Mauritian Creole and Language Attitudes in the Education System of Multiethnic and Multilingual Mauritius', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 28.1 (2007), 51–71 (p. 51).
[83] Ibid, p. 51.
[84] Ibid, pp. 52–53.
[85] Jane Wilkinson, 'Interviews with Dev Virahsawmy and Michael Walling', ed. by Martin Banham, James Gibbs, and Femi Osofisan, *African Theatre*, 2: Playwrights and Politics (2001), 109–24 (p. 110).
[86] Ibid, p. 110.
[87] Gerda Sonck, 'Language of Instruction and Instructed Languages in Mauritius', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 26.1 (2005), 37–51 (abstract); Roshni Mooneeram, *From Creole to Standard: Shakespeare, Language, and Literature in a Postcolonial Context* (Rodopi, 2009), p. 12.

The study of Shakespeare's work is still compulsory for those accessing the 'universal' education available in Mauritius.[88] Kreol has never been studied in the country's schools, despite it being the first language of 70% of Mauritians.[89] In 2014, the Mauritian Government issued its *Education Reforms in Action* paper, which detailed its planned implementation of Kreol into the primary curriculum of Mauritian schools.[90]

The Development of Theatre in Mauritius

Theatre in Mauritius is described as having had various influences, particularly the African Sega, a highly rhythmical percussive musical dance form developed by Africans who suffered under the bondage of slavery, which is always sung in Kreol.[91] In Mauritius, this musical form has become an ingrained and celebrated part of its cultural heritage. It is an example of a genre with 'popular origins' as opposed to those that have been synthetically introduced to serve economic or political means.[92] The Sega was brought to the island with the African slaves, the 'folk drama' that accompanied the immigrants from India, and then formal theatre introduced by the European colonisers combined to create a diverse cultural heritage.[93]

The colonial aspects of Mauritian theatre history began during the occupation by the French. The first 'fitted up' theatre was built in 1754, which would explain the 'heavy bias towards lyrical drama, performed by French artists for a francophone

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[88] Lionnet and Shih, p. 207; Roshni Mooneeram, 'Language Politics in Dev Virahsawmy's Toufann, a Postcolonial Rewriting of The Tempest', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 41.3 (2006), 67–81 (p. 68).
[89] Rajah-Carrim, abstract.
[90] Mauritian Ministry for Education and Human Resources, *Education Reforms in Action 2008-2014*, September 2014, p. 2 <http://ministry-education.govmu.org/English/Documents/EDUCATION%20REPORT%20in%20Action%2002.9.14.pdf> [accessed 19 August 2016].
[91] Daniella Police, 'Mauritian Sega: The Trace of the Slave's Emancipatory Voice', *UTS Review*, 6.2 (2000), 57–69 (p. 57); 'Sega - Definition of Sega in English | Oxford Dictionaries', *Oxford Dictionaries | English* <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sega> [accessed 19 January 2017].
[92] Ibid, p. 1.
[93] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 63.

elite'.[94] Theatre development was predominantly considered a 'social event' comprising of a festival of operas attended by wealthy landowners of French-Mauritian heritage.[95] The first play in English, Frederick Lonsdale's *The Last of Mrs Cheney* (1823*)* was performed nine years after Mauritius came under British rule. Mooneeram maintains that both English and French literary drama were dominant stage forms until the time of Mauritian independence, with English theatre only prospering after the founding of the Mauritius Dramatic Club in 1932. Plays performed by the amateur performers of the club included works by Shakespeare.[96]

Shakespeare in Mauritius

Shakespeare has continued to be a feature of Mauritian culture even after independence. Shawkat M Toorawa stated that 'nineteen works appeared in English or Kreol, inspired by the bard in one way or another' between 1986 and 1998.[97] Of these, seven are listed as plays: four by Virahsawmy – *Zeneral Makbef* (1981), *Toufann,* (1991), *Hamlet 2* (1995) and *Sir Toby* (1998) – and two by Yacoob Ghanty – *Macbeth Revisited* (1995) and *Clinton and Cleopatra* (1999).[98] The University of Mauritius currently offers a module as part of its undergraduate English degree entitled 'Shakespeare in the 20th and 21st Centuries'; the focus of study is on contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare, and it offers the students the opportunity to create their own adaptations of his works and to continue the development of Shakespeare as a feature of Mauritian theatre.[99]

The Productions

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[94] Ibid, pp. 63–64.
[95] Rubin, pp. 192–93.
[96] Ibid, p. 193.
[97] Shawkat M. Toorawa, '"Strange Bedfellows"? Mauritian Writers and Shakespeare', *Wasafiri*, 15.30 (1999), 27–31 (p. 27).
[98] Ibid, p. 30; William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by William Proctor Williams, Sourcebooks Shakespeare (Naperville, Ill: Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2006), p. 31.
[99] Angela Ramsoondur and University of Mauritius, 'Shakespeare in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Academic Year 2014-15, Semester 2' <http://uom.ac.mu/fssh/images/English/MIS/2014/ENG2022Ysem2.pdf> [accessed 19 August 2016].

Rei Lear - The Context of Performance

The Mindelact International Festival promotes 'national and international spectacles of high quality' and has become highly regarded; it now boasts satellite events such as lectures and workshops alongside main-house productions.[100] The festival relies on the goodwill of the local and artistic population; no profit is made from ticket sales – volunteers, including the performers, organise and run it.[101] In a country with such a small resident population, and with ongoing issues of poverty, it is a significant achievement to have sustained a major festival for over 20 years. However, there are questions as to who benefits from the festival. McMahon notes that the ticket prices to see Cape Verdean troupes double when they are performing at the Mindelact Festival, and concludes that the 'national culture' being promoted by the festival is 'skewed towards a privileged minority population'.[102] The majority of the 220-member audience attending the festival's nightly main-stage shows comprise of 'local Mindelo theatregoers, Cape Verdean performers attending from other islands, and visiting artists from other countries, many of them Portuguese speaking.'[103] Is there a cultural benefit to the majority of local people and does this national cultural extravaganza include and represent them? For a festival that relies so heavily on the unpaid input of the local population for its survival, not to incorporate that population would verge on exploitation.

The Process of Translation

The script of *Rei Lear* was co-translated and adapted by Branco and Soares; Soares also took the title role of King Lear in the production.[104] It seems significant effort was put into moulding the play's themes, characters, events and locations into a

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[100] 'Mindelact Association | Theatre D'mund in Soncent' <https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.co.uk&sl=pt-BR&u=http://mindelact.org/&usg=ALkJrhin6ljKFzFFs36w5iomGCZOld_0wQ> [accessed 28 August 2016].
[101] McMahon, p. 132.
[102] Ibid, p. 25.
[103] Ibid, p. 132.
[104] Ibid, p. 140.

form and narrative that would be meaningful to, and reflective of, a Cape Verdean experience.[105] The play was translated into Crioulo and specifically into the variety spoken in Mindelo. It was described as 'Shakespearian Crioulo', which McMahon says was because it utilised a specific dialect that lent itself to lyricism, and that it differed from the Crioulo spoken in other parts of the country.[106] It was thus reflective of the poetry found in Shakespeare's English. Ferreira offered further insight into Soares' process explaining, 'Soares researched words that had fallen out of use and attempted to creolise Portuguese words'.[107] He also endeavoured to maintain Shakespeare's iambic pentameter, which Ferreira suggests results in the Crioulo translation achieving a greater poetry than the Portuguese text.[108] Modern linguistic and performance forms were also employed; the Fool, for example, 'raps' Shakespearian verse in both Portuguese and Crioulo, often ending phrases with 'yo'.[109]

Characters and their respective plot lines, such as that of Edmund and Edgar, and indeed Gloucester, were radically excised, leaving Lear as the single fatality. The ending changed utterly with Cordelia, in fulfilment of the concept of 'inheritance', being the one left to carry the legacy of her broken family forward.[110] In this regard there are similarities to both *Toufann* and *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn,* the narrative was adjusted significantly to fit with more culturally appropriate events. In the case of *Rei Lear,* it is impossible to be sure how separate or entwined the rehearsal process was with the process of translation because I was not able to engage with anyone directly involved with this project.

The Production

I have been unable to gain access to a film or video of the production and so I am reliant upon secondary accounts and photographs. McMahon described the production as abstract in its setting and mise-en-scene, with the character most

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid, p. 141.
[107] Ferreira, p. 118.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] McMahon, p. 140.

ripe for being adapted, King Lear himself depicted as an 'abstract vision of royalty' in the expected golden crown.[111] She states that *Rei Lear* was a rare example of a GTCCPM (Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Portugues do Mindelo) creolization that was not explicitly placed geographically in Cape Verde.[112]

Aesthetic

In the photographs I have seen of the production the costumes appear almost cartoon-like, exaggerated and simplified – in particular the Fool (Nuna Delgado), with an oversized jester's hat complete with velvet tabard. In another, the wooden throne sits centre stage with a reclining Lear (Fonseca Soares) on the knees of a caped Cordelia (Helen Rodrigues).[113] In both pictures, the stage looms out behind the action, large and cavernous, foreboding and domineering. Branco is evidently experimenting with form and aesthetic but, aside from the translated text and the rapping, I found no evidence of exploration utilising performance forms, either contemporary or traditional, from Cape Verde.

Performance Style

The performance style seemed extremely stark, utilising 'highly stylised movement patterns' and characters that 'did not face each other' when delivering dialogue. The actors playing the three sisters also used hand-held masks; these not only masked the wearer but were also removed and used to represent Lear rather than have the wearer physically connect with him directly. Ferreira described this style of representation as being particular to Branco, 'to physicalise and make literal that which is alluded to in a text.'[114] In summary, she argues that the stylisation of the production introduced a performance mode not usual in Cape Verde and that the form suggests that the world of the play is not Cape Verde. She says that Branco's use of the Fool, as the character most representative of 'Crioulo identity', was inconsistent with the decision for his lines to be in Portuguese and resulted in 'showcasing Delgado's [the Fool's] ability to take the inexplicable Portuguese verse

[111] Ibid, p. 139.
[112] Ibid, pp. 136, 139.
[113] Ferreira, p. 119.
[114] Ibid, p. 122.

and transform – or creolise – it through performance'.[115] This particular element of the production highlighted how the incorporation of identifiably local performance styles was not enough to overcome the colonial overtones that remain synonymous with using Portuguese in performance in Cape Verde.

Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn-The Context of Production

Renegade Theatre Company was founded in 2007 and, to date, has mounted 65 productions at the Muson Centre, Lagos under the artistic directorship of Wole Oguntokun. Their programme covers adaptations of international works including Shakespeare, as well as work by Aimé Césaire, Soyinka and Oguntokun himself.[116] Renegade Theatre was commissioned to produce *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* by the Globe Theatre for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad celebrations. The parameters of the commission were as follows:

> We are bringing together artists from all over the globe, to enjoy speaking these plays in their own language, in our Globe, within the architecture Shakespeare wrote for. The artists will play the Globe way – telling stories through the word and the actor, complemented by costumes, music and dance – and will complete each play within two-and-a-quarter hours (we hope).[117]

The Process of Translation

The text was developed in stages beginning with the full script of *The Winter's Tale,* which was translated from English to Yoruba by Chief Ayantade Ipadeola with a specification from Oguntokun to be 'true to Shakespeare'.[118] Oguntokun said the resulting text was extremely formal, as 'old Yoruba' was used.[119] Old Yoruba, or 'Yuroban', differs from the 'colloquial Yoruba, English and Pidgin spoken on the

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[115] Ibid, p. 123.
[116] 'Renegade Theatre - About Us' <http://www.renegadetheatreng.com/display.php?page=about> [accessed 21 August 2016].
[117] Dromgoole and Bird.
[118] Oluwole Oguntokun, Interview: Questionaire for Shakespeare in African Languages, 2015.
[119] Oluwole Oguntokun and Shakespeare's Globe, 'Globe Recorded Interview with Oluwole Oguntokun', *SoundCloud*, p. 0:30-1:00 <https://soundcloud.com/globe-education1> [accessed 26 November 2015].

streets of contemporary Lagos'.[120] The second stage utilised the original English text to facilitate a cast read-through to establish a consensus on specific word meanings and interpretation of the characters. Stage three fitted the original play into the Nigerian 'world view', the keystone being the transposition of Kings Leontes and Polixenes into the Yoruba gods, Ogun and Sango. The Shakespearian understanding of the nature and role of kingship broadly aligns with the 'essence–ideal' that Soyinka attributes to the Yoruba gods, that the King is close to perfection but that man is not, and this connection between the two cultures was a crucial decoding for their respective audiences.

During the rehearsal process Oguntokun identified a need for the ending of the play to resonate with a Nigerian audience, perhaps in acknowledgement of the Nigerian diaspora who might attend the London performance, but also to proffer ownership of the play to the cast. Oguntokun adjusted the original ending. In the translation, Oya (Hermione), upon reawakening, blesses the marriage of her daughter but returns to her sculpted state.[121] Oguntokun has stated, 'somebody has to pay the price' – there has to be a moral message for the story to be credible in Nigeria and in this instance it is Oya who loses her life.[122] This chimes with *Toufann* and *Rei Lear* where there was also a compulsion to change the narrative to aid the reception of the play for local audiences.

The Production

In Oguntokun's words:

> I was asked to make a choice of which Shakespeare play I would like to direct and since I didn't want to do the ones more common to West Africa, I chose *The Winter's Tale.* (There are no winters here).[123]

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[120] Bennett and Carson, p. 242.
[121] Sanusi Lookman and Sola Adeyemi, 'Itan Oginnintin at The Shakespeare Globe...Much More Desired from Nigeria', *NGR Guardian News*, 10 June 2012, section Sunday Magazine - Arts <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=88719:itan-oginnintin-at-the-shakespeare-globe-much-more-desired-from-nigeria&catid=180:arts&Itemid=707> [accessed 28 November 2015].
[122] Oguntokun and Shakespeare's Globe.
[123] Oguntokun, 'Interview: Questionaire for Shakespeare in African Languages'.

What I find interesting is Oguntokun's expressed desire to break from the plays that are often associated with African productions of Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *Julius Caesar*. His desire to tackle the problematic (in theatrical terms) in its own way breaks new ground. *The Winter's Tale* is seldom done in the UK; it is considered a 'problem play' because of its odd structure, for it begins as an intense drama but finishes as comedy. To make this production 'Nigerian', as per the remit of the commission, and for it to convey meaning to the audiences in London, was a considerable undertaking.

Aesthetic

After a Nigerian premiere in Lagos, the UK performance took place on London's Globe's thrust stage. No set was used; the production relied upon costumes and props to indicate location and to provide furniture for the scenes. In one memorable scene, Prince Florizel (Joshua Ademola Alabi), who is in disguise, courts Perdita (Oluwatoyin Alli-Hakeem) at the Shepherd's cottage (Act 4 scene 4 of the original play). Perdita's adoptive father, the Old Shepherd (Amos Oluronbi Olutokun), is flanked throughout by two huge masks. This inhuman presence imbued the scene with an added dimension of chaos, physical and metaphysical, and added considerable status to the lowly Shepherd. (Only later did I learn about the significance of the Igunnuko mask, the male ancestral presence at a significant family occasion.)[124] The ten foot tall, multicoloured, fabric-fringed cylindrical dancing masks were both spectacular and incongruous in the Globe, but in the best way – they forced the mock Elizabethan architecture to accept another culture's staging.

Performance Style

The production opened with the silent, anxious Antigonus (Adekunle Smart Adejumo) holding a baby, wandering carefully about the stage, his comforting of the child juxtaposed against the confident, clear and melancholy singing of Igba (Motúnràyo Oròbíyi), the female narrator.[125] The result was a sense of impending tragedy. Departing from the play's original structure, this production started with

[124] Adeyemi, p. 56.
[125] Ibid, p. 55.

Antigonus abandoning the infant Perdita on a desert shore, which in the original happens during Act 3 scene 3.[126]

Music and song were at the heart of the production, with the spoken narrative and dance woven throughout, which seemed in line with Yoruba performance traditions. For example, the cast depicted an overseas voyage using only oars as props, creating the momentum of the boat with their bodies, drumming, and singing. Characterisation relied on large demonstrative gestures. This worked well for the audience; if they were unable to access the language they could engage with the narrative through recognisable gestures, such as beckoning, pointing, and slapstick pratfalls. All of these gestures and styles were used within the very first scene, setting out the parameters of the production, and they gave me confidence that I could access and enjoy the performance despite the language barrier. This seemed to be a useful tool for engaging an intercultural audience and one to be considered within my own work.

Toufann -The Context of Production

Toufann differs from the previous two productions because no recording is available of the performance; the English text that is available is an adaptation of the original, which is not, according to co-translator M. Walling, necessarily reflective of its source.

Dev Virahsawmy is a significant figure in Mauritian theatre, Shakespeare translation, literature and social activism.[127] His early play *Li* (1977) was published in Kreol in 1981 after it was translated as *The Prisoner of Conscience.* The next play to achieve similar international acclaim was *Toufann.* His work also supports the concept of 'Global Shakespeare';[128] indeed, the four reasons he gave for his writing *Toufann* were:

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[126] Oluwole Oguntokun, *GlobePlayer - The Winter's Tale*, 2012 <https://globeplayer.tv/rentals/4971> [accessed 13 June 2016].
[127] *Shakespeare in & out of Africa*, ed. by Jane Plastow and Martin Banham, African Theatre, 12 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), p. ix; Lionnet and Shih, p. 204.
[128] 'Sharing Shakespeare's Differences'.

> To show that MC [Mauritian Creole] is capable of expressing 'great thoughts'. To build bridges between cultures. To indicate that the establishment of MC as a national language does not mean cultural isolation. It is also a way of sharing with others things that I find beautiful.[129]

He harnessed Shakespeare's play to make his own political statements about the then incumbent government. Virahsawmy's literary achievements, therefore, 'bridged the gap between elitist literary drama and popular performance'.[130]

The Translation

Virahsawmy's self-described 'translation adaptation' of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* can be described as a political, cultural, and linguistic act; it presented Kreol publicly as a language rich, versatile and capable of encapsulating the complexities of Shakespeare.[131] Virahsawmy summarises *Toufann* thus:

> *Toufann* is a political satire which turns Shakespeare's *Tempest* upside down. Caliban the monster capable of beautiful poetry becomes a symbol of cultural and biological miscegenation. He is the handsome and intelligent *metis*. Prospero is tyrannical but he is overcome by love. Characters from different Shakespeare's [sic] plays are used to comment on certain political situations where culture purity, the thirst for revenge and misuse of power are satirised.[132]

Toufann reverses the traditional, deformed representations of Kalibann (Caliban) by making him the attractive, capable lover of Kordelia (Cordelia) and ultimate joint ruler of their fantastical island. He uses race to highlight prejudices within Mauritian social hierarchy; Kalibann is mixed race and, due to his incredible scientific expertise, Prospero is reliant upon Kalibann for his scientific explorations.[133] Characters from Shakespeare's other plays also appear; Alonso is replaced by Lerwa Lir (King Lear*),* and Miranda by Kordelia (Cordelia) both characters from *King Lear.*[134] King Lear is synonymous with his descent into madness and this inclusion possibly acts as a counterpoint to the Prospero

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[129] Wilkinson, p. 111.
[130] Mooneeram, 'Language Politics in Dev Virahsawmy's Toufann', p. 71.
[131] Wilkinson, p. 109.
[132] Dev Virahsawmy to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Dev's Writing', 11 February 2016.
[133] Roshni Mooneeram, 'Shakespeare's Postcolonial Journey', in *Books Without Borders, Volume 1*, ed. by Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008), pp. 186–98 (p. 192).
[134] Toorawa, p. 27.

Virahsawmy creates, whose character's journey is one towards clarity and sanity. The play also included invented characters Kaspalto and Dammarro, who are based on Shakespeare's fools and clowns – a further departure from the original text. Mooneeram informs us that the two are recognisably Mauritian characters – Dammarro embodying the 'spliff-head' and Kaspalto the 'piss-head'.[135]

The Production

Toufann (Hindi word for 'cyclone') (1991) was first performed at the grand 1,500-seat theatre at The Rose Hill's Plaza, Mauritius,[136] where it was very successful at the box office and ran for several weeks.[137] It was directed by Rajoo Ramanah and performed by his amateur company.[138] Production design was deliberately minimal, using proxemics and theatre lighting; the primary focus was on the performances. Virahsawmy was explicit that this was a deliberate aesthetic choice taken to showcase the language of the production, Kreol, as being a language well capable of carrying such a significant and highly regarded text.[139]

Reflections

The research above has shown me a range of approaches to translating Shakespeare into African languages and how such processes impact the final production and its reception. I interrogated the strengths and weaknesses of each production, and what was most valuable to me was to select which elements of each might be appropriate for me to utilise in my own practice.

The motivations for the three productions varied, but it is clear that each harnessed a Shakespeare text as a source partially because of his global status. My research also highlights how choices such as the language used for a performance

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135 Mooneeram, 'Shakespeare's Postcolonial Journey', p. 192.
136 'Rose Hill - The Plaza Theatre of the Old Mauritius', *Vintage Mauritius*, 2014 <http://vintagemauritius.org/rose-hill/rose-hill-plaza-theatre-old-mauritius/> [accessed 20 June 2016].
137 Lionnet and Shih, p. 204; Dev Virahsawmy to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Toufann', 2 November 2016.
138 Virahsawmy to Bonsall, 'Email: Dev's Writing'.
139 Ibid.

and the nationality, status and economic power of those commissioning the work have notably wider implications other than the artistic, due to the cultural hegemony imported by the colonialists. Translators and theatre directors working in postcolonial intercultural settings, then, have a particularly crucial role to play. To my mind, they ought to be aware of, and sensitive to, potential conclusions that their work might provoke in order for me to consider them as collaborating with, rather than appropriating from, other cultures. African language translations of Shakespeare plays can create important, vibrant and engaging work. However, it is clear from these examples that, when Westerners set the terms of Shakespeare productions, overcoming neo-colonial tropes is tremendously difficult. I set down here how my new knowledge, gained from the practices interrogated above, informed my practice-led research moving forward.

All three productions examined were ticketed, commercial performances. *Rei Lear*'s positioning within an expensive festival with prohibitive ticket prices was contentious because, as discussed above, local audiences were not able to access the work and so appropriating their language for the production was problematic. *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* was conceived as a commercial venture for the Globe Theatre, rather than one making claims about furthering Nigerian culture. Nevertheless, the recording of this potentially valuable Yoruba translation of Shakespeare's play on the digital theatre website has not, as far as I can tell, been made available without charge to local audiences in Nigeria, where it would have the most resonance. *Toufann* was also a commercial venture, but it is noteworthy that Virahsawmy has made the Kreol text of the play available gratis via his website, making access to Shakespeare more egalitarian. I am aware of oversimplifying the economic considerations of theatre production here but, to my mind, theatre should have audiences, and not commerce, at its heart. If work is being produced that is particularly meaningful for specific audiences then surely, ethically, it should be made accessible. As Virahsawmy showed, it is possible to make Shakespeare accessible and not elitist. Global Shakespeare productions clearly garner international interest in theatre from non-Western countries that might otherwise receive less attention. Shakespeare's plays, therefore, have the capacity to introduce audiences the world over to a huge range of new cultural experiences. I

suspected that a vernacular production in Malawi would be of interest to local audiences, but I understood that I needed further research to make this decision from an informed position.

Of the plays I studied *Toufann* most radically departed from its source text. In my view, only a local poet/theatre-maker would be able to make such a departure and still create a production that made a meaningful piece of theatre, which also retained some substance of the original play. Virahsawmy's use of contemporary local stereotypes for the clown and fool was a particularly useful device to consider for an intercultural production, as in Shakespeare plays these characters speak directly to the audience. The stereotypes of the 'drunk' and the 'spliff-head', which provide this important function, may not be apparent to a cultural outsider.

Oguntokun took specific elements of Yoruba total theatre and popular theatre, including the old Yoruba language of the translation, and moulded them into a form that could carry a translated Shakespeare text. It seemed to me that Oguntokun and the cast were attempting to root the production firmly within well-established Nigerian performance forms to make it as true to their interpretation of Shakespeare's play as possible. To achieve this, the whole team would need extensive cultural understanding and practical theatrical experience within those specific forms. To attain such a high level of cohesion of theatrical form requires considerable local expertise, either individually or through close collaboration with indigenous artists.

The most useful and practical findings of my research into recent productions of Shakespeare in Africa led me to set down the following parameters to move my project forward:

- To seek to remove as many barriers to accessibility for the audience as possible.
- To ascertain if a vernacular production would be of interest to the local population, through the collection of survey data during field research.

- To ensure that my project was designed to harness expertise from my Malawian colleagues in all aspects of the production.

The process of translation for all three plays influenced the aesthetic and style of the final productions. The staged development process employed in *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* brought translation and rehearsal close together. This seemed to be an approach that lent itself to the creation of a performance text that worked for the performers, as well as serving the original translation. There was opportunity for reflection and refinement, which was essential to how the translation served the parameters of the production. This seemed to me a very useful template for my own project.

It was useful to me to note that the three productions all used minimal setting, relying instead upon well-chosen props and costumes to make location clear. In the case of *Toufann,* the pared-down aesthetic was a deliberate choice because the production was conceived to highlight Kreol in the translation. *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* was a travelling production for the Globe Theatre, and so they made the architecture of that space their set. *Rei Lear* too seemed to rely on costume and props rather than setting, and it is possible that showcasing the language was part of the rationale for the overall design of the production. This aesthetic could also work well for a production in Malawi.

This project was the first time I had used robust research to underpin my directorial choices at such an early stage of a work. In so doing, I realised that beginning from a platform informed by research had the potential to provide a firm framework for theatrical experimentation while being simultaneously grounded in actual, rather than imperfectly perceived or imagined, local concerns.

CHAPTER TWO: An Exploration of the Development of Shakespeare in Malawi 1861 – 2015

Introduction

In his 1987 article 'Unmasking the Spirits' David Kerr informs us that it was through the school system that Malawians would have been introduced to Shakespeare's plays.

> Presentation of traditional English drama for Malawians was restricted to the very few secondary schools set up by the British, where the annual Shakespeare production offered ritual-like induction into the elitist culture of Europe.[1]

However, no single study investigates how this came to be or how contemporary Shakespeare production in Malawi has developed. Only one scholarly work touches on the subject: James Gibbs' 2001, *The example of Shakespeare: acting over and rewriting Shakespeare in Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria*.[2] Mufunanji Magalasi mentions Shakespeare in *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi: 1980 to 2002*[3] and Christopher Kamlongera, Patience Gibbs and David Kerr also contribute to the field. There is more recent documentation and discussion about the intercultural Shakespeare collaborations between Nanzikambe Arts (Malawi) and Bilimankhwe (UK), but the field remains fragmented and limited.[4] The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the history of Shakespeare in Malawi in order to contextualise contemporary productions of his work.

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[1] David Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits: Theatre in Malawi', *The Drama Review: TDR*, 1987, 115–25 (p. 117).

[2] Significant contributors to the study of theatre in Africa are Jane Plastow, Martin Banham, James Gibbs, David Kerr; James Gibbs, 'The Example of Shakespeare: Acting over and Re-Writing Shakespeare in Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria', *Journal of Humanities*, 15.1 (2001), 1–16.

[3] Mufunanji Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi: 1980 to 2002* (Zomba: Chancellor College Publications, 2012).

[4] Michael Walling, 'African Shakespeares - a Discussion', in *Shakespeare in & out of Africa*, ed. by Jane Plastow and Martin Banham, African Theatre, 12 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), pp. 83–97.

Part One: A Historical Introduction to Malawi

(*Fig 3*: Map of Malawi mid twentieth century)[5]

Malawi, in southeast Africa, measures just 100 miles wide and 530 miles long. It encompasses Lake Malawi and is framed by plateaux; Zambia is to the north, to the west is Mozambique and to the east, Tanzania.[6] The country's ethnological and political history is complex, but for this investigation it is useful to think of three distinct groups: the African populations who inhabit the geographical area known today as Malawi, missionaries from Europe, and the British colonisers.

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[5] John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2012), p. xvii.
[6] McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 8.

Early British Influences

Malawi is made up of land populated from as early as the late Stone Age.[7] In modern Malawi the Chewa are the dominant ethnic group, accounting for approximately 60% of the population.[8] Other major groups, each with their own languages and cultures, are the Yao from the south, Tumbuka and Ngonde from the plateau at the North of Lake Malawi and Ngoni from the northern regions.[9]

The presence of missionaries in Malawi was originally linked to the East African slave trade. This human trafficking derived from the region's trading links with Arab nations following the early 'invasion' of northern Africa by the 'Arabs' during the seventh century AD.[10] The central and eastern Africa explorer and missionary David Livingstone arrived at Lake Malawi in 1861, where he witnessed the terrible effects of slaving on the local population at Nkhotakota[11] and, upon his return to England, advocated for a missionary presence in the area, arguing that missions would spread Christianity and legitimate commerce and thus drive out slavery. Three missions responded: 'The Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Free Church of Scotland (Livingstonia), and the Established Church of Scotland (Blantyre).'[12] 1861 saw the Anglican UMCA[13] establish a mission station at Magomero near the western shore of Lake Malawi.[14]

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[7] Claude Boucher, *Digging Our Roots: The Chamare Museum Frescoes* (KuNgoni Art Craft Centre, 2002), pp. 11, 15.

[8] Boucher, p. 29; Bruce H Dolph, 'Culture of Malawi - History, People, Women, Beliefs, Food, Customs, Family, Social, Dress' <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Malawi.html> [accessed 8 July 2017]. There are over 14 ethnic groups in Malawi including the Yeo and the Chingoni. A 1966 census revealed that there were at least fourteen languages – however 50.2% of the population listed Chichewa as their 'native' language (Alfred J. Matiki, 'The Social Significance of English in Malawi', *World Englishes*, 20.2 (2001), 201–18 (p. 203)).

[9] 'Malawi | History - Geography', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Malawi> [accessed 1 May 2017].

[10] M.E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa* (Routledge, 2014), p. 10.

[11] Boucher, p. 51; CA Crosby, *Historical Dictionary of Malawi* (Scarecrow Press, 1980), pp. 73–74.

[12] Crosby, pp. 83–84.

[13] UMCA was founded as a response to Livingstone's lectures at Oxford and Cambridge in 1857. (Much more detail about the early experiences of the UMCA can be found in: Boucher, p. 51.; McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 39.)

[14] Boucher, p. 51.

Dr Robert Laws began the introduction of religion-infused British-style education to the missions.[15] His ventures began in 1875 at the southern base of Lake Malawi where he established a school as part of the Livingstonia Mission.[16] However, Isaac Lamba described the education provided as, perhaps predictably, a 'missionary enterprise', with the focus being on the spiritual rather than the scholarly.[17] Indeed, early education at the Blantyre and Livingstonia missions was:

> Little more than memorising the first few letters of the alphabet as a prelude to reading portions from the Bible. And this was also true of the village schools opened by the DRC [Dutch Reformed Church] and the Roman Catholics […][18]

The Livingstonia Mission left Cape Maclear and settled near Bandawe, on the western shore of Lake Malawi, in 1889.[19] By this point, as McCracken says, citing the Bandawe Journal entry for 23 November 1884 in *Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, 'there were more than a dozen schools, spread through the district, with over 1,300 pupils regularly attending'.[20] The focus of their mission was 'extending their evangelistic and educational influence through the creation of a network of village schools',[21] and it played a vital role in the introduction of English as part of the missionary curriculum.[22]

Commerce, politics and the Berlin Conference (1884-1885 where European nations agreed to carve up Africa in accordance with their respective ascendancy)[23] were behind the British declaration, 14 May 1891, whereby:

> Under and by virtue of agreements with native chiefs and by other lawful means, the territories in Africa, hereinafter referred to as the

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[15] Desmond Dudwa Phiri, *Malawi Our Future Our Choice: The Selected Essays of D D Phiri* (Society of Malawi (Historical and Scientific), 2006), p. 14.
[16] In a place called Cape Maclear, in the district of Mangochi, Malawi.
[17] Isaac C Lamba, 'African Women's Education in Malawi, 1875-1952', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 14.1 (1982), 46–54 (p. 46).
[18] McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 109.
[19] Ibid, p. 47.
[20] Ibid, p. 48.
[21] Ibid, p. 47.
[22] Stephen P Heyneman, 'The Formal School as a Traditional Institution in an Underdeveloped Society: The Case of Northern Malawi', *Paedagogica Historica*, 12.2 (1972), 460–72 (p. 462); Crosby, p. 69.
[23] Phiri, *History of Malawi*, p. 200.

> Nyasaland Districts, are under the Protectorate of her Majesty the Queen.[24]

The area was known as the British Central African Protectorate (BCA), but from 1907 became The Nyasaland Protectorate.[25]

The growth and reach of missionary education were substantial, from an enrolment figure of just 147 students attending two primary schools in the Northern Region of Malawi in 1881, to 16,000 pupils attending in 1900 (number of schools unknown).[26] By 1915 there were 2,064 missionary schools in Malawi.[27] However, inconsistency in the quality and content of education was a mark of missionary education. [28] At this time women were accorded few of the opportunities offered to men. This continued until the colonial administration oversaw education in Malawi from 1926.[29]

The 1923 Phelps Stokes Education Commission estimated that in Malawi 146,800 local children were being educated at 2,748 missions, approximately half of the child population.[30] The report noted that education at the missions largely focused on agriculture with most students being taught in the vernacular, although at least five missions (not specified) taught higher-level classes in English. The education provided at Nyasaland missions was deemed 'good'.[31] It was only in 1926 that the colonial government finally took full control of education in Malawi.[32]

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[24] Ibid, p. 213.
[25] Crosby, pp. xiii–xiv.
[26] Heyneman, p. 462.
[27] McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 115.
[28] Ibid, p. 109; John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Kachere Monograph, no. 8, 2nd imprint of 2nd ed (Zomba: Kachere Series, 2008), p. 112.
[29] McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, p. 113.
[30] 'Phelps Stokes Commission to East Africa' (Adam Matthew Digital, 1923), pp. 10–11, The National Archives <http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Phelps Stokes Commission to East Africa 19231925>.
[31] 'Phelps Stokes Commission', pp. 10–11; Rose Komu, 'A History of Kenyan Theatre' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Leeds, 2014), p. 1.
[32] Lamba, p. 46; McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 112.

By 1938 the colonial government had prioritised education and the formal teaching of English was part of that policy.[33] However, the majority of the local population were still not accessing education. McCracken says the 1945 census showed 'only 7.2 per cent of the population were literate, less than a fifth of those who had attended schools'.[34]

The Central African Federation (CAF) brought together Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). It was granted Royal Assent by the Queen on 1 August 1953, despite considerable opposition from both the indigenous population and missionaries in Nyasaland.[35]

The Genesis of Shakespeare Production in Malawi

Malawian children who did attend school were introduced to the plays of Shakespeare through the English curriculum, as indicated by the 1929 Advisory Committee On Education In The Colonies.[36] It issued a substantial memorandum containing detailed information and guidance on the 'preparation and selection of English reading books for non-English speaking pupils'. The comprehension of written English and the ability to read, understand and interpret English was stated to be a crucial function of the education provided.[37] Later in the document there are suggestions for 'good literature' and listed is 'Oberon and Titania' in the Reader II New Series produced by Longman & Co.[38] It is in the document titled Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies – 'The School Certificate Examination and the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools in the Dependencies',[39] dated 1933, where the first direct reference to Shakespeare,

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[33] Malawi National Archives, 'African Literature of Northern Rhodesia Annual Report for 1938 - Archive Mark 15a', 1938.
[34] McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 264.
[35] John Pike, *Malawi: A Political and Economic History*, Pall Mall Library of African Affairs (London: Pall Mall P, 1969), p. 120; Crosby, pp. 47–52.
[36] Malawi National Archives, 'The Advisory Committee on Education 1929 Reference 5a in Folder Number S1/510/30 Mark 1a', 1929.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Malawi National Archives, 'Item Number S1/510/30', p. Reference 5a in Folder Number 1a P14-15.
[39] Malawi National Archives, 'Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies - the School Certificate Examination and the Teaching of English in Secondary

Coriolanus, is mentioned in relation to examinations in English Literature (equivalent to a UK GCSE):

> The literature should be very carefully chosen to suit the candidates' linguistic and educational history. Such a choice would not include The Faerie Queen and probably not Coriolanus (the latter and Book I of the former are in a current syllabus).[40]

The reasoning behind the desire to remove Shakespeare is further explained:

> The memorising of paraphrases which are not literature at all, and in the acceptance and repetition by immature minds of critical judgements devoid for them of any genuine significance whatever. It leads to the dead-alive lesson on a play of Shakespeare which, in one place or another, most of us have heard – a lesson which can only be a weariness to the class and a mockery of the poet's genius.[41]

This confirms the presence of Shakespeare on the Malawian curriculum from at least 1933 and for some years preceding this; however, it should be noted that Blantyre Secondary School, Malawi's first, was not established until 1940.[42] This report also highlights the chasm between the academic study of literature in the pursuit of exam success and the purpose for which Shakespeare originally intended his work – performance.

The imposition of Shakespeare on Malawian students then was intertwined with the colonial politics of the day, which sought to privilege the serious study of British and European culture and values over the indigenous and African or, as Malawian academic Innocent Akilimale Ngulube terms it, 'cultural brainwashing'.[43] I will examine the implications of this below, but here I create a chronology of the performances of Shakespeare in Malawi. This evidence begins in the 1950s because, according to P. Gibbs, newspapers covered only expatriate productions and very limited indigenous activities prior to this.[44] As I have shown, very few Malawians would have been studying Shakespeare earlier than the 1950s in any event.

Schools in the Dependancies 1933 Folder Number S1/510/30 Reference Number 8b', 1933.

[40] Malawi National Archives, 'Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies Ref No. 8b'.

[41] Ibid.

[42] McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 241.

[43] Ngulube, p. 83.

[44] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. i.

The Little People's Indian School reportedly performed *The Merchant of Venice* in July 1951 and then the Limbe Convent (school) performed the play in 1957.[45] A 1958 production of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* performed by and at Dedza Secondary School, was highly significant. The School, staffed by expatriate and African teachers, served the indigenous population, therefore when teacher David Rubadiri created a full production of the play it is possible that he produced the first documented example of Malawian intercultural Shakespeare.[46] The casting of the production, as reported by the Nyasa Times, 'included Europeans and Africans'.[47] Rubadiri reportedly gave all the characters, apart from the witches and the doctor, to white performers. The production was open to public audiences.[48] Kamlongera was clearly exasperated by the casting as he commented, 'what was Rubadiri trying to achieve? Was he trying to prove himself? Was he trying to identify with the whites of the school?'[49] Rubadiri, who himself went on to become a renowned academic and writer, had studied at Makerere University, Uganda before returning to Malawi. While an undergraduate, he had been active in the theatre and was involved in the university's Shakespeare performances.[50] Kamlongera's comments are an early indicator of the cultural and colonial sensitivities that intercultural Shakespeare productions provoke, and yet Rubadiri's casting perhaps reflected the cultural concerns or sensibilities of the time. In this case, a highly educated Malawian was, of his own volition, using practical performance to make the play meaningful to indigenous students and local audiences.

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[45] Ibid, p. 40.
[46] Ibid, pp. 32–33.
[47] Christopher Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form: The Relationship between Drama and Society in Malawi and Zambia' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1984), p. 50.
[48] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 33.
[49] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 50.
[50] Austin Bukenya, 'My Students' Achievements in Their Various Fields Justify My Classroom Career', *Daily Nation*, 2015 <http://mobile.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/Dream-of-meeting-my-ex-students/1950774-2696222-format-xhtml-utwqxqz/index.html> [accessed 18 May 2017]; Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2001), p. 121.

Another production, presenting excerpts of *Julius Caesar,* is mentioned in a 'Colonial Annual Report for Nyasaland' from 1961 by Domasi Teachers Training College.[51] P. Gibbs informs us that in 1962 there was an adaptation of *A Comedy of Errors* entitled *The Land of the Lake* by D.F. Anderson published in English in 1968, performed by Blantyre Secondary School. She reported that the play had been 'localised', but it is not clear whether the original production was in English or the vernacular as, being at a local school, newspapers did not cover the production.[52] Anderson's adaptation has a two-act structure and a narrative, Western-facing form. The dialogue, while heightened, retains realistic content and speech patterns as the excerpt below shows:

> CHIEF Is it cruel and lawless to do to your people as they do to mine? For twelve months now your Chief has been troubling my people greatly. As they pass near your village they have suffered beatings and sometimes their dhows [sailing vessels used in east Africa] have been stolen. Two men have died from this treatment. It is now our law that anyone from Ruarwe found near here or sailing along our shores is captured and put to death.
>
> *The villagers echo this pronouncement with shouts of 'death' and other similar threats as they break into a war song. When this has finished Musole continues speaking.*[53]

The characters are counterparts to those of the source text, although all of the names have been changed. The locations of the play also differ, for example the Abbey, Act 4 scene 1 in the original, becomes the forest inhabited by the Lady of the Forest, Thandeka, in the adaptation.[54] The script includes local dances and songs, for example the use of a love song demonstrates the growing affection between Zungirwayo of Ruarwe (Antipholus of Syracuse) and Tamula (Luciana) although which ethnic group a dance or song comes from is not specified:

> ZUNGIRWAYO …Even if I had, it would be you that I love – only you. (*Takes pounding stick from her and throws it away as he catches her at last.)* Only you, Tamula. (*They sing a love song together.)*[55]

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[51] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 50.
[52] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, pp. 40–42; D.F Anderson, *Land of the Lake* (London: Evans, 1973).
[53] Anderson, pp. 12–13.
[54] Ibid, p. 39.
[55] Ibid, p. 33.

Even though characters and the settings were localised, the indigenous performance forms still feel additional to the script rather than being integral. Without being able to explore this play further in production it is difficult to say how successful it would be as a piece of intercultural theatre. Importantly, however, it does show that early Malawian intercultural Shakespeare was looking to the local for more than cursory inspiration. Whether the motivation for this came from the European or the Malawian producers of the work is not known.

The multi-racial Catholic Limbe Convent School put on a production of *Julius Caesar* at some point between 1960 and 1967, which was fondly remembered by students from that time.[56] The evidence suggests that Shakespeare was studied in the few existing elite government and missionary high schools of this period, but that performance of his work was sporadic. However, the productions at Dedza and Blantyre show that efforts were being made by some to make Shakespeare's texts more relevant to students and the local population.

Drama in Malawi

I summarise and discuss here some of the most significant performance forms in contemporary Malawi so that they can be seen in relation to later discussion of intercultural theatre. It is essential to trace the development of these forms considering influential factors such as education and politics to subsequently contextualise them in relation to my own practice in Malawi. Within Malawian culture, performance continues to play a role in marking a variety of personal, community and political events. Malawian performance rituals mark 'life cycle and seasonal changes or […] historical and legendary events' through traditional ceremonies and festivals.[57] Rituals, which contain elements of performance, have retained their significance after transference down through the generations, continuing to serve their societal purpose as well as being a living record of Malawian performance history. [58] Song and dance remain an integral part of

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[56] 'From the Archives: Sisters in Malawi', *Daughters of Wisdom: Province of Great Britain & Ireland*, 2013 <http://www.daughtersofwisdom.org.uk/from-the-archives-sisters-in-malawi/#comment-264> [accessed 1 June 2017].
[57] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 5; Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits', p. 115.
[58] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, pp. 6, 8–17.

traditional culture as explored in detail in Lisa Gilman's 2004 *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance and Democratization in Malawi*.[59] The *Gule wa Mkulu* (big dance), for example, is a performance tradition of the *Nyau* cult (which is exclusively male and emanated from a hunting ritual). It forms part of the culture of the Chewa people and is listed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.[60] Other performance traditions include:

> Spirit possession dances (such as *Vimbuza* of the Tumbuka people), initiation ceremonies (such as *Jando* of the Yao people) or war dances (such as *Ingoma* of the Ngoni people). Scarcely any area of political, religious, or social life was neglected by the performing arts - whether dances, mimes, games, rituals, narratives, or dramatized songs.[61]

The root of Malawian drama and theatre (separate from the indigenous performance rituals listed above) – which emanated from the colonialists, missionaries – has been evidenced back to 1902.[62] However, as both Kamlongera and P. Gibbs say, the documentation that would allow for a complete and accurate picture of the development of drama during the period does not exist, partly because of incomplete records but, more tellingly, due to the general inability of the European administrators to understand the culture they were documenting.[63] There were attempts to curtail local performance forms. As David Kerr says, the indigenous performing arts were negatively impacted during the 1890s when the colonial administration and the missionaries targeted 'performance' culture directly by trying to restrict the activities of the Gule wa Mkulu.[64]Indeed, by the time Malawian independence was declared it seems that indigenous culture had been so affected by colonialism that there was an immediate push 'from politicians to rejuvenate [and] revive' them.[65]

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[59] Lisa Gilman, *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance, and Democratization in Malawi* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
[60] 'Gule Wamkulu - Intangible Heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO', *UNESCO* <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/gule-wamkulu-00142> [accessed 1 June 2017]; Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 5.
[61] Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits', p. 1.
[62] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 1.
[63] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 24; Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, pp. 40–42.
[64] Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits', p. 116.
[65] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 62.

According to P. Gibbs, evidence suggests that by the 1930s Malawians were making use of European theatre forms at the missions, developing an early European and Malawian hybrid:

> The reports of events between 1934 and 1936 in Vvaro na Vvara [from the Livingstonia Mission Records] provide very early evidence of an imaginative mixture of western and traditional drama and theatre in Malawi…one of the most interesting features of these performances is that they appear to have been organised almost entirely by Malawians.[66]

In addition to missionary education, the introduction of Jeanes schools in 1929,[67] in response to the recommendations of the aforementioned 1923 Phelps Stokes report, was significant in the development of this indigenous/European hybrid dramatic form. These schools employed culture and theatre as part of their remit:

> To harness the natural dramatic talent of the Africans and finally, developing this talent insofar as it [was] amenable to conscious development, for purely artistic ends […] The task of harnessing and utilising the dramatic talent of Africans for educational purposes was actuated by utilitarian motives [viz] using the stage for propaganda purposes.[68]

Jeanes schools were created in America in 1907[69] as a means of educating newly freed slaves, the focus being on practical and home-based education. These schools trained teachers to use drama as a way of exploring moral issues and later as a way of explaining technical and mechanical theories and information. [70] The Livingstonia and Blantyre missions modelled their teacher training courses on the

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[66] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 29.
[67] Owen J. M. Kalinga, *Historical Dictionary of Malawi*, Historical Dictionaries of Africa, 4th ed (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 146.
[68] Christopher Kamlongera, 'Theatre for Development: The Case of Malawi', *Theatre Research International*, 7.3 (1982), 207–22 (p. 208).
[69] Linda B. Pincham, 'A League of Willing Workers: The Impact of Northern Philanthropy, Virginia Estelle Randolph and the Jeanes Teachers in Early Twentieth-Century Virginia', *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74.2 (2005), 112–23 (p. 117).
[70] Christopher Kamlongera, 'Theatre for Development in Africa', in *Media and Glocal Change: Rethinking Communication for Development*, ed. by Oscar Hemer, Thomas Tufte, and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 1. ed. in English (Göteborg, Sweden : Buenos Aires: Nordicom ; CLACSO, 2005), pp. 437–38 <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/coediciones/20100824082120/35Chapter28.pdf>.

colonial government's Jeanes training centre and the dramatic forms used surely spread among the indigenous population.[71]

Separately, the colonial British brought with them the cultural practices of 'civilised life' in the form of their own performing arts traditions as they recreated theatrical hits from the 'London West End', performed on proscenium arch stages, which David Kerr described as fostering a '"Theatre of nostalgia" exclusively for whites'.[72] P. Gibbs supports this, maintaining that the plays produced by the expatriate clubs during the period 1900 to 1950 were 'entirely European and patronised only by Europeans'.[73]

By the 1950s then, there were three distinct performance forms in the country: the indigenous, the exclusively European and the mission/church/school-facilitated Western and indigenous mix. Magalasi traces the development of the hybrid strands of drama development in 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama: Origins, Challenges and Growth' (2008). In summary, his phrase 'Malawian popular commercial drama' is an umbrella term that Magalasi uses to describe the forms of rehearsal and performance that created works that were considered popular with the indigenous population:

- Chichewa drama 1940s and 1950s
- Productions that arose from ATEM (the Association for English Teaching in Malawi formed in the early 1960s)
- Radio drama (from the 1970s onwards)
- The University of Malawi drama, in particular the department's Travelling Theatre (early 1970s – late 1990s)[74] which evolved in both English and the vernacular, also known as 'art' theatre or 'serious drama'
- Drama groups arising from the formation of the Association of Artists (early 1980s)

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[71] Malawi National Archives, 'Item Number S1/510/30', p. 3.
[72] Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits', p. 116.
[73] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 22.
[74] Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 24–25,121.

- Productions by popular theatre companies of the late 1970s to the 1990s, including Wakhumbata Workshop Theatre founded by Du Chisiza (1983)
- Plays by significant writers such as Steve Chimonbo (*The Rain Maker* 1978)
- Playlets performed by comedians at political rallies during the early 1990s and
- Theatre for Development (Tfd) and didactic drama.[75]

Magalasi states that commercial Chichewa drama began (from the 1940s and 1950s) 'with performances staged in churches and schools as part of the school variety concerts, which included traditional dances and episodes of jokes or short dialogue-based acts'.[76] These early dramas contained 'strong moral messages', depicting how Malawians were expected to behave.[77] The form then stagnated during the 1970s, which Magalasi ascribes to indigenous theatre practitioners being significantly impacted by the strict censorship of published works in Chichewa that was instigated after independence, which I discuss below.[78]

Didactic theatre developed during the 1940s, gaining momentum during the 1950s, and was widely used throughout the British African colonies including Malawi.[79] Government departments including the Ministry for Agriculture, Education and Health used local artists to engage the indigenous rural population with the informative and educational messages being delivered.[80] The purpose was to teach the locals about essential skills, as the colonial government saw it, without risking an education that might put the indigenous population on par with the white Europeans.[81] It was, therefore, both subjugation and education. A range of theatre techniques, including songs in the vernacular, hand puppets and familiar dance forms, were used to inform and entertain audiences. The improvisational performance style was designed to 'minimise theatricality' to encourage as many

[75] Mufunanji Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama: Origins, Challenges and Growth', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34.1 (2008), 161–77.
[76] Ibid, p. 162.
[77] Ibid, pp. 162–63.
[78] Ibid, p. 162.
[79] Kerr, *African Popular Theatre*, pp. 30–32.
[80] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', pp. 99–102.
[81] Kerr, *African Popular Theatre*, pp. 31–32.

people as possible to be involved.[82] This form was the precursor to Theatre for Development, which Zindaba Chisiza says began in 1981 at the University of Malawi through the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre, discussed below.[83]

Kamlongera discussed how 'African Literary Drama' was being produced before independence.[84] For example, *Sewero la Mlandu wa Nkhanga The Play of the Trial of the Guinea Fowl* was written by S.A Paliani (first published in Chichewa in 1952) at a time of increasing thefts among the African population in the northern regions of Malawi. The writer described the play, saying: 'In this play you will see what happened between two families; from this you should learn and see that a thief never gets respect or blessings before other people'.[85] That this Chichewa text was published is significant because it indicates moves towards Western-styled script based drama some twelve years before independence.

Part Two: Hastings Banda and Post-Independence Theatre

1961 saw the first general elections in Malawi, which Hastings Kamuzu Banda's Malawi Congress Party (MCP), running on an independence ticket, won overwhelmingly ahead of its two rivals.[86] In 1963 Dr Kamuzu Banda was sworn in as Prime Minister, with Malawi receiving her full independence on 6 July 1964.[87] All of Banda's tertiary education had been undertaken in the United States and the United Kingdom, where he had lived and worked (as a medical doctor) for decades. He returned as 'a saviour of Malawi independence',[88] but the British influences on his attitude towards education and culture were enormous. Lupenga Mphande

[82] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', pp. 99–103.
[83] Zindaba Chisiza, 'The Problem with Theatre for Development in Contemporary Malawi', *Leeds African Studies Bulletin*, 78 (2016), 61–78 (p. 61).
[84] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', abstract.
[85] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', pp. 42–43.
[86] Crosby, p. xvi; McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 379.
[87] Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda was Malawi's 'Life President'. Born in 1898 in Kasungi in the central region of Malawi, he trained as a medical doctor in the United States and practiced medicine in Liverpool and in Scotland for many years. His Malawi Congress Party won the fist democratic elections in 1961 and he was made Prime Minister of Malawi in 1963. In 1964 he became Malawi's first independent President. (Crosby, pp. 9–16).
[88] Crosby, p. 11.

accused Banda of trying to maintain the 'missionizing colonial cultural status quo'[89] and that as a result of his influence over his fellow Malawians:

> Entertainment halls in schools and colleges were flooded with productions of *Hamlet, Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar.* Students became more familiar with famous English actors […] than with performers in their own oral literary traditions. Banda encouraged the study of English, French and Latin, which were given more resources than was allocated for the development of indigenous languages, of Chichewa, even, the country's nominal national language.[90]

In relation to the evolution of Malawian drama, Kamlongera stressed that the development of post-independence theatre resulted from a 'confused background' which was influenced by colonial attitudes towards local culture, the missionary use of drama for educative purposes and, finally, by educated Malawians themselves who used Western-facing dramatic techniques to create their own work.[91]

By 1965 Banda had made Malawi into a one-party state run by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP).[92] Philip Short, quoted in Crosby, says that Banda had manoeuvred the position of the MCP to fulfilling the role of a 'pre-colonial (Chewa) chieftainship'.[93] This marked the beginning of Banda's internal conflict – which he then projected onto his nation – between familial, childhood Malawi heritage and early life experience and his adult, professional and British lived experience.[94] This conflict would influence many aspects of Banda's leadership, and it led to a particularly problematic environment for education and the arts in Malawi. Banda undertook to regulate 'literary productions' through the creation of a Public

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[89] Lupenga Mphande, 'Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Writers Group: The (un)Making of a Cultural Tradition', *Research in African Literatures*, 27.1 (1996), 80–101 (p. 85).
[90] Mphande, p. 85.
[91] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', pp. 51–52.
[92] Dr Banda lost a number of cabinet ministers first by dismissal and then through resignations. (Crosby, p. 15).
[93] Crosby, p. 15; Mphande, p. 82; Lisa Gilman, 'The Traditionalization of Women's Dancing, Hegemony, and Politics in Malawi', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 41.1 (2004), 33–60 (pp. 38–40).
[94] He did study in America, though it did not seem to influence him to the extent that Britain did. (Mphande, p. 85).

Security Regulation, which 'gave him powers to detain without trial any person with dissenting views'.[95]

Education

According to McCracken, in the 1960s secondary education was inaccessible to the majority and poor in quality for many. McCracken cites the *Legislative Council Proceedings,* 1961, saying there were only '1,505 pupils in 17 schools, only five of which taught the full secondary syllabus'.[96] In order to improve the quality of spoken English in schools, an Association for English Teachers in Malawi (ATEM) was formed in the early 1960s:

> To co-ordinate and encourage efforts aimed at improving the teaching of English in the country's secondary schools and teacher training colleges, its main function at first was to organise conferences for teachers of English throughout the country.[97]

At the same time, ATEM created the 'National Oral English Competition for secondary schools',[98] which promoted the speaking and performing of English through poetry readings and interview panels. When the competition closed in 1969, the Secondary School Drama Festival was formed and all secondary schools and post-primary educational establishments were allowed to enter.[99]

The festival was described by P. Gibbs (1980) as 'the single most important contribution to the development of drama and theatre in Malawi'.[100] Its prominence was partly due to media coverage. The drama festival organisers produced an ATEM newsletter and a biannual journal that gave drama a place alongside long established, well publicised and widely popular Malawian dancing and drumming performances.[101]

A further milestone in the advancement of drama was the foundation of the University of Malawi in 1964. The University was made up of smaller colleges

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[95] Mphande, p. 81.
[96] McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, pp. 399–401.
[97] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 54.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. 43.
[101] Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. iii.

which amalgamated, and in 1973 the Chancellor College (CHANCO) campus opened in Zomba. CHANCO housed the English Department, however it was focused on 'dramatic literature rather than drama as performance'.[102] The productions by the English Department, combined with a tradition of 'concerts' and 'play-lets',[103] were purely extra-curricular. Both staff and students participated.[104] Between 1967 and 1969, the department presented two shows produced by British lecturer Trevor Whittock, *Trials of Brother Jero* (Soyinka, 1969) and *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller, 1953).[105] However, film was Whittock's principal interest, and the only non-academic theatre training available was a single session of 'practical drama and film'.[106]

British academic David Kerr was appointed to the department in 1969 along with lecturer and actor John Linstrum, also British, and Malawian actor Mupa Shumba (who, importantly, had experience of 'the first Makerere College Travelling Theatre in Uganda').[107] Together they formed the Chancellor College Travelling Theatre (CCTT) in 1970.[108] From 1972 James Gibbs, who had previously worked with the Ghanaian Legion Travelling Theatre, led the CCTT.[109] Magalasi describes how Gibbs encouraged his students to 'tap material from Malawian Folk tales, legends and myths' after the students were unable to find relevant texts.[110] As a result of the influence of the academic staff, a 'fusion' style of mixed Malawian and Western drama influences was developing within the department.[111] Money for productions for the CCTT came from a variety of trusts and foundations, including the British Council and The Gibbs Family Morel Trust Fund - the university did not support

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[102] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 55.
[103] Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 24.
[104] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 55.
[105] Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 24.
[106] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 55; Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 25.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Kerr, *African Popular Theatre*, p. 139.
[109] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 55; Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 24.
[110] Ibid, p. 25.
[111] Ibid, p. 45; Patience Rosina Ansaa Gibbs, p. vii.

the CCTT financially.[112] 1976 saw the publication of the first anthology of *Nine Malawian Plays,* all one act plays and all but one by students, edited by James Gibbs.[113] Notably, the plays were all in English. This publication highlighted the department's increasing importance in the development of literary drama in Malawi. In 1978 Chris Kamlongera took over the CCTT from James Gibbs.[114] From that time on, with support from Kerr, Kamlongera developed the CCTT by touring 'vernacular plays' and extending the range of the tours from the previous urban school venues to include rural villages.[115] Further evolution within the department during this time was the inclusion of 'more material from Malawian oral tradition'. [116] David Kerr instigated 'improvisatory drama in the vernacular languages' and the first resulting play was *Eviction* (1981), performed in Chichewa at the open-air theatre, which further expanded the range of performance forms being utilised within the department.[117]

The opportunities for studying and researching theatre and performance at tertiary level gradually increased from the 1980s onwards. The Department of Fine and Performing Arts was established within the CHANCO Campus in 1981, and in 1982 the Great Hall complex opened with two new theatres. By this time drama was part of the taught curriculum.[118] The Fine Arts Department at CHANCO remains at the heart of Malawi's academic drama training, although the founding of Mzuzu University in 1997, with a language and literature course offered by the Educational Department, has expanded the opportunity for Malawians to undertake advanced study in the Northern region of Malawi.[119]

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[112] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 57.
[113] Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits', p. 119; Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 21.
[114] Exact date unknown (Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 287).
[115] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 55.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 287.
[118] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, pp. 55–56; Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 59.
[119] 'Mzuzu University Department of Languages & Literature', *Mzuni.ac.mw* <http://www.mzuni.ac.mw/languages_profile.html> [accessed 2 November 2017].

The Development of Malawian Drama During the Early Independence Period

Censorship was an effective tool of Banda's dictatorship. This posed a considerable challenge for artists working in Malawi, particularly writers and theatre-makers. The role of the Censorship Board was to keep a tight rein on all public performances.[120] The process was onerous, requiring any piece of theatre to be 'passed' by the Board and then previewed, before public performance was allowed.[121] The development of Chichewa drama was severely curtailed because Banda demanded that

> Public acts should use 'proper Chichewa', as spoken in Central Malawi. This discouraged authors wanting to use the language because 'proper' Chichewa was simply one of many dialects, and far removed from the ways the language was spoken in the rest of the nation. For fear of reprisals should they deviate from Banda's wishes, many playwrights and performers experimented with English instead.[122]

Banda was only interested in performance to his political advantage: 'vernacular public performances in the form of praise songs and dances were staged for Banda and his government at political rallies'.[123]

It is important to understand that writers utilised literary and theatrical devices to seek ways that would enable them to make socio-political points that Banda would not have liked and still be granted performance permission from the censor. Owen Mbilizi's *Daughters of Their Mother,* directed for the Chichiri Secondary School's 1981 entry for the ATEM festival, featured a written script in English which utilised Malawian visual and textual coding to tell a story of something that would not have been accepted by the censors in overt form.[124] The play centres on Laweni and Wanga, two women who discuss their feelings about their lives and

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[120] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, p. 57.
[121] Banham, Hill, and Woodyard, pp. 57–58.
[122] Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 163. Dr Banda was from the Central Region of Malawi ('Hastings Kamuzu Banda | President of Malawi', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hastings-Kamuzu-Banda> [accessed 2 June 2017]).
[123] Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 163; Steve Bernard Miles Chimombo and Moira Chimombo, *The Culture of Democracy: Language, Literature, the Arts & Politics in Malawi, 1992-1994* (Zomba, Malawi: WASI Publications, 1996), p. 5.
[124] Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', pp. 298–301.

their roles as wives and mothers.[125] What is notable about this play is that, within it, Kamlongera finds multiple examples of references to intimacy and sexual acts concealed through innuendo, use of props or insinuation – for example, the shame of being the last woman out of her hut (which he says can be interpreted as implying she has been engaging in sex with her husband) or the simple act of eating cassava, as does Wanga's husband, Chinangwa when he first enters:

> The name Chinangwa is the Chichewa word for cassava. And raw cassava is commonly believed to possess powers of enhancing man's sexual strength. By introducing this character this way Mbilizi was directing the audience to understand the man's role in the play was going to be – a symbol of male sexuality.[126]

The sexual connotations with cassava were only fully realised during live performance and by that time permission had already been granted. This play was for the educated schools festival audiences who would likely have been familiar with scripted, formal theatre forms. Chichewa drama developed differently.

A key difference between Chichewa drama and the more thematically serious English language drama discussed above was the creative process. Chichewa drama is exclusively rehearsed through improvisation, and then the company devise the text.[127] Kerr describes the process and aesthetic as being

> Created collectively through improvisation […] Theatrically, the Chichewa plays normally use a proscenium stage, a broadly exaggerated acting style, a storyline borrowed from indigenous popular narrative and adapted to a modern urban environment, a heavy emphasis on comic dialogue and mime, and a moral tone reinforcing traditional kinship and community values.[128]

Chichewa drama utilises elements of Western performance and appropriates them to serve a Chichewa-speaking audience.[129] Magalasi says, 'what drove the making of these productions […] was the desire to please their audiences, and to make

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid, p. 301.
[127] Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 172. It should be noted that Magalasi states that 'improvisation' can mean the cast improvising around a 'narration' or outline of a story or situation written by the credited 'writers of the basic story' (Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 143.)
[128] Kerr, 'Unmasking the Spirits', p. 124.
[129] Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, pp. 9–10.

money'.[130] According to Mzumara, during the early 1980s Candlex (a soap and candle company) hired two Malawian performers known as Izeki and Jacob to tour the whole country advertising their products using Chichewa comedy sketches. This marked the start of the commercialisation of Chichewa comedy which was, and still is, funded by corporations who use the form as a marketing tool.[131] This inspired many small groups all over the country to copy the form and create their own sketch comedies.[132] These artists placed popular appeal above other considerations, and this is quite different from the approach used in 'art' theatre produced at the university and, I would suggest, by ATEM.[133] As a result, these two performance forms, while both come under Magalasi's banner of popular commercial drama, were distinct and served their audiences quite differently. According to Mzumara (2017) the definition of the term serious drama, in the Malawian context, is fluid: 'it [the play] is something people could relate to, and serious topics presented seriously, that qualifies it to be serious drama'.[134] Drama in the vernacular is usually, but not exclusively, comedy.[135] Serious drama is performed in the vernacular by established groups: Kwathu Drama Group and Nanzikambe Arts in Blantyre use Chichewa, whilst Chokolopa Drama Group in Karonga perform in Chitimbuka and Chingonde, but these function in the urban rather than the rural areas indicating that serious drama remains somewhat an elitist form. The influence of comedy even on performances considered 'serious' is a unique feature of Malawian acting style. As Mzumara says:

> That is why even among good performers, one can notice exaggerations verging on cartoonish characters aimed at making people laugh – because of being so used [to it] that audiences have to laugh. If you do a play, with serious characters and jokey ones in Malawi and you ask people to choose who they think is the best actor – most point at the jokey one, even while being a poor performer because of being used to comedy.[136]

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[130] Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 183.
[131] Misheck Mzumara to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Malawian Drama', 16 June 2017.
[132] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email: Malawian Drama'.
[133] Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, pp. 182–83.
[134] Misheck Mzumara to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Serious Theatre', 6 May 2017.
[135] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email: Serious Theatre'.
[136] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email: Malawian Drama'.

Texts originally written in English are rarely translated into the vernacular, and these performances usually fall into the category of serious drama.[137]

Productions of Shakespeare Plays 1974 - 1994

Although censorship was restrictive in this period, and getting new plays approved by the censorship board was extremely difficult, productions of Shakespeare texts were easily waved through. For example, in 1974 Gibbs applied to put on a production of Julius Caesar.[138]

> He [the Censor] told me he did not bother to read texts submitted to him by such masters as 'Shakespeare and Dickens.' What could be more worthy of worship than a play by the undisputed master of English about the noblest Roman of them all?[139]

The production was in contemporary dress and staged on 'an imposing flight of steps' that lead up to the theatre at CHANCO.[140] The promenade staging, with the audience being moved to the Chirunga Open Air Theatre (an amphitheatre on the grounds of the university built as a home for the CCTT), used audience members as citizens around Caesar's corpse. The boldness of that particular scene being staged 'within a few yards of the rostra, or scaffold, from which Banda spoke during Congregation' must have made the significance of Shakespeare's play tangibly relevant.[141] Shakespeare became a resource to be exploited for those looking to criticise the government covertly. James Gibbs explains:

> In Malawi during a period of repression the unthinking reverence with which some regarded Shakespeare, Bardolatory, enabled others to use specific plays to communicate relatively subtle protests at the extent of Hastings Banda's tyranny.[142]

Owen Mbilizi and Isaac Chirwa, both of whom had come into contact with Chris Kamlongera and Gibbs respectively as students, formed the Owen Mbilizi Tsine Performing Group (1978)[143] based in Blantyre until 1981.[144] It was through their

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[137] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email: Malawian Drama'.
[138] There was a production in 1974 but it is unclear if this is the production Gibbs is referring to.
[139] James Gibbs, 'The Example of Shakespeare: Acting over and Re-Writing Shakespeare in Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria', p. 5.
[140] The date of this has not to date been obtained.
[141] Ibid, p. 5.
[142] Ibid, p. 2.
[143] Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 165.

company and through involvement with the ATEM Festival that both became significant figures in English language drama in Malawi. In 1979 Owen Mbilizi created *Crossed by Fate*, based on *Romeo and Juliet.* Unfortunately, I have no further information about this production. During the 1970s radio drama was another point of access for Malawians wanting to enjoy plays. 'Theatre of the Air' (broadcast in English) not only produced scripts from young writers, it also aired the winning plays from the ATEM Festival, which included *Crossed by Fate* (1979).[145]

In 1983 Du Chisiza Jr wrote *The Deceased's Attack,* based on *Hamlet* and presented by Chisiza and the Henry Henderson Institute Secondary School as part of the ATEM Festival.[146] Magalasi's description of the play is relevant because of his analysis of the Malawian cultural specifics of the adaptation but also because it highlights the significance of this work within the development of Malawian Shakespeare production. This production was a Shakespeare adaptation led by Malawians:

> Firstly in the play, Viyezgu returns from war, and after being welcomed by his two young wives and two younger brothers, he is told that his father Moyala was killed by the uncle Kanyoli, who later married Viyezgu's mother (pp. 3-12). Already, there are several problems that undermine the play at the level of credibility. Firstly, if Viyezgu is coming from a war, there is temptation to ask: whose war? Was it a clan or tribal war? Because if it was either of the two, then why did the father and the uncle not go? [...] So right from the start, the story does not ring true if circumstances of clan and tribal war are considered.[147]

These questions seem to me reflective of vast scholarly discourse which orbits Shakespeare's original play and is concerned with making logical sense of *Hamlet* rather than accepting the play as a piece of art on its own terms. I realise I am reading the play from the perspective of an outsider and while I found the play to be short, just 23 pages long, and the characters underdeveloped, I thought it was a

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144 Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 134.
145 Magalasi, *Stage Drama in Independent Malawi*, p. 136; Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 165; Kamlongera, 'Problems in the Growth of a Popular Art Form', p. 341.
146 Magalasi, 'Malawian Popular Commercial Stage Drama', p. 165.
147 Mufunanji Magalasi, 'Malawian Theatre at the Crossroads: Developmental Paradigms and Underdevelopment of Stage Drama in Malawi', *Journal of Humanities*, 15.1 (2001), 17–42 (p. 33).

thoroughly engaging and entertaining work which had enormous performative potential. For example, Nthutwe and Chiliro have been awaiting their brother Viyezgu's return. When they see him they are cowed by his appearance for he presents as an accomplished warrior. Interestingly, the directions tell us they use stylised movement and mime to tell Viyezgu of the stories the village heard about his heroic achievements during the war:

> Nthutwe: I will follow your paths brother. (*Both rise for a dramatic demonstration of their pride. They take three steps back and then begin their act. They step together with their right feet forward and hold their arms with clenched fists forward, showing their muscles. They have vicious looks on their faces).*[148]

The sequence, which takes up just two sentences on the page, could clearly prove infinitely more complex and nuanced in performance. Magalasi's comments also highlight the challenge of transporting a Shakespeare text into a Malawian context – must an adapted text always be overt in its cultural signifiers? Surely there must be room for artistic licence and creativity when working in theatre or the work risks being reductive or pedestrian. I believe that Chisiza, by affording himself some artistic licence and moving away from a literal translation, created a potentially sophisticated and meaningful production.

Chisiza's text employed heightened language through repetition and rhythm to build tension which, to my mind, did capture something of Shakespeare's original play but because of the movement sequences also placed the drama firmly in Malawi:

> Chiliro: The clan heard about your hair-raising conquests and raids. (*They take a step forward and mime slaughtering a chicken by holding it by the neck with their left hands and cutting it with the edge of their right hands*.)
>
> Nthutwe: It heard how you slaughtered people like chickens. (*Taking three steps backwards, while panting heavily, Chiliro lies on the ground*.)
>
> Chiliro: It heard how you slept in caves of lions. (*Nthutwe lies down leaning on Chiliro*)
>
> Nthutwe: And how you leant against them (…)

[148] Du Chisiza, *The Deceased's Attack* (Wakhumbata Ensemble Theatre, 1992), p. 8.

> Chiliro: It heard how you chased away the Yawundes (*they chase by moving forwards*).[149]

The movement and the text interact in this section and serve a sophisticated dual purpose. By conflating village life, as in the slaughtering of chickens, and the unseen horror of war Chisiza creates a montage through text and the physical depiction of killing, which foreshadows the violence that is about to be unleashed upon Viyezgu's domestic life later in the play.

What makes the example above so important is that the production of *The Deceased's Attack* was widely considered to be a commentary on the death of Chisiza Jr's own father, Dunduzu Chisiza. Dunduzu Chisiza was a member of Banda's government during the 1960s whose death in a car crash, before Du Chisiza Jr's birth, was supposedly carried out by agents acting for Banda. This play is, therefore, a particularly sophisticated example of a Shakespeare text adapted to serve as political allegory. It was written and performed at a time of considerable political unease in Malawi. The connections between the play, the murdered father returning to exhort his son to avenge his death and the inheritance of Du Chisiza Jr, were clear. As Kerr says:

> I did see the production of the *Deceased's Attack* […] I can't forget that because the front row was full of VIPs including Gadama & Matenje. It was a very tense time with rumours of splits in the MCP. Du, all rigged out in Ngoni regalia sang a song whose refrain was "Mukuruta imwe" ("You're going" in Chitumbuka) as he shook his spear at the front row VIPS. Gadama and Matenje waved their hands in refusal as they recoiled in their seats. Within a week they were dead – bodies found in the famous fake car accident. The mood in the audience (which understood every nuance of the allegory) was electric.[150]

Aaron Gadama and Dick Matenje were officials in the Banda Government who had been calling for government reform, and were found murdered in 1983.[151] Banda was tried and found not guilty of their murder in 1995.[152] The use of *Hamlet* as a

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[149] Ibid, p. 8.
[150] David Kerr and Kate Stafford to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Shakespeare in Malawi', January 2015.
[151] 'Gadama's Vote: Chakwera's Cross to Bear', *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi*, 2014 <https://www.nyasatimes.com/gadamas-vote-chakweras-cross-to-bear/> [accessed 3 June 2017].
[152] 'Obituary: Dunduza Chisiza', *The Independent*, 1999 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-dunduza-chisiza-

source to enable political commentary during a time of tightly controlled censorship is elegant and gives a new twist to the play within a play.

In 1989 Kerr himself directed an edited production of *Macbeth* with a group of approximately 30 first year undergraduate English students. The production was performed in the Great Hall at CHANCO and at local secondary schools. The production experimented with languages using English for the verse and Chichewa for the prose. Kerr recalled that a group of female students watched the production with 'copies of the text on their laps trying to keep up with the live version'.[153] This further highlights the close relationship between Shakespeare and education in Malawi, but it also demonstrates that vernacular languages were being integrated into some aspects of Shakespeare production.

By the 1990s there were increasing calls for multi-party elections as Banda's power waned. Directed by (British) Michael Bogdanov, a production of 'a pioneering Landrover version' of *Macbeth* (1992) was allowed to embark on a nationwide tour of Malawi. Importantly, it toured villages as well as towns (also Ghana, Sierra Leone and Namibia), making a work with an entertainment, rather than solely educational, value – available to the many and not just the urban elite. In April 1992, the newspaper *The Namibian* said that the production sought to bring Western performance to those areas deemed (presumably by the producers) to have little access to such practice, and that the piece should be accessible to those who might not have English as a first language:

> The aim is not merely to give an introduction to Shakespeare, but to place the emphasis on a strong storytelling technique bridging the gap between performance cultures that on the surface might seem incompatible. This is achieved by uniting the performer and spectator in a celebration of basic theatre skills, telling the stories and conveying

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1084771.html> [accessed 3 June 2017]; The Director of Public Prosecutions v Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda & Ors., *MSCA Criminal Appeal No. 21 of 1995*, 1997, HIGH COURT CRIMINAL CASE NO. 1 OF 1995 <http://www.sdnp.org.mw/judiciary/criminal/MWANZA%20MURDER%20CASE%20SC.htm> [accessed 3 June 2017].

[153] Kerr and Stafford to Bonsall.

> the themes through a combination of ritual, physical skill, mime, movement and music and a minimum of text.[154]

In the article, it is unclear whether this summary is the journalist's own analysis of the work or lifted from information provided by the theatre company. What is striking is the assumption that the skills and the text used must be basic. Why should this have been so? In the case of Malawi there is a sophisticated performance history, branches of which were, by 1992, developed along European lines. Basic research into the development of popular theatre in the country would have told the producing company that this was so. This production was the first to bring Shakespeare to Malawi on tour; it is an early example of Malawi's occasional interaction with 'Global Shakespeare' and it set the tone for patronising Western superiority and benevolence for touring productions succeeding it.[155]

Part Three: Intercultural and touring Shakespeare productions in Malawi 1998-2015

There have been four presidents of Malawi since the first democratic elections of 1994: Bakili Muluzi (1994-2004), Bingu wa Mutharika (2004-2012), Joyce Banda (2012-2014) and the incumbent Peter Mutharika. While Malawi is certainly benefiting from a stable democracy, 17 per cent of its population cannot access sufficient food, and it remains an unequal and poor country.[156] As there has been no governmental financial support for theatre in Malawi, NGO sponsored projects became a major influence on the development of commercial stage drama in Malawi during the 2000s.[157]

Education

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[154] 'English Shakespeare Group on Tour in Namibia with Macbeth', *The Namibian* (Namibia, 14 April 1992), Vol. 2 No. 545 edition, p. 4.
[155] 'Sharing Shakespeare's Differences'.
[156] 'Malawi - Woldbank Page', *Worldbank.org* <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview> [accessed 2 November 2017].
[157] Chisiza and Bonsall.

According to Mzumara, in many Malawian classrooms resources are scarce and the teachers lack adequate training.[158] The curriculum in Malawi now incorporates the study of both Malawian and African literature, but the English Literature component of the current MSCE (equivalent to the UK A-Level, students must pass six subjects, one of which must be English) requires the study of *Romeo and Juliet*.[159] The play was introduced into the curriculum in 2009, succeeding *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice.*[160] Students are expected to demonstrate an excellent grasp of the entire play and must show detailed knowledge of the characters, the events within the play and their significance. The exam is closed book.[161] Students must be successful in this exam if they are to achieve the grades required to attend university.

In his 2016 'Appropriation of Shakespeare's Plays in the Postcolonial World: The Case of Malawian Education', Ngulube considered how the continued use of a Shakespeare play as a core text of the MSCE contributed to, as he saw it, a continuingly colonised mindset in Malawi.[162] He argued that there were three reasons why Shakespeare remained a minor, but nevertheless persistent, feature of Malawian education and, I would add, the cultural landscape. Firstly, he argued that there clearly *is* a colonial hangover and the very presence of a Shakespeare play on the curriculum is evidence of this. Secondly, that the global appropriation and transpositional history of Shakespeare's texts 'outweighs their [the plays] dabbling in "British colonial hegemony"'. Finally, that the Literature and English curriculum set down by the Malawian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology aims to encourage 'an appreciation of one's culture and respect for other people's cultures'.[163] Shakespeare's work, therefore, becomes an access

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[158] Misheck Mzumara to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Interviewed by Amy Bonsall', February 2017.
[159] 'Education in Malawi', *Starfish Malawi* <http://starfishmalawi.com/education-in-malawi/> [accessed 22 May 2017]; Taurai Nathan Kamwetsa, 'MSCE English Language and Literature Made Simple' (St John's Catholic Secondary School, Malawi (Local publication only)).
[160] Ngulube, p. 96.
[161] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email Interview with Misheck Mzumara'; Kamwetsa, pp. 145–64.
[162] Ngulube, p. 99.
[163] Ngulube, p. 99.

point for Malawian students to interrogate and become aware of supposedly 'universal values'.[164]

However, as secondary education in Malawi is not mandatory, it is only those who pass the Junior Certificate of Education at 15 and continue on to the MSCE curriculum that would encounter Shakespeare's works. According to UNESCO data from 2014, 73 per cent (or 761,000) of Malawian children of secondary school age are enrolled in school. In 2015, some 136,296 students sat the MSCE exam including the English component, or approximately 18 per cent of those enrolled in secondary education if the enrolment figures from the previous year remain broadly stable.[165] While I agree that elements of Shakespeare's plays, in particular the themes, could be argued as being universal, I suspect that Malawian students for whom English is not their first language would find it extremely challenging to penetrate the finer nuances of Shakespeare's dense and complex text in its original English form.

It is a difficult task – in the 2016 MCSE exams just .014 per cent of candidates scored the highest possible mark of six out of a total of 80,570 declared results. The lowest pass rate is 36, and 56 per cent of candidates were awarded this score.[166] If the purpose of the curriculum is to open up Shakespeare's work and the world to students then, in my opinion, access to a vernacular translation could aid these students considerably without overriding the purpose of the exam.

Ngulube states that 'the appropriation of Shakespeare's plays in Malawian education can be viewed as a catalyst for British neo-colonial hegemony', because

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[164] Ngulube, p. 100.
[165] Education Policy and Data Centre, 'Malawi: National Education Profile Update 2014', *Epdc.org*, 2014 <https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Malawi.pdf> [accessed 29 July 2017]; Face of Malawi, 'MANEB 2015 MSCE Results Are out : Check The Pass List Here' <http://www.faceofmalawi.com/2015/10/maneb-2015-msce-results-are-out-check-the-pass-list-here-malawi/> [accessed 27 July 2017].
[166] 'Official 2016 MSCE Exam Results Pass List | Face Of Malawi', *Face of Malawi* <http://www.faceofmalawi.com/2016/10/2016-msce-exam-results-pass-list/> [accessed 22 May 2017].

the African and Malawian texts are not 'core', whereas *Romeo and Juliet* is. The privileged status afforded to Shakespeare's work adds to the suggestion of a Malawian colonial hangover.[167] This is in line with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's assertion in *Decolonising the Mind*, where he says that the positioning of African literatures within the Kenyan education system is fundamental to the status of such literatures in the minds of the students.[168] If African literatures are made optional then Western writing remains core, giving African students the impression that 'their' writers are somehow of inferior status to, for example, Shakespeare.[169] I argue that it is conceivable that this mindset might be being transferred from the classroom into popular Malawian performance practice because serious drama is still primarily performed in English and serious drama is considered to be a 'higher' form of theatre than the comedy of Chichewa drama in Malawi.[170]

African Julius Caesar

In 1998 British director Toby Gough created *African Julius Caesar* in Malawi. In an interview with the Times Higher Education Supplement about the production, he states that 'the plays are timeless and can be imposed on any state in any part of the world'.[171] Statements such as this, however, were precisely what Gilbert and Tompkins in *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996) criticised of works claiming universality, which they said renders intercultural works devoid of cultural differentiation.[172] Shakespeare is perhaps England's most unfortunate export in this regard:

> To bring a crew of British actors out here to do the original *Julius Caesar* would have been awful – a real colonial horror. Instead, the Shakespearian language was pared down to its simplest meaning. Coming up with the script took three days, Gough says: 'I took out the boring bits and focused on the images Shakespeare conjures with language – games, snakes and fire-dancing. Shakespeare writes for the

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[167] Ngulube, p. 100.
[168] Thiong'o, p. 90,91.
[169] Thiong'o, p. 90,91.
[170] Ngulube, p. 102.
[171] 'Is All the World Still His Stage?', *Times Higher Education (THE)*, 1998 <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/is-all-the-world-still-his-stage/108985.article> [accessed 21 February 2017].
[172] Gilbert and Tompkins, p. 10.

> people, which is what we are trying to do – make Shakespeare accessible.[173]

Gough is clearly aware of Malawi's colonial past, because Smith Likongwe, who worked as an assistant director on the production, explained that Gough had worked on an earlier production in Malawi about David Livingstone.[174] *African Julius Caesar*, sponsored by the British Council, incorporated Malawian songs and dances into the action, athough Likongwe does not specify which. While there were evidently attempts made to make the production accessible to local audiences, Gough's reference to 'boring bits' (boring in whose opinion?) is similar to the commentary about Bogdanov's *Macbeth* in the newspaper discussed above. The publically-expressed opinion that Malawian audiences may not have been able to grasp the serious or complex aspects of the play, even if such views were not reflective of what occurred in the rehearsal room or performance, was palpably patronising.

Nanzikambe Arts

As an example of a different mode of Shakespeare production in Malawi, I offer the work of Nanzikambe Arts. In 2003 British director Kate Stafford, along with Melissa Eveleigh and Malawian Smith Likongwe, founded Nanzikambe in Blantyre. Stafford, who trained as an actor at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, came to Malawi with her husband, who was working with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and her family. In Blantyre, Stafford found that there were few professional theatre organisations. She was interested in Shakespeare and was aware that Malawian students were required to study his plays at school, and so, working with Malawian artists and officials, Nanzikambe began operating as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization). The company was established in order to:

> Produce theatre both for entertainment and as a means of delivering development education. From the start we produced plays for the general public, sketches for conferences, training in active learning using theatre techniques for NGOs.[175]

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[173] Liz Welch, 'Bard Act to Follow', *FRANK Magazine*, August 1998.
[174] Smith Likongwe to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: African Julius Caesar', 2016.
[175] Kate Stafford to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Continuation of Skype Interview', 16 August 2015.

For the purposes of this thesis I limit my analysis of the company's output of productions of Shakespeare plays, but it must be noted that during this early period Nanzikambe had a varied programme which included plays by Henrik Ibsen and Georges Feydeau and educational work devised by the company.

Stafford's first production was *Hamlet* (2003). This play interested her personally, and the project received some funding from the British Council Malawi, headed by Richard Weyers.[176] At the time Weyers wanted to develop his idea of 'mutuality' between Malawi and Britain, a concept Stafford defined as 'the coming together of cultures, learning from each other and contributing to each other.'[177] Stafford was particularly keen to work with local artists and forms. A production of *Hamlet,* therefore, was an ideal project for developing 'mutuality' – rehearsals serving as the forum for exploration and the resulting performances as the tangible artistic output.

Stafford subsequently directed *Macbeth* (2004) and *An African Dream* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) (2004/2005). Both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* toured within Malawi, mainly to urban centres, and Macbeth was also performed in Harare, Zimbabwe. Each production had an entirely Malawian cast and largely Malawian creative team.

During each production, Stafford refined her practice and established modes of working that became increasingly intercultural. All three Shakespeare productions were performed in the original English because of their positioning on the school curriculum, and as Stafford explains:

> The local theatre audience are interested in Shakespeare and there was a demand for any Shakespeare in the original. All Malawians who have been educated to MSCE level (graduating secondary school) still study Shakespeare but have had little opportunity to see it performed live, and they really responded to this opportunity.[178]

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[176] Stafford to Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Continuation of Skype Interview'.
[177] Kate Stafford, *Interview of Kate Stafford Conducted by Amy Bonsall* (via Skype, 2015).
[178] Kate Stafford to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Nanzikambe Productions', 6 July 2017.

The company, therefore, used methods aside from full-text translation to situate the play into a Malawian context. For example, *African Dream* (named as such because it was set in pre-colonial times) featured original music by Malawian actor/musician Baba Twaya Sanudi – who also played Bottom. The songs, with lyrics in Yao, served the specific purpose of reinforcing the detail of the narrative using local language.[179] In another example of the intercultural effort, Stafford explained that assistant director Muthi Nhlema directed Act 2 scene 2, the Forest scene, in collaboration with the actors using physical theatre, which Stafford commented 'was one of the most successful scenes in the play, and got huge audience response in the form of laughter and applause'.[180] In this instance, then, the artistic intercultural collaboration being developed at Nanzikambe was advantageous to local artists and enjoyed by many in its audiences.

This intercultural form of working became a defining feature of Nanzikambe's methodology and production style:

> Over the course of the three Shakespeare productions I directed, my practice developed and changed. The input from Malawian colleagues increased enormously as our relationship and trust developed. This was an energising and exciting few years in which I developed intercultural practice, which I am still working to develop today.[181]

Stafford had come to Malawi with her own theatre experiences and interests but had committed to developing a theatre company, which would become embedded into the local theatre landscape. Through the local production of numerous works, Stafford and her colleagues committed to the long-term development of a Malawian/British intercultural practice, using Shakespeare as a framework benefitting the local artistic community and serving their audiences. This is an entirely different model to the touring and educational productions of Shakespeare mentioned above.

The impact of Nanzikambe's work is not entirely positive however, Chisiza and I argued that:

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[179] Stafford to Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Nanzikambe Productions'.
[180] Stafford to Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Nanzikambe Productions'.
[181] Stafford to Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Nanzikambe Productions'.

> The company took money in order to establish its brand and audience base; however the funding model allowed Eurocentric texts to be produced at the expense of prioritising the development of Malawian dominated intercultural performance.[182]

This issue of financing is akin to the criticisms I made about *Rei Lear* and Joao Branco in chapter one. There I argued that local intercultural interaction between a postcolonial country and its former coloniser remained problematic because of economic disparity between the two nations, further exacerbated by the neo-colonial overtones synonymous with a European cultural icon such as Shakespeare. The cultural interest and funding that producing Shakespeare's plays attracts seemed to create 'leverage' for Nanzikambe which brought in funding, large audiences, and both national and international interest. Perhaps it was the very economic privilege that came with Shakespeare production that unwittingly overshadowed other elements of this company's artistic and cultural advances.

African Romeo and Juliet

In 2012 Bilimankhwe Arts (a British theatre company established in 2006 by Kate Stafford, which is also the sister company of Nanzikambe Arts) and The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust co-produced *Romeo and Juliet* for performances in the UK and then Malawi. I directed the production, which was performed in Chichewa and English, with only Romeo and Juliet retaining their lines in Shakespeare's original language.

The *Nyasa Times* referred to the implied ownership of the production enabled by adaptation and translation:

> African *Romeo and Juliet* is instantly recognizable and relevant to both watching Malawian and European audiences with some elements adjusted while retaining the storyline. The Elizabethan sayings, some, were replaced with African sayings without losing the intended meaning … There is a lot of song and dancing, some traditional and newly composed for the production, done in English, Chichewa, Ngonde, Yao that draw the audience into the play.[183]

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[182] Chisiza and Bonsall, p. 84.

[183] 'Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet Wears Malawian Face', *Malawi Nyasa Times - Malawi Breaking News in Malawi* <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/11/30/shakespeares-romeo-and-juliet-wears-malawian-face/> [accessed 6 August 2015].

Because the production had been conceived with an audience demographic in mind, specifically Malawian school students, the motifs employed by the creative team and cast, according to the review above, resonated with the audience, though not with all – in an ironic inversion of my criticism of other productions removing 'boring bits', a student at the University of Malawi said that she had found the production 'boring'.[184] It was clear from the reactions of Malawian students that the production needed significant development, particularly the language and specificity of the relocation anchors that made the production identifiably Malawian. It was these conclusions that led me to conceive this PhD project.

Hamlet

On 23 April 2014, Shakespeare's Globe embarked upon a two-year global tour of *Hamlet* to every country in the world. The 'Globe to Globe *Hamlet*', directed by Artistic Director Dominic Dromgoole, had the following goals:

> Globe to Globe *Hamlet* was created with the aim of performing Hamlet to as many people as possible, in as diverse a range of places as possible. The central principle of the tour is that Shakespeare can entertain and speak to anyone, no matter where they are on earth; and that no country or people are not better off for the lively presence of Hamlet.[185]

Malawi hosted the production in April 2015 and was reliant on the assistance of Nanzikambe Arts and Bilimankhwe.

The venue was St Andrews High School in Blantyre, which was filled to its 400-seat capacity.[186] Stafford's response to seeing the play is useful here because of her own experience in directing Shakespeare for Malawian audiences. She describes how the doubling of characters using the convention of different British regional accents to delineate characters was particularly problematic for Malawian audiences. The convention was near impossible for them to interpret into a

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[184] Amy Bonsall, 'Chancellor College, Zomba, Research Diary', 2015, p. 4.
[185] 'Shakespeare's Globe to Globe - Hamlet', *About the Project* <http://globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com/hamlet/about-the-project> [accessed 6 August 2015].
[186] 'Shakespeare: Globe to Malawi (to NZ Too)', *G Is for Go* <https://gisforgo.wordpress.com/2015/04/09/shakespeare-globe-to-malawi-to-nz-too/> [accessed 6 August 2015].

meaningful signifier for character doubling.[187] Malawian Joshua Bhima also mentioned the textual delivery:

> Not many Malawians got to see it and even if they saw it they couldn't have grasped all of the text because it was in fast mode, it looked like they wanted to finish it and go.[188]

This statement highlights a significant cultural pitfall whereby theatrical conventions, when simply transposed across nations, do not read clearly. With the huge commitments of resources and energy undertaken by the Globe on this momentous project it is unfortunate that one Malawian audience member, at least, understood the use of fast textual pacing to mean that the company was wanting to make a swift exit, when the pacey delivery of Shakespeare text in performance is a modern convention in many mainstream productions in the UK. Mzumara, who organised the production logistics for the Globe's tour in Malawi, said that there was no local newspaper coverage of the production primarily because other arts events required journalistic coverage on the same day. Furthermore, a questionnaire sent to the Globe by *The Nation* newspaper was never returned and that 'put off some journalists' from engaging with the production at all.[189]

Reflections

The research above indicates that, in so far as there is interest in Shakespeare's texts in Malawi, it is overwhelmingly born from their privileged position on the secondary education curriculum as a result of Malawi's colonial past. As such, I reflect here upon the implications of this history on my approach to this project. I acknowledge that seeking to create a production of a Shakespeare play in Malawi, at all, could be viewed as contentious and neo-colonial. However, because Shakespeare remains firmly on the school curriculum in its original English form, it was worth investigating how a text could be made accessible and enjoyable for local audiences. My survey data also indicated that there was local interest in a production translated into the vernacular. As I have evidenced, there is at least a small history of intercultural Shakespeare production in Malawi. It was

[187] Stafford.
[188] Joshua Bhima, 'Personal Email: Response to Questions Posed by Amy Bonsall', 14 July 2015.
[189] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email: Malawian Drama'.

appropriate, therefore, to interrogate, develop and utilise those elements of such practice that preceded my own.

My analysis of the early productions of Shakespeare in the country highlighted important considerations regarding the 'Malawianisation' of Shakespeare. Should all productions of Shakespeare in Malawi be considered intercultural? If, as in *The Deceased's Attack,* little of Shakespeare's language, character names or theatrical (European) style remained, was this still *intercultural* Shakespeare? I contend that *The Deceased's Attack* was a radical re-imagining of *Hamlet* that expanded the possibilities for popular Malawian drama and Shakespeare performance. While the production was performed in English and retained recognisable elements of the source text, including the narrative, characters and the sporadic use of heightened language, a Malawian company transposed them into a Malawian context. Chisiza had re-imagined *Hamlet* into a local setting using contemporary English. This chimes with the translation/adaptation of *Toufann* undertaken by Dev Virahsawmy who used contemporary Kreol for his translation - they both used contemporary, rather than archaic, forms of language to depict their unique works, inspired by Shakespeare's source texts. Chisiza and Virahsawmy worked from an emic position to create work for their respective local audiences. I did not feel that this approach would be appropriate for my own project because I could not shape the work from such a culturally knowledgeable position.

The other productions that toured to Malawi were conceived in the West and had little or no input from local theatre artists. Where there was local input, it seemed to have been only included at the rehearsal stage once the rationale and parameters of the production had been set. This model was not compatible with the research I was seeking to undertake because of my semi-etic positioning and my increasing awareness of the neo-colonialism associated with intercultural Shakespeare production conceived by Western theatre makers.

Nanzikambe and Bilimankhwe were flawed in some aspects of their practice, as discussed above. However, there was a clear and deliberate attempt by the management to continually improve on artistic and cultural considerations

production by production. It is essential to recognise that Stafford was consciously engaged with a developing practice with local practitioners and audiences, and this practice flowed through the Shakespeare productions as well as the rest of the work produced by Nanzikambe and the subsequent Nanzikambe/Bilimankhwe collaborations. Stafford progressively relinquished her position as artistic director of the company to her Malawian colleagues. At the time of writing Nanzikambe has been led entirely by local practitioners for five years.

The Bilimankhwe working practice developed out of Stafford's work in Nanzikambe and is built on the notion of:

> Each one teach one…We bring together artists from differing cultures to work together, learning from each other's culture and building our skills. We share language, traditions and various forms of artistic expression across the spectrum of the arts.[190]

By continuing to create Shakespeare productions, with Nanzikambe and Bilimankhwe collaborating with local artists and seeking to innovate production by production, working methods could be further developed and refined. As discussed above, I was already involved with both companies and so it was appropriate for this research project to build upon these practices.

As Chichewa drama is the most populist and accessible form of drama in Malawi, I suspected that a translation of *Romeo and Juliet* into Chichewa could open up Shakespeare's text for both Malawian students and general audiences. This could help students' understanding of texts that were mostly studied only in the classroom and would give greater exposure to the texts beyond an elite schooling environment. Furthermore, a well-researched and contextualised intercultural Shakespeare production that prioritised Malawian artists and performance forms in the vernacular might create exciting performative possibilities.

My research from chapter one and chapter two highlighted how important the awareness of any potential legacy was when working interculturally. By collaborating with some of the artists who had previously worked on my 2012

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[190] 'Bilimankhwe | Education', *Bilimankhwe-Arts.org*, 2014 <https://www.bilimankhwe-arts.org/education> [accessed 30 July 2017].

Bilimankhwe production (*African Romeo and Juliet*), I could ensure that the practice we explored in this new project could have a lasting presence and value in the country and could itself be built on in future productions.

As I was to engage in intercultural production, it was essential to consider how my work might be made meaningful to Malawian audiences without making assumptions as to how various audience groups would access the text. By working in collaboration with local performance artists and exploiting existing hybrid performance forms such as Chichewa comedy, the British cultural hegemony that Shakespeare's texts so often represent could be further interculturally challenged. If local performers were integral to the creative process, then the production was more likely to resonate with their fellow Malawians.

As I am not Malawian, I was clear that, like the Shakespeare performances of Nanzikambe, the intercultural identity of my production would have to be a defining feature of the whole enterprise from its inception. As I sought to extend the scope of the Shakespeare productions in Malawi by working in the vernacular, my work was, at least in part, concerned with challenging the postcolonial legacy of elite theatre performed in English for the educated, urban population. I am not fluent in a Malawian vernacular, therefore it was essential that I engage a Malawian writer to undertake a translation or adaptation of the text and to work *in partnership* with Malawian theatre artists at every stage of the production.

It should be noted that Nanzikambe's Shakespeare work was all undertaken when Stafford was at the helm. Since her departure, the subsequent Shakespeare productions the company has been involved with were co-produced with Bilimankhwe, Stafford's company in the UK. Shakespeare production by the company has remained led by Westerners. In my opinion, if intercultural Shakespeare practice in Malawi continues to develop and change, then it has a purpose: to reflect and serve its local audience. If it fails to adapt then it surely risks becoming a self-serving enterprise mainly benefiting those making the productions. I was determined that my production would build on the successful elements of intercultural practice I have identified, and would extend the range

and scope of Shakespeare performance in Malawi further still, with the ultimate intent of placing performances of his work beyond the accusation of neo-colonialism.

CHAPTER THREE: Exploring Shakespeare in Malawi

Introduction

This chapter examines and analyses my practice-led research, undertaken during the three trips to Malawi in November 2014 (two weeks), June 2015 (two weeks) and March/April 2016 (three and a half weeks). The discoveries made within this research result from the practical encounters between myself and the students at CHANCO during exploratory workshops, and then again at Mzuzu University during rehearsal and performance. In order to explore the relevance of Shakespeare for a Malawian audience, public performances were essential. My research was therefore all about seeking to create performances of Shakespeare that might resonate with Malawian audiences. This chapter is reflexive and, as such, it will enumerate the terms I set down as a result of my theoretical research and use them to interrogate the practical methods I applied within the workshops, rehearsals and the audience feedback from the performances. It will also highlight how my leadership of the process, in the role of both workshop leader and director, shaped the work and how this affected the final aesthetic of the production.

Having examined intercultural Shakespeare practice intellectually, as encapsulated in chapters one and two, I sought to use (or discard) elements of established practices I had encountered in order to explore intercultural theatre-making in Malawi. In so doing I created the following directorial rationale in lieu of a Western-facing directorial concept:

1) The project should have a clearly defined local benefit, and that benefit should dictate the artistic style and venue(s) of the production.
2) The play should be in Chichewa, and the translation should be made available locally.
3) I would endeavour to understand local audiences to tailor the play more specifically to their needs/tastes and create an entertaining and quality production for them.

4) There should be time set aside for workshop exploration of the text. This strategy closely aligns with the three-phase process undertaken in the creation of *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn*. The text for *Romio ndi Julieti* was similarly translated first before being explored and tested in workshops which then led up to a formal rehearsal process leading to production of the final work for public viewing.

5) The process and the production should incorporate methodologies from both Western and Malawian practices, and the final artistic quality of the work should not be at the expense of a collaborative and mutually constructive process. A best case scenario would be that our work would expand and add to the Malawian theatre landscape and not take from it.

6) I would seek to collaborate closely with Malawian theatre artists to shape the work by developing a rehearsal methodology that would provide creative space for the actors to flex their imaginations and physical skills while retaining my role as overall director. I would remain mindful of any issues of authority and hierarchy my presence, as part of the Western cultural hegemony, might present within the rehearsal room (my concern would be an inhibition of practical artistic experimentation by the actors).

7) The performance style should come from techniques and forms familiar to the local artists. Traditional performance forms might be utilised, but that would be dependent upon the Malawian performers offering these suggestions themselves.[1] I would then shape the work using these performative materials. The production is intended to be intercultural and not an exclusively Malawian enterprise.

8) The production must be free to attend.

Drawing on my reflections from chapter two, that Shakespeare performance in Malawi is still widely associated with education, but that no vernacular translation of the set text *Romeo and Juliet* is available, it was clear that there would be a

[1] 'Survey Responses: Zomba and Blantyre', ed. by Amy Bonsall, 2014.

tangible local benefit to using this text in translation to form the main thrust of my practice-led research. My significant concern about the practical elements of the project was that I might be inadvertently facilitating cultural colonialism. This concern arose from my misgivings about the practice of other intercultural theatre-makers, as discussed above. To address this issue I arranged to engage in field research in Malawi, which would be comprised of three distinct phases. Firstly, I undertook archival research in November 2014 and gained some initial survey data, which confirmed that there was interest in seeing a Shakespeare production performed in a local language. 18 of 21 surveys (three surveys did not ask this question, and so they were discounted) showed the respondent would like to see Shakespeare in the vernacular, when adding the remaining three surveys to the data all 24 surveys showed that the respondents felt Shakespeare's plays were relevant to Malawi (Appendix A).[2]

Having ascertained that there might be Malawian interest in my project the second phase, between the 18 and 25 June 2015, focused on theatre workshops with undergraduate theatre students at CHANCO, to explore the text in performance and attempt to find ways of working practically that might elucidate meaning for Malawian audiences and be transferable to a rehearsal process. The final phase at Mzuzu University, rehearsal (21 March – 6 April 2016) and performance (8 – 9 April 2016), took forward some of the discoveries made in the workshops and moved into the performance co-creation, itself an important part of intercultural exploration. Finally, I aimed to survey and evidence the cast's and audiences' responses to the production to evaluate the impact of this approach.

Part One: Translation and Editing

The Translation of the Text

In order to avoid the criticisms I have made about the work of practitioners such as Brook and Gough in relation to their adaptation of Western texts, I decided that offering the text to a translator in its entirety and being flexible as to the form the translation could take would ensure that the text could be described as 'Malawian'.

[2] Ibid.

In 2013, I had worked on an adaptation of Malawian, Onjezani Kenani's Cain Prize-nominated short story *Love on Trial* at the Oval House Theatre in London. What attracted me particularly to this piece was the lyricism and imagery of the writing. As a Chichewa-speaking writer and playwright, he had appropriate experience to offer, and he also had a sound understanding of the culture and history of the UK, including Shakespeare. He said he wanted to undertake the project, as it would be the first time an entire Shakespeare play had been translated and published, and he wanted to be the first Malawian writer to do this.[3] My decision as a scholar and director, therefore, was to choose Kenani as the person I thought best placed artistically and interculturally to engage with the writing of the text.

Kenani gave me the rights to use his translation for the first run of performances. We wanted to publish the text to allow Malawian schools to have access to the work. We also agreed that the translation should be printed with the Chichewa version appearing on the right-hand side of the page and the English original, line by line, on the left – making the text as accessible as possible to the reader (the text was published in this form in May 2016 by Dzuka Publishing). I stipulated to Kenani that he should translate the play into Chichewa. I explained that my directorial decision was to give him the artistic freedom to decide whether the most appropriate way of doing that might be to take the route of *Ìtàn Ògìnìntìn* and use older forms of the language to locate the play in a time more akin to Shakespeare's original, or to explore how contemporary Chichewa could be used in this instance (more akin to Branco's approach) or, thirdly, to take a more radical view (a la Virahsawmy) and rework and adapt Shakespeare's play. In the event, he chose to translate the whole text as close to the meaning of the lines in the original as the Chichewa language and Malawian cultural considerations would allow. The source translation used was the Arden Shakespeare Third Edition (2012).[4] In my opinion, this edition is the most comprehensive available, and the substantial

[3] Stanley Kenani to Amy Bonsall, 'Personal Email: Interview by Amy Bonsall', 1 February 2016.
[4] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Rene Weis, 3, New edition (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012).

introductory and textual notes offered Kenani a rich and reliable basis for his Chichewa version of the play.[5]

Kenani wrote three drafts of the text in total, creating a literal translation. After the first draft was completed he undertook the following exercise:

> I read the Chichewa part alone, sometimes loudly to myself, just to gauge whether it flowed as a story someone would read and enjoy. I had to strike a balance between adhering to Shakespeare's script and removing trans-literal translations to put in images that would help the Chichewa reader understand the story in a better way.[6]

We had very little communication during his creation of the first draft of the text. My research had led me to acknowledge that I needed to work on a basis of trust with the local experts with whom I had chosen to collaborate.

I took a copy of the first draft with me to CHANCO and, whilst we were not able to interrogate the whole script, we did explore how large sections of the text could work in performance. I had anticipated taking notes back to Kenani as a result of the process, however, the translation was extremely well received by both the students and by Chichewa-speaking academics. The most significant issue was the length of the script; Chichewa vocabulary required more words for description than English. On the basis of that feedback I suggested that I edit the play down for production, Kenani was happy for me to make cuts. He completed a final draft of the script, making minor revisions of some of the poetry, before I commenced rehearsals.

Language Choice

Kenani examined how Chichewa had been used in different areas of Malawi, as well as how it had developed over time, before embarking on his translation. This was an important consideration when making choices about how particular characters would use the language:

> Chichewa, like German, has got what we could call High Chichewa – the Chichewa that is so grammatically perfect that you would be hard-pressed to find a single soul that speaks it; we in fact only hear it on the MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Company) radio, even so when they are reading the news only. Everybody else's Chichewa depends on the

[5] Kenani to Bonsall.
[6] Ibid.

> locality in which they grew up. It is hard, for instance, for somebody from Dowa district's most rural area to be understood in Blantyre's Chileka sub-district, although they, like the people of Dowa, are Chewa. In the last 25 years, I have witnessed the urban Chichewa evolve in terms of its incorporation of foreign words, twisted, as it were, to sound like Chichewa, and this is almost uniformly spoken by the youth in all urban areas.[7]

Kenani sought to use these differences to his advantage, explaining, for example, that informal language was utilised for Mercutio in an attempt to replicate the speech of the Chichewa used by urban youth. For the characters of higher status he utilised 'High Chichewa' as a way of asserting their position in society, though he mixed it with some 'informal expressions' so that the characters would still sound 'real'.[8]

Kenani sought to incorporate Malawian culture into the fabric of the language of the translation. The following is an example of how language choice can indicate respect:

> The use of the word 'you.' Chichewa, like French, has got two forms of 'you'. There is iwe, or the French tu or toi, and inu, or the French vous. We say iwe when talking to children or to peers we are so close with, otherwise it becomes an insult (for instance, I was appalled when I visited an uncle in prison in 1989 whom prisoners thirty years his junior were calling iwe) […] In the translated version of *Romeo and Juliet*, I made sure that all references to the Prince, the Montagues and the Capulets carried the respectful inu to denote respect…

Kenani balanced the demands of the original text with how the literal translation appeared in Chichewa. In the following example, from Act 3 scene 5, the original text is followed by the Chichewa translation. Kenani then explains his rationale for adapting Shakespeare's original poetry to use more culturally appropriate images.

> *CAPULET*
> God's bread! It makes me mad.
> Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,
> Alone, in company, still my care hath been
> To have her matched. And having now provided
> A gentleman of noble parentage,
> Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly trained,
> Stuffed, as they say, with honorable parts,
> Proportioned as one's thought would wish a man—

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

> And then to have a wretched puling fool,
> A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,
> To answer 'I'll not wed,' 'I cannot love,'
> 'I am too young,' 'I pray you, pardon me.'[9]

Translated as follows:

> *KAPULETI*
> Akundikwiyitsa nanga.
> Masana ndi usiku, ola ndi ola, nthawi iliyonse, kuntchito, tikamasewera,
> pandekha, ndi azinzanga, palibe chinthu chomwe
> ndakhala ndikufunitsitsa kuposa
> kupeza mwamuna wake. Ndiye pano ndampezera
> mwamuna wochokera ku banja labwino,
> wooneka bwino, wophunzira, wabwino.
> Atsikana sakugona tulo m'manyumbamu kufuna mwamuna amene uja.
> Koma mbuzi iyi, kachitsiru aka, kachiweto kongolira zilizonseka,
> kakuuwona mwayi uli m'manja mwake
> n'kumati, 'Sindingakwatiwe. Sindingagwe m'chikondi.
> Ndikadali mwana. Chonde.'[10]

Kenani explains:

> 'Proportioned as one's thought would wish a man —' becomes 'Atsikana sakugona m'manyumbamu kufuna mwamuna amene uja' (line 8), which literally means 'girls are spending sleepless nights in their homes at the mere thought of him', an image I chose to emphasize Paris's handsomeness, since we have already said before that he is 'wooneka bwino' or 'handsome,' saying 'Chilichonse mwa iye chili m'malo mwake' a literal translation of 'proportioned as one's thought would wish a man' does not come out as strong in Chichewa. A Chichewa reader would easily connect with the image than the trans-literal translation [sic].[11]

While the superficial meaning is conveyed, the multiple layers of meaning that are synonymous with Shakespeare's language, i.e. the double entendre regarding 'parts', are not retained here. No translation can be literal, especially poetry; it will always be to some degree a new work. Kenani has adapted the text linguistically to make the meaning accessible to a Malawian audience, however it does stay close to the original text.

Kenani tried to retain the meaning of each line keeping the characters, the narrative and structure of the play unchanged. He was adamant that his work was

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[9] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* Act 3, Scene 5.
[10] Kenani to Bonsall.
[11] Ibid.

a translation and not an adaptation, and he was unsure as to how it would be received, stating that translation of Shakespeare for Malawian audiences is '*terra incognita'. Romeo and Juliet* had not been formally translated into Chichewa before and, at the start of the process, he did not know if it was even achievable. Kenani stated that the translation was an exercise in flexing Chichewa. For example, Chichewa has no word for pink, and so he settled on using the slang word 'pinki'. He also mentioned that he occasionally asked for advice from other Chichewa speakers via social media, marking a development in sourcing methods for translation. Thus, Kenani's text could be considered a palimpsest. Shakespeare's original manuscript exists in the translation, but it is overlaid with the language and culture of the translator.

To edit the play I looked to the English component of the MCSE. As the exam required a full understanding of the whole play, I created an abridged version of the text that would run at approximately 60 minutes (read in English). I also considered feedback from the workshops where Magalasi was concerned that British tragedy was too slow for Malawian tastes, and tried to ensure that the action of the play was retained.[12] The group felt that the female voice was significant within the play and so I sought to keep as many of the significant characters from the original play as possible, in particular Lady Montague, without losing entire scenes. Mzumara, who I engaged to work with me during the final research phase, then took my English edits and edited the Chichewa text accordingly.

At the first read through in Mzuzu, during phase three of the research, it was clear that the script would need further editing as the running time was still far too long. My abridged version would have been over three hours, which the company stated was too lengthy - audiences would not enjoy it. Mzumara and I made further edits and developed an efficient method of achieving this, sitting side by side at a table. I had the hard copy of the English/Chichewa script and together we edited the story right down, leaving the bones of the action and plot development. Once a section was agreed, Mzumara would work on Kenani's Chichewa script, ensuring that the

[12] Bonsall, 'Chancellor College, Zomba, Research Diary', p. 7.

sense and the grammar were still correct and endeavouring to keep changes to a minimum. Mzumara then isolated the sections of the play that Kenani had made poetic in order to retain as much of the poetry as we could as we both felt that the poetry was one of the identifiably Shakespearian textual traits that audience might expect and enjoy. I edited the English version accordingly. We cut the 56 page script down to 30, reasoning that every page of Chichewa text ran at two minutes of performance.[13]

Part Two: Workshops (Selected examples on DVD 1)

Introduction

Between 18 and 25 June 2015 Dr Mufunanji Magalasi kindly agreed to facilitate my practical research with ten fourth-year students at CHANCO. Magalasi's support as Head of Drama was essential to the success of the project. His presence gave it weight and validated the work as collaboration and not cultural imposition. The purpose of the workshops was to use practical exploration and group discussion to explore Kenani's Chichewa translation of *Romeo and Juliet,* now *Romio ndi Julieti,* as preparation for my directing a full production of the work.

The workshops uncovered performative possibilities and highlighted elements that might prevent *Romeo and Juliet* being meaningful or accessible for a Malawian audience. 46 hours of practical workshop and discussion were undertaken. Workshops were timetabled to accommodate the students' university commitments, but the number of attendees varied daily.

Initial Meeting

During an informal meeting on the 16 June I introduced myself as a Leeds University PhD candidate. I made clear my appreciation for their assistance and I pitched myself as a student, and one reliant upon their support. I explained my purpose was to discover whether, and if so how, the play could be made meaningful for Malawian audiences, and this resulted in a lively discussion about Shakespeare's texts and how the students felt about his plays. One student stated

[13] Amy Bonsall, 'Mzuzu University, Research Diary', p. 3.

that she had always felt that Shakespeare was female. She reasoned that, to have created such a complex character as true to the inner life of a young woman as Juliet, Shakespeare, with his tender words, must be female. I suspected that gender would be discussed further throughout the workshops.

The Workshops

I had anticipated that my early focus would be on practical exploration of the text in line with Bharucha's methodologies. However, during the first workshop session, it became clear the students wanted to discuss their ideas about the play, about Shakespeare and about theatre audiences in Malawi rather than engage with anything practical. I conceded, and a valuable dialogue about their hatred of exams and their struggles to understand the original English text of *Romeo and Juliet* ensued, confirming that a Chichewa translation of the text could have value.

The group were particularly interested in continuing the debate about gender, maintaining that there were significant issues such as access to education, and social expectations that were faced by both genders. The males felt constricted by the expectations upon them to marry and provide for a family; the women felt that they were still regarded as inferior to males in every way. Interestingly though, both genders regarded the term feminism with suspicion and negativity.[14] The group indicated that they would like to explore gender within the workshops and that issues relating to unequal power within marriage and the influence of family on the lives of young Malawians could form the basis of a production concept.

As a result of the group's interest in the text, I discarded my previous plan of working initially through imagery and the practical and chose to begin the workshops with a group reading of the prologue to Act 1 scene 1 of the Chichewa text. After discussing the play's narrative it was evident that some students had a firmer grasp of the text than others, so it was logical for us to begin the read-through in the order presented in the script. This early deviation from my planned

[14] Seodi White, 'Situation Of Women', *WLSA-Malawi*, 2009 <https://wlsamw.wordpress.com/situation-of-women/> [accessed 11 February 2017].

method of working highlighted two important points about the process of making intercultural theatre in Malawi. Firstly, while English is widely used in administrative settings it is not the daily language of most Malawians and, as such, plays in English, particularly the English of Shakespeare, may communicate individual words and broad canvasses rather than multi-layered meaning to Malawians. Secondly, the group were not excited to be exploring *Romeo and Juliet* but were fascinated by the prospect of engaging with the Chichewa *Romio ndi Julieti*.

From a textual perspective, an obvious issue warranting discussion was the question of names within the text. Malawian cities and towns sometimes have European names, so the group suggested we leave the place names the same. The proper names of some characters could be slightly altered through pronunciation, for example Juliet became 'Julieti' and Romeo 'Roo – Mei – oh' (Romio) to sound more familiar to a Malawian ear.

The group decided that it was important to retain recognisable Shakespearean elements within the text because they felt that other performative and visual methods could be used to situate the production in Malawi, something they were keen to explore. For example, one suggestion was that either Montague or Capulet having more than one wife might highlight a rural practice of polygamy.[15] The Apothecary could be a herbalist/street seller locally known as a sing'anga - a very poor traditional medicine peddler or witch doctor.[16] The group said these were familiar figures in markets in Malawi, and Malawians of every status patronise them - Romeo making use of one would be entirely culturally acceptable. [17]

Workshop Methods

By the end of the workshop phase I aimed to have refined working methods that could be applied to the final rehearsal process. After the first three sessions we had created a pattern of working that broadly followed a structure whereby the group

[15] Bonsall, 'Chancellor College, Zomba, Research Diary', p. 6.
[16] Brian Morris, *Chewa Medical Botany: A Study of Herbalism in Southern Malawi*, 2 (Hamburg: LIT Verlag Münster, 1996), p. 161.
[17] Bonsall, 'Chancellor College, Zomba, Research Diary', p. 13.

worked as a whole on a single large group scene, or split into pairs or threes to work on smaller, more intimate sections. When working in smaller groupings all pairs would explore the same section, an example being three pairs working on Act 2 scene 2, the balcony scene (an example of which can be seen on DVD 1). We would then reconvene, and each group would share their work and then discuss it. This proved to be a very efficient way of working as it meant:

- We were able to get numerous interpretations of the same scene within a small amount of time
- There was a great deal of opportunity for group reflection
- The groups were able to work on their own ideas without my intervention, unless they invited it
- The groups were able to watch and reflect upon the work of other groups and aid in the process of reflection and analysis
- Within this main framework, a sub-pattern of working method developed. Firstly the actors would read through the specified section of text; then they would read it while also 'walking' the text, script in hand, and building up the detail and ideas. The final stage was to play the scene and improvise the text, free of scripts[18] and
- We were able to create a montage of the work that we had produced and present it to Magalasi on the final day (this can be seen on DVD 1).

The fifth point warrants further explanation. It was an interesting methodological encounter between my Western-centred practice and Chichewa drama, where scripts are created and performed through improvisation rather than by adherence to a prescribed text. The method freed the actors to investigate how physicality could be explored, for example, to depict the intimacy for which *Romeo and Juliet* is famous while also being mindful of the cultural considerations around intimacy that are specific to Malawi, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

To examine closely how workshops were conducted and to analyse how two highly significant themes from the play – gender and death – were explored, I include

[18] Ibid, pp. 10–11.

examples of these two sessions in detail as entered in my reflective diary at the time of the research. Elements of the discoveries made in these two workshops formed the basis of how these scenes were approached in the rehearsals for the final production.

EXAMPLE - Workshop 2: 19 June 2015 10.30am-12.30pm

> We have three female students and we decided to look at the funeral scenes and the death of Juliet. We discussed how deaths are dealt with in Malawi and it was really useful to find out more about it. There can be up to 2 days of singing and everybody comes to see the body and look at the face. We decided to do the scene where the nurse finds Juliet dead (Act 4 scene 5). It was really interesting how long the scene went on for, much, much longer than it would ever be played in the UK. It was heart-breaking to see a mother cradling her child in her arms. We also explored the scene where Paris is left with Juliet's body (Act 5 scene 3). This was problematic because bodies are traditionally buried in Malawi and you would never, ever go back to the gravesite. We discussed these problems with the text and the group decided that if Juliet were buried in her family's grounds, then it would be possible for someone to visit where she was laid. We could not solve the fact that she was not buried so we discussed leaving it ambiguous. We decided to leave her under a cloth as that could be symbolic either of her being buried, or that she is in a mausoleum. We discussed their wailing and lamenting and how, whilst using the text, there could also be 'grieving improvisation' as well, and the group was confident with that because this is what happens at funerals in Malawi; the audience would be clear what was translated Shakespeare and what was improvisation. And as a director, I would be tempted to leave this text to be improvised at every performance, as this is closer to how Malawian popular drama is created.[19]

The improvisation used to explore Act 4 scene 5 freed the group to experiment with characterisation, pace, performance-style and voice. It moved from panic at the discovery of Juliet's body into a raw and unhurried performance style that utilised repetitive movements and vocalisations to create an atmosphere of despair and disbelief. The longer the scene continued the more it imbued me with a sense of the terrible loss of Juliet. It became clear to me that death in Malawi is marked with its own cultural practices and, as such, can elicit different external emotional responses from mourners and, by extension, an audience. The vocalisation of grief through wailing and howling was a visceral emotional and

[19] Ibid, p. 9.

external response with grief being poured out in contrast to the internalised and hidden response to death common in the UK.

In a subsequent conversation about death in Malawi, Magalasi informed me of a 'comic' who is sometimes in attendance at Malawian funerals specifically to make fun of the deceased – mourners are encouraged to laugh at human frailty.[20] With regard to costume, dress at funerals is significant. For traditional funerals in rural Malawi all makeup must be removed by the women along with all jewellery, hair must be as plain as possible. This style of mourning could signify that Juliet's funeral was taking place in a rural location.[21] I learned that the text, the narrative and the characters had great capacity for accepting different modes of being human for, as much as Shakespeare's text is about words, it is also, significantly for performance, about what remains unsaid. For intercultural theatre it is perhaps this interface that is the richest in performance terms.

EXAMPLE - Workshop 23 June 2015 3.30-7.30pm (see DVD 1)

> In the afternoon we had another very interesting session looking at the scene just after Romeo and Juliet have spent their one night together. Jane [Plastow] had taken a workshop earlier in the day with the students using actions rather than words as a starting point. It had worked in the fight scene to do this so I decided to continue this.
>
> The students read the scene a number of times and then recreated the scene using only gestures. The first run had lots of gesticulating and demonstration, so I asked them to choose only three gestures and to do it more simply. After this was relatively unsuccessful, Jane suggested that one person read the dialogue and the two perform. But prior to doing this we sat around and discussed what the difficulties are for performing love and tenderness in a Malawian performance context, and how audiences might respond to this. We are trying to avoid the audience laughing, and so how might this be achieved?
>
> The discussion was interesting, the students talked about how actresses would be judged personally if they kissed an actor on stage. For theatre actresses this would have a serious implication for them in their personal lives and communities. And so we went through looking at types of gesture that would be acceptable, things such as stroking of the face, stroking of the hands and of the shoulders. [See DVD 1] Then they did the scene again using only these gestures and responding to the text

[20] Ibid, p. 7.
[21] Ibid, p. 7.

> as read by somebody else. This was much more successful and had moments of real tenderness, especially when they relaxed and did less rather than more, as there is a real tendency to over-gesticulate bordering on mime. It was interesting again to note that women were judged far more harshly than men.[22]

Exploring Act 5 scene 3 highlighted the importance of discussion prior to practical exploration. The scene exposed specific cultural issues concerning the depiction of physical contact between the sexes in Malawian theatre – women and men should not touch intimately on stage.

We developed a gestural vocabulary that would be acceptable to both performers and audiences: stroking of hands and caressing the shoulders and upper arm, but never anywhere close to the chest or breast area. The two characters could also sit close to each other and lean on each other, creating the sense of a tender, mutual bond between them. The relationship that came across in subsequent improvisation was more specific and much more engaging for an audience to watch. There were moments of great 'tenderness' because the performers could comfortably embody their characters using gestures that conformed to the codes of their culture. This freed them to make strong physical choices that depicted the inner emotional turmoil that the characters describe in the text.

As in all cultures, it is women who are judged most harshly when sex is involved regardless of the fact that theatre is all illusion. This intervention highlighted that it would be important to consider culturally specific performance codes not just for aesthetic reasons but also for cultural sensitivities. The act of discussing a scene, which might be sensitive, before engaging in the practical elements of performance, demonstrated my respect and consideration for the performers and for an audience. In the case of our workshops the audience comprised of other members of the group, but extending consideration to both actors and audience created a mutually respectful artistic environment. In my opinion, this promoted artistic risk-taking.

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[22] Ibid, pp. 14–15.

It is impractical to suppose that all culturally sensitive issues could be highlighted prior to the commencement of a project, so ongoing and embedded reflection as part of the practical exploration is a vital mode of working in a sensitive intercultural manner combining the practical and the intellectual. Poor performative results from a practical exercise, such as the first exercise using gestures discussed above, enabled us to step back and intellectually examine why the performance had not engaged and excited either the performers or the director. Had I insisted on pursuing practical exploration without allowing for the opportunity for discursive reflection I would have risked alienating the group and may have stalled what was ultimately a fruitful session. This conclusion led me to decide that my intercultural practice must deviate from the privileging of practical exploration that has been a feature in some of the intercultural theatre work I had researched. I discovered that cultural pitfalls could be effectively managed if discussion formed a significant part of the working method of exploration.

Interrogating my own position as a director working interculturally is timely at this juncture. During this session, I recognised the Western text-based education and the practice-privileging intercultural theoretical research my methods were based on, and so I was able, in partnership with the group, carve a new pathway for the work. By this stage of the workshops our now-established dialogic rehearsal environment, which gave agency to the group, was working effectively. While the group had that agency from the start of the process, it took time for them to become fully confident in voicing their opinions and taking performative risks. They experimented with their own raw ideas knowing I could intervene at an appropriate moment and aid them in shaping the work, something that was welcomed and not enforced.

During the final session the group reflected on our work. They all agreed that *Romeo and Juliet* was a play relevant to contemporary Malawian society and that a production of the translated text would be a positive addition to Malawi's theatre landscape. They all agreed that using a Chichewa text had opened up infinite possibilities for them for intellectual and practical discoveries within the

workshop/rehearsal room, stressing that the experience had encouraged them to consider writing their own serious plays in the vernacular.

One member of the group, Grant, said that he found the Chichewa text more challenging than the English and, furthermore, he preferred the original English text.[23] His comment embodied issues of postcolonialism and translation; for him, and presumably for others, English was his first language and the vernacular language(s) his second. Therefore, conclusions about people in former colonial countries always being disconnected from the coloniser do not necessarily apply to Malawi, especially someone like Grant, who has as much ownership of English as someone British-born. This is significant in understanding the complexity of Malawian audiences, and it highlights the importance of capturing individual responses from members of the audience. It cannot be assumed that *all* Malawian audiences will prefer performances in the vernacular.

Moving Forward

I realised that my role was to create basic frameworks. These frames needed to balance the discussion and intellectual examination of the issues presented by the work, with the practical explorations that were essential to test the text in performance. Leading but not dictating was challenging, and I was not always successful. I often had to make decisions about which sections of text would be explored and state what I was hoping to achieve by undertaking such explorations. I discovered that the role of a director within an intercultural and postcolonial context required the ability to call upon my intellectual resources as much as it did my practical, tacit knowledge and experience. Being able to deftly and sympathetically analyse each fresh discovery within the workshop and make immediate decisions as to whether an idea was worth pursuing or not, while appropriately communicating the reasoning behind such decisions to the group, was the most challenging yet most rewarding aspect of the process. While the students benefited from this guidance (they made this clear themselves within the evaluation sessions), in retrospect it may have been even more useful for the students to lead some of the workshops themselves and leave me as only an

[23] Ibid, p. 7.

observer. This might have been a catalyst for them producing their own work on the text without any interference from me; it would have given them full ownership of the text and challenged them to apply some of the methods of working we had developed or, indeed, to develop their own.

By the end of the workshops, the group discovered which major themes they felt were most pertinent to them as Malawians. These themes were gender, rural vs urban population, societal divides, death and rituals associated with death. These themes contrast with those most often associated with *Romeo and Juliet* in the UK, namely youth, first love and glorified violence and a rather romanticised depiction of gender stereotyping. I argue that the difference between these two examples demonstrates the importance of providing artistic freedom within intercultural theatre practice. I could not have predicted which aspects of the play would hold meaning for this group, nor could I have anticipated the direction the explorations took. An essential part of the workshop was my facilitating their access to the physical and intellectual space they required to be able to explore their ideas freely and to draw conclusions as to the most relevant parts of the play for them.

Discussion About Malawian Audiences

During the workshops in 2015 I interviewed Magalasi in order to learn about his understanding of contemporary Malawian audiences. I asked him which Malawians might typically attend theatre performances and whether or not there were social class, education or geographical differences that impacted on theatre attendance. He responded by splitting audiences into three categories, the urban and educated elite, rural audiences, and finally school audiences, but did not give clear insight into any particular behaviours or features of each group.[24] I posed the same question to the workshop group at Mzuzu University. They were also clear that Malawian audiences were diverse; one suggestion for groupings was that about 80 per cent of audiences were rural and uneducated, with the remaining 20 per cent being educated and theatrically literate theatregoers, however it is

[24] Mufunanji Magalasi, Interviewed by Amy Bonsall, in person (Chancellor College, Zomba), June 2015.

possible that these views might reflect university elitism.[25] During the conversations there was no clear differentiation between serious and European-style theatre and theatre for development or Chichewa drama, and so theatre was, unhelpfully in hindsight, used as a catch-all term for all the contemporary forms of Malawian theatre. On the basis of my conversations about Malawian audiences I established that there were four main groups:

- Group 1: The Urban and Educated Elite. This group largely live and/or work in or have access to the three major cities of Malawi, namely Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu .
- Group 2: Rural. Limited access to resources or education, though not exclusively so.
- Group 3: Schools. Students attending secondary school. They may be rural or urban, but they will have had some level of contact with formal education.
- Group 4: The Expatriate. Either rural or urban but generally educated and with financial means and, if rural, access to the major urban centres using private transportation.

In order to gain more detailed insight into contemporary Malawian audiences, and to compare specific and individual audience reactions to my production, it was clear that there should be multiple performances, allowing me to encounter different kinds of audience.

[25] Bonsall, 'Chancellor College, Zomba, Research Diary', p. 4.

Part Three: Rehearsal and Production (Selected Examples on DVD 1)

(Plate 1: Chingalire village, 9 April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

Chingalire village is so remote that the four Europeans travelling together to see the final performance of *Romio ndi Julieti* became hopelessly lost on leaving the main road. My car eventually pulled up in tree-lined Chingalire; in front of me was a wall of people – hundreds – their backs turned watching the play. The final performance of *Romio ndi Julieti* was in full swing. It was a moment that, at times during rehearsals, I was not certain I would experience. The cast and I had embarked on a great experiment together, none of us knowing what our work would eventually look like or if anyone would come to share our performance.

Kindly, silently, space was made so I could see the stage. The audience was huge, well over 1,000 people from babes in arms to the very elderly. I saw that the cast were masked, which told me that they must be in Act 1 scene 3, Capulet's Ball. Something was wrong: Capulet was clearly unwell. He was struggling to stand, relying on Lady Capulet for physical support – he was guided off stage. The rest of the cast were keeping the performance moving; I wasn't sure if the audience realised that there was a problem. Hussein Gopole, my right-hand man, was not on his Mianji drums – far from this being a concern it was a reassurance to me, he must be backstage keeping the production running smoothly.

Benvolio and Mercutio soon had the audience laughing with their antics. Small children climbed high into the yellow-bloomed jacaranda tree to gain a better view. The pair commanded their audience, timing their comedy routines to perfection. That set the scene for the young lovers Romio and Julieti. They could

flirt with a light-hearted innocence during their interaction on the balcony for the audience was warmed up and ready to find the fun within the scene. The doomed couple seemed very young. The detail we had explored during rehearsals took on new meaning when met with a live audience who gasped and giggled at the couple's shy looks and mock protestations. There was an unspoken trust developing between the performers and the audience, which to my mind was predominantly because of the language. The actors embodied the characters and used the words to support their physicality; it was relaxed, fun and controlled but also because the audience recognised the comic and physical performance forms being utilised. The performers were enjoying the process of performance as much as the audience was enjoying watching them.

"Julieti! Julieti!" screamed the Nurse. No response. The audience understood that Julieti was dead. Some in the audience laughed, some shouted – most stayed silent. Capulet began gently singing; the audience recognised the familiar song of mourning *Ndili ndi chisoni pakusiyana nawe* (I am deeply sad that we have been separated). Some of the audience joined in. This poignant moment was for me a highlight of this intercultural experiment where I could see an audience totally engaged in serious drama in Chichewa.

Making *Romio ndi Julieti*: The Parameters of the Project

Using the audience groupings defined earlier, I arranged for performances at three different venues: Luwinga Secondary School, in Mzuzu, the stage at Mzuzu University and the Chichewa-speaking Chingalire village, outside Lilongwe. Rehearsals would run between 21 March and 6 April 2016, with performances on 8 and 9 April 2016 (The text would be edited in line with the findings from the workshops and three weeks was deemed adequate rehearsal time). I did not think it useful to encounter an expatriate audience specifically within this study because I was particularly focusing my research upon indigenous Malawian audiences. In line with my directorial rational (set out on p99) it was agreed that there would be no charge to audiences; the work would be as accessible as possible.

In Zomba, I had engaged Magalasi to assist me in organising the workshops at CHANCO. His support had given academic validation and status to the work but he had not been able to offer practical performative assistance. For Mzuzu I sought to engage colleagues who had academic status along with the practical performance expertise that would ensure they could assist me in the rehearsal room. I decided to cast Mzumara as Capulet and Hussein Gopole as Montague, both experienced, professional Malawian actors with whom I had worked on *African Romeo and Juliet* (see chapter one). I hoped that by employing Misheck Mzumara, who was now a lecturer at the University, in the cast he would convey confidence in my work to the rest of the group and also reiterate that the university endorsed the production. In light of my previous criticism of intercultural practitioners, I sought to ensure that Malawian performance expertise was, as far as practicable, incorporated within the parameters of the project and was central to rehearsals. Gopole, a highly regarded national dance expert and drummer, represented support from the wider Malawian performance community. Misheck Banda (lecturer at the university, Mzumara's superior and the patron of Mzuzu University Theatre Group MUTAG) offered to be periodically present at the rehearsals to assist with the pronunciation of the Chichewa as the script utilised some vocabulary that was little used in everyday parlance (Appendix D). For clarity I will refer to the cast, aside from Mzumara and Gopole, using their character names unless otherwise stated.

From the outset at Mzuzu University, Mzumara and Banda understood the project was for my PhD research and it was necessary that I lead the work. This was agreed via email prior to the start of the project, and it was discussed again in a meeting upon my arrival. During that initial meeting it was agreed that, in line with copyright law, Kenani would retain the rights of the translation, while I retained the rights to the production, including set and costume. After the project was completed the university could re-work the production and, if they obtained the rights from Kenani, would be free to perform their own version of the production.

All the involved parties were clear that this was the first time a full production of *Romeo and Juliet* in Chichewa had been attempted. Mzumara arranged for press

interviews and marketing that would advertise the production locally and nationally through newspaper and radio interviews. The cast were aware of the significance of the production and their crucial role within it, as both Mzumara and I had explained this to them before the first read-through. I insisted that Mzumara was always interviewed alongside me, his presence and contribution, I hoped, would highlight the collaborative elements of the project to the public.

The group I was working with were members of MUTAG, but I had not realised that the student members were drawn from any discipline within the university, I had been under the impression that they were all language and literature students of Mzumara's and that, as such, he could ensure that they were available for rehearsals. Unfortunately, at my first meeting with the department I was told that the cast would have to work around their timetables. My only option was to try and use what time I had economically. We resolved to use the days for meetings with small groups and individual actors and the evenings, 6-10pm, to rehearse the whole company, giving us approximately fifty hours of rehearsal over three weeks.

The MUTAG group were all confident and committed performers, and after observing their work during the first read-through and early rehearsals it seemed to me that their prior experience had familiarised them with Western performance modes. They understood Western-style stagecraft, for example they knew how to explore characters physically and emotionally to create detailed characterisation. Vocally they were able to make themselves audible in the university performance space. In this regard they were similar to UK university theatre groups. Some members were much stronger performers than others, but all were keen to commit their time and energy to the production. The entire cast had prior knowledge of *Romeo and Juliet* from their secondary school education, and they had been given the Chichewa text prior to my arrival so they had a solid working knowledge of the play and its characters.

Rehearsals

(Plate 2: Whole cast rehearsal, Act 4 scene 5, 1 April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

During our first rehearsal, I began by introducing myself and my previous work and then I outlined the project. I talked about the work I had undertaken during the workshops in Zomba and described some of the discoveries we had made there. These discoveries included the idea of Romio being a modern Malawian man; of using cloth to symbolise the burial of Juliet; and how we had discussed Juliet being buried in the grounds of her family compound, to make sense of the cultural taboo that Malawians do not return to graveyards after the burial of a body. I did not state that these were ideas that I wanted to carry forward into the production, but I did offer them as possibilities as they had been explored and found to work in practical terms. I explained how the rehearsals would be managed; that I would be in overall control but that Mzumara and Gopole would be supporting me by directing scenes, in consultation with me, and that Gopole would be leading the music and dance in the production. I wanted as many people as possible to engage with the work, and so I agreed that William Maulidi, a member of the department, could come and watch rehearsals. Throughout the introduction I referred to both Mzumara and Banda as supporters of the project and I expressed

my thanks to all involved. I was careful to ask if the information I was giving was clear or if they wanted Mzumara to translate what I had said into Chichewa.

At this stage I deliberately did not have a specific director's concept in mind. I wanted to avoid imposing my ideas of what I thought would be successful and to work against the stylistic directorial 'concepts' my research indicated had been signatures of the productions examined in chapters one and two. I was interested in finding out if and how the performance style for the production would develop through using the reflexive rehearsal method I had established in Zomba. I made the cast aware of this and stated that I wanted to work with them to develop our performance style.

During rehearsals I used three texts and two scripts. My primary script laid out English and Chichewa line-by-line; I called this my parallel script. Mzumara translated the Chichewa script back into English (a literal translation) and this allowed me to navigate the dramatic climax of the lines and indicated how the sense of the scenes was affected by the translation (Appendix E). The parallel script worked particularly well during larger rehearsals (scenes containing four or more actors) as we were able to discuss the exact words that needed accentuating; it allowed the direction to be word specific where necessary, for example when working with Romio and Julieti on Act 3 scene 5, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Over the first two rehearsals Mzumara, Gopole and I circulated throughout the rehearsal room and each looked at the work the others were creating. The three of us worked on the early scenes of the play, in chronological order, with our groups. During each evening rehearsal we came together at regular intervals to watch each other's scenes developing and to discuss which performance styles were interesting to watch and which were serving the text well. We included the cast in these discussions. We were quickly able to agree on performance styles that used exaggerated physical comedy, popular and nationally recognisable dances, and drumming riffs and demonstrative gestures for the more serious scenes, such as Capulet's altercation with Juliet. We developed and refined the performance style

throughout rehearsals by running the scene, discussing it and then running the scene again with the agreed changes. By the end of the second rehearsal we were all confident that we could move forward, working with the performance choices we had made to produce a cohesive production. Later in the process, time constraints forced me to adapt further the rehearsal methods I developed in Zomba. We would hold a group meeting at the beginning of the session to set down which scenes needed attention. Discussions about ideas for the scenes would ensue and, after we had made decisions about how aspects of scenes would work, I would split the cast. I worked with one group, Gopole another and Mzumara a third.

Gopole, Mzumara and I discussed broad themes outside of rehearsal and then we discussed these ideas with the cast. Through this dialogue it became clear that the cast found that the text resonated with Malawian society and political structures. They were especially interested in the origin and motivation for the conflict between the two families. We imagined Capulet and Montague as contemporary businessmen in Lilongwe both with ambitions for achieving high political office, something Mzumara said was a common feature of affluent Malawian families. As a company, we discussed how the social and political structures within the play could be made meaningful to a Malawian audience. The cast suggested that the Prince could be modelled on Inkosi ya Makosi Mberwa (Paramount Chief Mberwa), who is second only to the President of Malawi. This would work well because it chimed with the political ideas with which we were experimenting, such as local politics and power grabs, which have been a feature of the Malawian political landscape since independence.

Once initial decisions about dances or songs had been made through the discussions at the start of the rehearsal, Gopole and I worked together with the group to ensure that the blocking would complement the choreography and ensure that these elements would support the play's narrative. We achieved this by discussing the most important elements of the scene first before the actors improvised the scene. I would carefully work through the blocking with the actors while Gopole would direct the choreography, then we would run the scene. Once it

had ended, we gave feedback and tackled physical, blocking, vocal or characterisation issues. When we had rectified those problems the scene would run again. This cycle would continue until we were satisfied. Thus, I established a refined dialogic mode of rehearsing based on working with small groups and continued reflective and embedded peer-to-peer feedback.

One of the intercultural aesthetic features of the production was the incorporation of traditional Malawian dances into the fabric of the narrative. Using the system outlined above we made use of traditional initiation dances for Capulet's Ball. The main dance *Manganje* is a Yao traditional dance used during male and female initiation ceremonies that indicate one has become fully-grown, a complete person. This dance was chosen because it would indicate to the audience that the Capulet family were complete, rich, powerful and successful. It also introduced an element of dramatic irony into the production for those in the audience who already knew the narrative of the play. In addition to the *Manganje* to support the significance of the first meeting of Romio and Julieti, the two actors broke away from the main party and danced the *Chisamba,* a women's initiation dance which represented Julieti's initiation into Romio's world.

We all worked in the same space, which enabled us to note how the other groups were progressing. Surprisingly, we did not encounter any significant problems with this rehearsal system. I suspect that this was because Gopole, Mzumara and I had worked together before and were familiar with each other's working practices. This system allowed us to block all 18 scenes within three rehearsal sessions before working them for detail later in the process.[26] This mode of rehearsal gave the performers a clear physical journey through the play; as the blocking and geography of the production was set early, they were then free to engage more deeply with the nuances of character, text and physical performance. It was only later on, once the production was running as a whole, that significant issues relating to power in the rehearsal room between Banda and myself fully surfaced. I will interrogate these issues in due course – but I do not believe these issues were born out of the rehearsal system we used. In fact, I strongly suspect that, had I

[26] Bonsall, 'Mzuzu University, Research Diary', p. 4.

engaged in a traditional Western-facing rehearsal process where the single director holds ultimate power, the issues might have surfaced earlier and derailed the project before a production had been created.

My directorial style was to guide rehearsals by making final decisions about aesthetic once options had been discussed. When working with actors I would try and ask questions to challenge the performers rather than imposing my direction onto them. To do this, I adapted elements of Stanislavski's system from *An Actor Prepares* in its basic form, anchoring my questions around the who? what? when? where? why? of a character's situation.[27] This was not to attempt to create a realistic performance style (for which Stanislavski's system is famous), rather the questions challenged the actors to think specifically about their characters and encourage them to make considered and imaginative performance choices.

In order to appreciate the performance style we created it is essential to situate it specifically within the broader context of the development of Malawian drama. The two strands of performance that must be considered here are Wakhumbata Ensemble Theatre (established in 1983) and Chichewa drama. When blended, these two forms create a very particular effect, broad, physical articulation (often comic) and big performances in conjunction with more emotional expression in the European naturalistic style (see DVD 2).

It was unsurprising that our own performance aesthetic followed the same course because, while keen to experiment with the challenge of performing in Chichewa, the group seemed to me less inclined to experiment with unfamiliar performance styles. We utilised demonstrative gestures and character traits that were rooted in the text to embody the characters, and we relied on naturalistic emotional expression to form and signify the internalised physiological narrative. The actors created heightened and obviously theatrical characters, which facilitated the tragedy in the play in all of the scenes because the scenes are so theatrical,

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[27] Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, Bloomsbury Revelations Series, Reprint Edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

heightened and non-naturalistic. An example of this would be the character of the Nurse, who was played as a comic character throughout the production. Her overly padded posterior was a constant visual point of comedy, even upon the discovery of Julieti's body. I became aware that merging comedy and tragedy in performance was a distinctive feature of this group of performers because they were, in the main, able to navigate the two rather deftly in rehearsal. If I tried to remove all of the comedy from the scene it became clear that actors and audience became uncomfortable, the atmosphere would change and sometimes the actors would corpse, and I wondered if comedy in Malawian performance plays a similar role of camouflaging extreme emotion as silence does in Western performance. If the Nurse retained her swagger some of those watching would laugh but this seemed to be a necessary emotional release from the seriousness of the scene, rather than laughter *at* the character. The actors in the scene, in this instance Julieti and Lady Capulet, appeared to me to be more confident with their performances when the Nurse was able to retain her comic status; counter-intuitively their performances captured the despair of the scene more convincingly. I strongly suspect that there are social and anthropological reasons for the way in which Malawians express and experience emotion in public and in private that might explain this. The relationship with comic performance in Malawi seemed to me to be entirely different to that in the UK and, because I became aware of the difference, I trusted the actors when they said that this style of acting would work for a Malawian audience. In *Between Theater and Anthropology* (1985) Schechner touches on styles of performance within intercultural theatre discourse, saying 'After all "established genre" indicates a record of what has found its place'.[28] It was clear that the conflation of the comic and serious was a firmly established performance style in Malawi, and so my role evolved. I tried to ensure that the comedy never became so overt that it detracted from the seriousness of a scene, but also that I did not give notes that discouraged comic performance where the performers were keen that it should be used.

[28] Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 118.

The exaggerated gestures complemented the actors' delivery of the words, which was heightened by their use of exaggerated accents from the central region of Malawi to align voice with the classical Chichewa of the text. I was told that classical Chichewa is an equivalent to 'Old English' (I understood this to mean something like Elizabethan English) and that it is spoken only by a small number of people in the central region whose ancestors were the original Chichewa speakers. It appears to be a dialect associated with older members of the community and so Fr Lawrence, the Nurse and Capulet used it as a feature of their characters' voices.

Later on in the process, once we had begun to run sections of the play, each session began with a warm-up and fight call led by Gopole (who I could trust to work safely and accurately), and ended with a brief discussion and feedback session which I intended would create space for ideas to be mooted and for issues to be aired. Working in this way brought surprising results. I had always thought of the fights in *Romeo and Juliet* as being extremely violent, and so I was surprised when Banda suggested that the fight scene in Act 1 scene 1 could be a slapstick comic scene. We tried his suggestion and I gave the actors free rein to use their own ideas. It became a joyous, funny Kung fu parody, exaggerated and stylised – but it worked incredibly well because the actors were freely playing with a form, slapstick comedy, that was familiar to them. They enjoyed the response of those watching the rehearsal and so continued to work the style and the characterisation into the scene. The comedy also served to highlight the petty nature of the hatred between the Montagues and the Capulets. This discovery was particularly significant for me as it demonstrated the complexity of intercultural practice in a postcolonial country. Interculturalism in this instance was not binary; it was infinitely more complex – Malawian actors appropriating Asian forms taken from American films and repurposed to accentuate Malawian rivalry within the context of a British play.[29] I doubt I would have made this discovery in a UK rehearsal room, but in our intercultural space I was open to finding where comedy could be added to the production without detracting from the main tragedy or drama of the narrative. My directorial skills were being significantly flexed.

[29] Bonsall, 'Mzuzu University, Research Diary', p. 3.

I was learning that my assumptions about the structure of the play and the construction of the emotional arc, as rendered within the narrative, could be challenged. By making that first, often very aggressive, scene comic my opinion of all of the characters with a connection to the violence of the play changed. The Montagues and Capulets did not have to be lofty or superior; they could be figures of ridicule without this impacting on the tragedy of the death of their children. I realised that intercultural Shakespeare could illuminate innumerable possibilities for interpretation that were often missed in the UK due to over-familiarity and stale assumption.

Rehearsing Intimacy

In a play as dependent on the depiction of physical intimacy as *Romio ndi Julieti*, it was essential to ensure that the actors trusted me and that we could work together to develop a physical lexicon that would not unduly offend cultural codes. For our first rehearsal of the protagonists' scenes we worked with just four of us in the rehearsal room, myself, Gopole, Romio and Julieti. This proved to be a sensible decision as both actors had considerable concerns about how they could play their characters with integrity while also depicting the intimacy they share. They were worried about their personal reputations. I assured them they would not be required to do anything with which they were not comfortable.

We began with the two actors improvising in character and Gopole and I challenging them with questions such as, 'What will you risk to see each other?' 'Are you willing to be rejected by your family forever?' From there they began to experiment with character traits and physical mannerisms such as Julieti's crossed arms and Romio repeatedly checking his mobile phone in his pocket. There was one moment when he was about to move in to get closer to Julieti and his phone vibrated and, without breaking the move forward, he glanced at his phone, decided it could wait and put it away. It was so funny, so modern and so typical of the social behaviour I had seen in Malawian youngsters outside of rehearsals that we decided to keep it in. Julieti, in contrast, used her head and her gaze, which always rested on Romio if he was in the vicinity, to show how captivated she was by him. By building on individual character traits such as these, we were then able to

create a relationship between them. Romio became more gentle, slower in her presence and by doing so, Romio supported Julieti in expressing her strength of character. This element of her character's journey peaked when she defied her father's command that she must marry Paris. The performances were built on demonstrative and character-specific gestures, for example when Romio covered his mouth with his hands when worried. The actors depicted sensitivity between them that was quiet and calm, vulnerable, grounded and yet playful. They took ownership of the space and found 'safe' positions that demonstrated that they were intimate, including leaning on each other and holding each other's shoulders. They became comfortable in showing their intimacy in a culturally appropriate way, namely no touching of the female chest area, no kissing on the lips, and no touching of the buttocks of either gender.

Gopole was keen for the characters' night together to be represented through a dance (I later discovered that this is common Malawian performance coding) and they decided a very tender and playful way to achieve this would be to perform an 'English dance', such as those in the 'movies'. I did not know what they meant, but when performed it seemed to me to be a hybrid of a tea dance, a tango and a traditional Malawian dance style, backed by a drumming riff played by Gopole.[30] The correct title for the dance is the *M'bwiza.* Mzumara clarified that *M'bwiza* is a copy of the ballroom dance style of Europeans and is considered to be strengthening for community cohesion. Usually, a man and a woman tie a cloth around their waists, and then man and woman touch, which is highly unusual for a Malawian dance. Within our play, the dance was used to show the audience that the characters had engaged in a sexual act. Cultural sensibilities in Malawi mean that sex is not a word or an act that is usually explicitly depicted in performance or artistic forms, and so other motifs have evolved that allow artists to refer to sex without offending audiences or the censor; this dance is one such motif. It was a risk for these young actors to try something that, although acceptable, was still very physical, and I know that it would not have been achieved if we had not all been listening to each other and trying to understand what the aims of the scene were. As with the first fight scene, this was another fascinating example of

[30] Ibid, p. 4.

intercultural theatre, an English play depicted with traditional Malawian song and a Malawian interpretation of an English dance form.[31]

Romio and Julieti did kiss in our production, but the actors did not. They were adamant about this, and spent a great deal of time perfecting a technique using thumbs and hands to conceal the non-contact of lips, as can be seen in the production on DVD 2. They did not want my assistance with this at all; they felt more comfortable working on this most intimate gesture themselves.

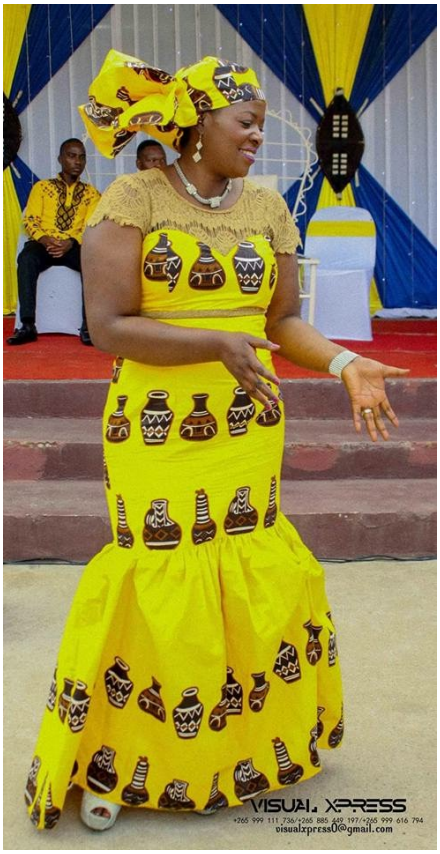
Aesthetics

We decided to use Malawian political rallies as a starting point for the visual and performative aesthetic of the production, as these were something all audiences in Malawi would understand. Rallies rely on colourful costume to denote political allegiance, and they utilise drumming and dance, all of which were elements we could input throughout the production. Specific colours are synonymous with political parties, and so we decided we could give the Montagues and the Capulets each their own colour to show that they are politically powerful – visual coding that would be understood in Malawi. We decided upon sky blue for the Montagues and rich purple for the Capulets, a colour of cultural significance as it is the colour of the shrouds used to wrap the corpses of the wealthiest Malawians for burial. This colour choice allowed us to wrap Julieti's body in cloth of her family colour near the end of the play and create a visual motif for the production.

Contemporary Malawian dress is a mix of Western-style clothing, chitenji cloth worn as a skirt for the majority of women (Plate 3) and national wear (Plate 4), which we used for Lady Montague and Lady Capulet.

[31] Ibid.

(Plate 3: Staff at Chingalire Clinic, Chingalire 2017, credit Ben Mankhmba)



(Plate 4: Example of Malawian National Wear at an Engagement Party in Blantyre 2016, credit Visual Express)

We decided that it would look striking to costume Lady Capulet and Lady Montague in National Wear in the colour of their respective houses, and that Lord Capulet and Montague would wear suits with ties the colour of their houses as Malawian business men do (note: contemporary Malawian fashions are heavily

influenced by west African trends). The younger male characters would wear shirts in hues of their house colour with trousers - this would provide a useful identifier for the audience, they would know which house the character belonged to, but it was also a specifically Malawian visual aesthetic.

(Plate 5: Lady Montague, Montague and Benvolio in rehearsal, Mzuzu, April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

(Plate 6: Nurse and Julieti in rehearsal, Mzuzu, April 2016, Credit Amy Bonsall)

Julieti wore a demure but contemporary dress of pink and purple, her family house colour. Hussein Gopole, Julieti and I chose the dress together; it was essential that it be below the knee and with a draped, rather than a tightly fitted skirt, not only

for the decorum of the character but also for the actress. The Nurse wore a t-shirt with a chitenji wrapped around her, as most housekeepers and domestic staff and poorer/rural women do in Malawi. This costume was a visual link for the audience as it literally combined the contemporary with the traditional.

(Plate 7: Benvolio and Mercutio in rehearsal, Mzuzu, April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

We adapted the colours of the costumes for Benvolio and Mercutio during the rehearsal to reflect the partnership that the actors had created for their characters – they matched each other. As the production was set in contemporary urban Lilongwe, the idea was that the two close friends had set up their own successful gym there. They wore matching lycra leggings and a t-shirt with the name of a gym on it. This was their own idea, and it set those characters clearly in Malawi where young, enterprising men setting up local businesses is an aspirational ideal which audiences would recognise. Not only were the costumes very funny – they stuffed socks into the front of their pants to accentuate their male appendages – this backstory also served to highlight the tragedy of Mercutio's death. The two created a comedy double act that brought great hilarity to the production, but when Mercutio was killed not only was his future extinguished but so was Benvolio's.

Benvolio must somehow continue alone and his despair was deeply poignant, a secondary narrative in terms of the play but no less devastating for the character.

Problems of Power

In Western-facing performance, including the intercultural, the director has long been at the top of the theatrical hierarchy as regards to artistic and aesthetic decision-making. This is particularly relevant to intercultural Shakespeare; in all of the productions investigated in chapter one the vision of the director defined the aesthetic of the final production. It took me three rehearsals to realise that, in the case of MUTAG, it was the patron, Banda, who held sway in the rehearsal room. What I could not have anticipated was the impact that our two different views of the project would have on the cast, and therefore on the artistic output we could achieve. His comments at the end of sessions confused the cast if what he fed back to them differed from the notes I had given. For example, we had decided early in the process that the production would have an urban setting, yet later on Banda began saying that the production should have been more traditional, but without making it clear if he meant rural. Of course, it can be the nature of artistic enterprise that thoughts change as the work develops, but our differing views and Banda's potentially contradictory notes affected the confidence of the cast. Had I imposed my views, however, I felt I would have undermined the collaborative premise of the project. In the event, I resolved to try and maintain a cordial working relationship with everyone involved.

Having made the parameters of the research clear, I assumed that I would have the support of the department I was working with and of the wider university. I had hoped to meet senior members of the university management, but anticipated meetings never took place. After an initially co-operative start, I was surprised to find what I felt to be resistance to the project from Banda. This clearly put Mzumara under considerable pressure, which made the process very difficult for him to navigate. This fracture of leadership also impacted on the relationship I could build with the cast. Individually all the actors seemed keen and supportive, yet in a group they were more difficult to work with because some would leave the room once their scene was completed and, to my mind, this seemed rather

unsupportive of both me and the rest of the cast. I had requested that all actors stay for the duration of all rehearsals to allow them to get to know the production intimately. When they kept leaving I was unable to ascertain if this was because they were unhappy with the work we were doing or for personal reasons. It became progressively clearer that there was a split in the group, especially when Banda attended rehearsals. Some seemed to want to work more under Banda's leadership and others were supportive of what I was doing. The latter group, led by Gopole, became frustrated that they were not able to fully commit to my (our?) process and privately told me so. I do not believe there was any personal animosity directed towards me; rather it was a symptom of the lack of time, resources and the mutually challenging cultural negotiations with which we were all engaged.

Over the rehearsal period I had tried to connect with Banda and improve our working relationship. Early on I had tried meeting with him formally, but a week into rehearsals, when I realised the situation was not improving, I met with him and Mzumara in the university bar, hoping a social environment might allow us to build a more positive relationship. The meeting was cordial, enjoyable even, but once we met again in subsequent rehearsals the situation did not improve. I was trying to navigate unfamiliar working methods and performance forms as well as challenging new social experiences and I made errors, as I will discuss. However, I felt increasingly demoralised by our inability to resolve our leadership issues.[32] Ominously, the clash of cultures was to become a feature of the remaining rehearsals.

The Final Week

On the evening of Friday 1 April, after two and a half weeks of intensive rehearsal, we embarked on our first run-through. It was very poor. Overall, the scenes did not connect, the blocking and characterisation were illogical and bore little resemblance to our rehearsal work. It was the start of the weekend and other actors were at the campus to perform, they wanted to watch the run-through and, unbeknownst to me, they had brought alcohol to the rehearsal. I found this to be unacceptable; the atmosphere degenerated, some of the audience were engaging

[32] Ibid, p. 7.

with the production but others were drinking and talking. Actors were late on for scenes because they were conversing with the audience. The situation was not one conducive to focused work. The breakdown between the audience and those performing affected the commitment that the actors were prepared to invest in their performances. Romio, Julieti, Benvolio, Tybalt, Balthazar and Mercutio were trying to maintain the standard of performance we had come to expect in rehearsals. I was told privately, after the rehearsal, that because the work had taken place on a Friday evening it was considered to be not so serious a rehearsal. I had assumed that the performers would want to work on a Friday evening as they would any other. I had fallen into a Western mode of rehearsal that was simply not appropriate in this context. My expectations had not aligned with local practices. To my mind, this rehearsal jeopardised my standing within the company and the integrity of the production. This was confirmed to me when Banda announced, without consultation, that there would be another dress rehearsal on Monday.

Over the weekend of 2 and 3 April, I was informed that drinking when working in theatre in Malawi is entirely normal and accepted behaviour, especially on Friday nights and at weekends. This surprised me because the impact on the quality of the work was enormous. In my diary I described this experience as 'a clash of cultures', and so it was.[33] I was unable to accept drinking within the rehearsal room because of the dangers it posed (in fight scenes for example), and so I was rejecting the local cultural norms. As we were working in Malawi it was not surprising to find that the MUTAG operated as they usually would. As a director, my duty of care for those I worked with had, to my mind, superseded my embracing the local culture on this occasion. I also felt that Banda was perhaps trying to forge a Malawian production under Malawian rehearsal and performance conditions, rather than considering the intercultural aspects of the project or his earlier agreement that I was in charge of the production. I discovered that rehearsals usually took place over a series of months and they were very relaxed. The intensity of the *Romio ndi Julieti* rehearsals had surprised the student members of the group (Gopole and Mzumara were, however, used to this way of working). This was another example of an instance where I had tried to ensure that all parties were working to the

[33] Ibid, p. 5.

same premise. However, once in the field, it was clear that the students had not fully understood that this project would require a different mode of working from that to which they were accustomed. Initial agreements in intercultural theatre clearly only take you so far.

The first run-through had exposed the weaknesses of the production, which were mainly rooted in hesitation and the lack of confidence of the performers. This suggested that they did not yet have faith in the production and were not fully familiar with their journey through the play, and it was incumbent upon me to help us forge a way forward. As discussed in chapter two, Chichewa dramas are developed using a breakdown of scenes with the characters and the action, but all the text is improvised before it is, sometimes but not always, scripted. I decided to apply this method on the 4 April in order to meld together the 18 separate scenes into a cohesive production. We ran the entire play in this manner and, based on the explosive energy and pace it brought to the work, I then proposed that the cast remain on stage throughout the performance. I felt that remaining on stage helped them to reproduce the urgency in the drama that they had found during the improvised run. It also negated the need to block the many entrances and exits in the play, which I realised were slowing the drama considerably. Actors would still need to enter the drama, but they would be closer to the action, allowing for more simple and economic movement into the space and the opportunity for more instinctive and active performance. Entering from the wings forced the actors to enter the space disengaged from the scene due to distance, and the energy for the scene would take time, even if only seconds, to reach optimum levels for performance.

The cast performed two speed runs of the play back-to-back, one where they remained on stage throughout and the other adhering to scripted entrances and exits. It is a method I have used and adapted before, though I am unsure of the original source, and it was an exercise that the cast had not previously encountered. It tested their confidence and physical knowledge of the production by revealing where the weak points of performance were. If an actor does not know their text and their movements well enough then they hesitate and stumble.

Every member of the cast made discoveries, the dramatic moments returned and the comedy grew. They were all present in the moment; they were all truly listening to each other, working together and trusting the drama. As a group we then discussed the rehearsal. There was universal agreement that they knew their characters significantly better, with the word 'bonded' being used to describe how they now viewed their characters. They felt confident. Tybalt and Balthazar approached me after the rehearsal had ended to say that they had never worked in that way before and that it had ignited their curiosity as to how theatre worked and what it could do.[34]

During the most challenging rehearsal of the process, on 5 April, the cast, led by Alfred Njikho (student head of MUTAG who played Fr Lawrence), refused to perform the run-through, despite having such a successful rehearsal the previous day. He insisted that they wanted to adhere to the exits and entrances as they appeared in the text but would not explain why. Banda came on stage which, whether intentionally or not, exacerbated the situation by undermining my authority with the cast.[35] The cast called a meeting and I was not invited to attend. Ali Campbell's article in *African Theatre in Development* (1999) dealt with the creative fractures that can open up when engaging with intercultural theatre-making: 'Nowhere else have I learned so much, and so thoroughly, through humbling failure'.[36] This resonates with my feelings at the time. While I was walking back to my accommodation after the rehearsal, some of the cast, notably those playing smaller roles, stated that they had no issue with my suggestion; they were disappointed that they might not get to explore it in performance. I had a responsibility to keep the group together and to ensure that the project moved forward and so I set up a meeting with Mzumara, Banda and Njikho in order to hear their thoughts about the group's resistance to my suggestion, and to try and ensure that they were still supporting the project.

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[34] Ibid, p. 8.
[35] Ibid, p. 9.
[36] Ali Campbell and others, 'Telling the Lion's Tale: Making Theatre in Eritrea', in *African Theatre in Development*, ed. by Martin Banham, James Gibbs, and Femi Osofisan, African Theatre, 1 (Oxford : Bloomington: James Currey : Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 41.

At the meeting, Banda insisted the exits and entrances would suit Malawian audience tastes more than the style I wanted to adopt and said this was the reason why the students were so against the change. I suspect that this was again a manifestation of his resistance to the intercultural component of the production. I realised that there comes a point when the negotiations have to cease and that the director, if the production is director-led, has to make final decisions. Unfortunately, Banda seemed unwilling for this to happen. Because Banda's comments contradicted what some of the students had said to me, I suggested a compromise. The school and the university performances should use the blocked exits and entrances, but the village production would be performed with everyone on stage throughout. Banda and Njikho were very resistant to trying different ways of working and they seemed to want to make the production Malawian, but were unable to articulate to me, or indeed to the rest of the company, what that term meant or how it might manifest in performance. Eventually, the compromise seemed to calm the situation down and was accepted as a way forward. In the end, Mzumara blocked the entrances and exits during the final run - while I watched and took notes.

Performances

Luwinga Secondary School

(Plate 8: 1st Performance *Romio ndi Julieti*, 8 April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

There were approximately 40 post-sixteen secondary school students who had travelled a considerable distance to come to the performance.[37] Unfortunately, some members of the cast had not brought their costumes with them, despite my repeated notes that they were responsible for their own costumes and personal props. This delayed the start of the performance by nearly an hour. Thankfully the audience was extremely patient and was prepared to wait.

The performance space was on the raised and high proscenium arch stage, meaning that the audience seated on chairs below had to crane their necks to see the actors within the cavernous school hall. The performing area was a generous size in width and depth, but the wing space was shallow and exposed to most of the audience, meaning that the exits and entrances were not concealed and, as such, the onstage life of the drama and the off stage mechanics of the production

[37] Bonsall, 'Mzuzu University, Research Diary', p. 11.

were conflated. I found that collision of conventions was confusing at times and, despite my asking the actors to face the wall rather than the audience when they were off stage, there were surely moments when the audience was not clear if occurrences were part of the action or not.

Unfortunately, torrential rain hammering down on the corrugated iron roof throughout the performance made the actors hard to hear at times. In the event, the performance unfolded with one other significant incident that negatively impacted the production. Fr Lawrence changed his character entirely and began upstaging the other actors in all of his scenes. The young audience responded with hysterical laughter and the more they did so, the more he played up for them. I later discovered that he had undertaken teaching practice at the school and knew some of the students, and so began playing up for their entertainment. Unfortunately, this did a disservice to the other actors he was performing with and, to my mind, undermined the tragedy of the play. The other actors had all worked very hard to ensure that the performance worked as it had been rehearsed. The Nurse, in particular, found new depths to her character and managed to achieve a delicate balance between making the audience laugh and making them gasp. The moments of comedy and the moments of high drama elicited strong reactions from the audience generally and, in my opinion, this gave the performers confidence, which in turn helped to enhance the symbiotic relationship between the performance and the audience, thus encouraging clearer storytelling from the performers.

Mzuzu University

(Plate 9: 2nd Performance *Romio ndi Julieti*, 8 April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

The audience of approximately 100 people ranged in age from primary level school children to the elderly. The cast did not arrive at the venue until after 6.30pm, despite being called for 6.00pm. The performance was advertised to start at 7.00pm. A relaxed attitude towards timekeeping was a feature of Malawian life, but I found it very difficult to remain calm about it when there was an audience waiting for a production to begin, although I did not get any sense that the audience was perturbed by the delay.

The performance space was a large lecture hall with formal raked seating facing a wide but shallow performing area. There was a distance of at least six feet between the edge of the stage and the seating, which created an unfortunate divide between the performance space and the audience. This gave a more formal aesthetic to the production than there had been at the school.

Because the cast were late, I had asked that the doors at the back of the auditorium be kept shut until I gave the all clear to open the house. I am ashamed to admit that

it never occurred to me that there would be a different protocol. Banda was trying to let the audience in to take the seats while I was still on stage trying to give notes about the earlier performance. Initially I asked him not to do this and then, after he refused, Plastow took him aside and tried to make the request again. This resulted in a verbal altercation with Plastow and myself. I asked the cast to leave the stage while I attempted to defuse the situation, which I was able to do by reiterating to Banda how important it was that we support the performers. He agreed, and the actors returned to the stage.

I gave the cast general notes, which had to include mentioning Fr Lawrence and his performance at the school and requesting that he should revert to the performance he had rehearsed. Having been so adamant that I should be the person who gave notes to the cast I invited Plastow to offer some of her thoughts about the performance and, in so doing, I made a near fatal error. She, entirely appropriately, also mentioned how jarring Fr Lawrence's performance had been in relation to the performance style of the rest of the cast. This note led to a near total breakdown with Mzumara and Banda, who, in defending Fr Lawrence, suggested that the evening's performance not go ahead. It was an enormous reaction to two superficially minor issues in the scheme of a large and complex project, but there was clearly something culturally inappropriate about the requests and criticism that we made and/or the way we articulated them that released tensions that had been building for three weeks. While it was deeply unpleasant, it felt like a necessary public purging of stress and anger for us all. The Associate Dean was called to intervene, which she did, and calm was immediately restored.

I requested that I have a few minutes to warm up the actors, essential given the circumstances, and I insisted on speaking to Fr Lawrence alone. I left the company warming up on stage and spoke to Fr Lawrence privately in order to let him know that I had full confidence in his performance abilities and that he was an integral member of our company. He seemed to genuinely appreciate this and assured me that he would perform as rehearsed.

Despite starting late, the performance went well. The cast were more confident in their performances than they had been at the school. They were performing in a space we had previously rehearsed in and, consequentially, they took command of the space. The blocking was tight and so the changes between the scenes more deft. This created a faster pace for the narrative and more emotional urgency from the characters, which, in turn, created a compelling performance for the audience. Fr Lawrence reverted to his rehearsed mode of performance and his interaction with his fellow actors supported the unfolding tragedy rather than undermining it.

The moments of audience interaction worked especially well, in particular Capulet's Ball, where members of the audience danced on stage as part of the party scene. It was very energetic, and that energy created a joy that resonated throughout the auditorium, bridging the gap between those watching and those performing. From my observation the audience was very attentive throughout, responding vocally and showing great appreciation at the end.

Chingalire Village (DVD 2)

(Plate 10: Chingalire village, 9 April 2016, credit Amy Bonsall)

The informal performance space in the centre of the village was marked out on the ground; the audience sat on the floor facing the performers. This meant that some scenes were performed at the same level as the seated audience, creating a stronger connection with the audience than the more formal and removed seating at the other venues.

It had been agreed that the village performance would use the staging I had suggested, namely that all the actors would be present on stage throughout. Due to the indisposition of Mzumara, Banda had taken the decision, in my absence, that the performance should remain unchanged. This was a sensible decision given the circumstances.

Maulidi, who had watched many of the rehearsals, was attending this performance and he stepped in to replace Mzumara. Once he had taken over the role of Capulet, the production settled down. Gopole, who had been backstage trying to organise the smooth running of the performance, was able to return the production to its usual form of scenes underscored with drumming and singing. These were key features of the production and they clearly helped the audience to engage with the play, as demonstrated by the way volunteers from the audience were very happy to interact with the performers when invited on stage. Members of the audience sang along to songs that they recognised.

Because the exits and entrances were being made through improvised wings the peripheral blocking became redundant and required improvisation, however, once on stage the scenes worked smoothly and all of the actors engaged the audience through their performances. They worked together and relied on each other to tell their story collectively.

Audience Responses

At each of the venues I made brief notes as to the approximate size of the audience and how that audience appeared to me to respond to the production, which allowed me to reflect on and analyse each particular show. However, I was only able to write these notes at the end of the performance because I was engaged

throughout in taking directorial notes to feed back thoughts to the actors. The dual role of director and data gatherer was less than ideal, and it meant that I was only able to gather a limited number of audience surveys and interviews because, whilst I was assisted, I still needed to ensure that the work was completed correctly. With the assistance of students from Mzuzu University, I was able to collate audience feedback via surveys and interviews. Due to limited time and resources, approximately ten people were surveyed at random in each setting, resulting in 31 survey responses. It was difficult to find people to survey and interview after the performances because as soon as the applause concluded the play audiences dispersed very quickly. I garnered three interviews after the school performance, one after the university performance and three after the village performance.

What was most striking was how similar each of the audiences were in their behaviour and responses during the production, and how similar those reactions were to what I might have expected of a European audience. The audiences did respond collectively in so far as the vast majority of them behaved in a similar, though not identical, manner throughout the performance. There was a collective tacit agreement from the audience at each venue that they would watch, respond, laugh, clap, quietly comment and occasionally talk with their neighbour but without ever interrupting or disrupting the ongoing performance. This indicated that all three audiences were familiar with European introduced behavioural conventions associated with attending serious/literary drama, even the young children in the village.[38] The least harmonious audience was at the school. There was a power socket in the middle of the front stage wall and periodically one particular student repeatedly plugged in a mobile phone during the performance, which I found distracting, but none of the adults with the group chastised her, indicating that perhaps this was not unusual behaviour. I also noticed a small number of people wandering in and out of the hall during the performance. I deduced that they were staff and cleaners at the venue who were trying to watch snatches of the show. The strict distinction between performers and audience did hold, unless the audience was invited to participate directly, as happened during

[38] Barber, p. 354.

Capulet's Ball, but again at each venue the audience members understood the convention and returned to their seats once the scene was finished.

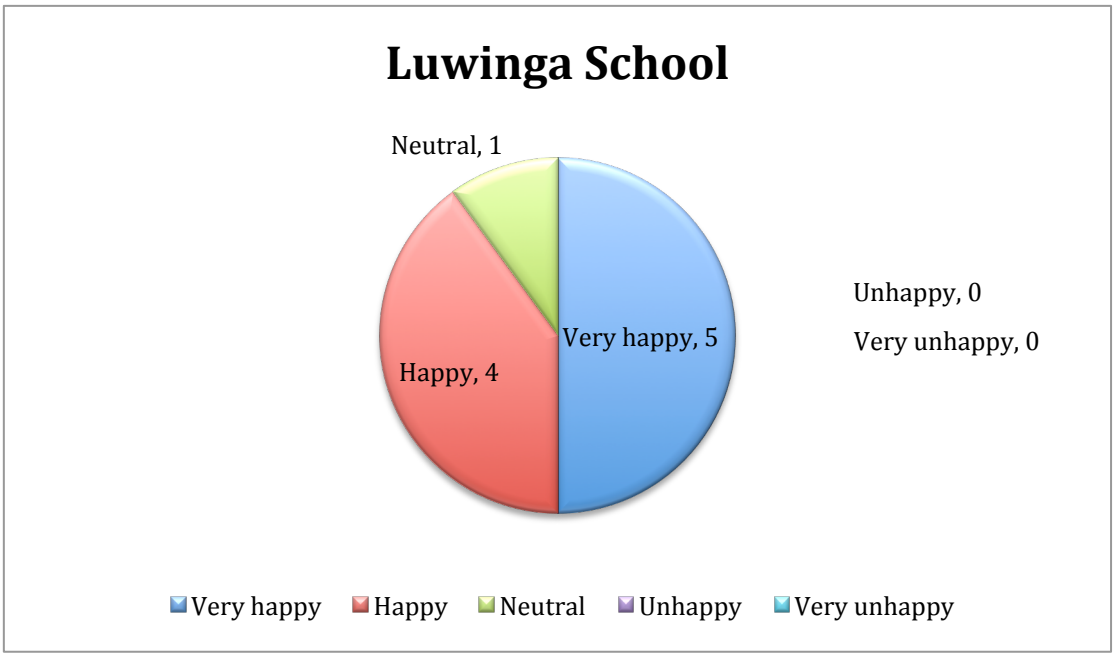
Observations Arising From All the Survey Responses

Overall, audiences were overwhelmingly positive about the production, with 91 per cent of the responses indicating that they were happy or very happy, 6 per cent neutral and 3 per cent sad. No one indicated very sad (Appendix A). Calculating the average by ranking answers from 5 (very happy) to 1 (very sad) of 31 responses gave an overall rating of 4.4 out of 5. This clearly indicates that the production could be deemed successful in its most basic aim of giving people an enjoyable experience. However, a comparison with audience reactions at different performances would be required to support this statement fully or to find out more nuances/ differences in response. The single sad response stated that they felt the costumes were poor. But even this comment shows that they had been critically engaged with the production regarding the aesthetic we had created and was therefore valuable feedback.

Comparing The Venues - Key Issues and Observations

The interviewees were not selected to be representative of the audience demographic nor were the interviews conducted with the same questions, therefore they are not suitable for reliable comparative data. I was able to identify two areas common to both written surveys and interview responses that were referred to by members of the audience at each of the three performances: language and performance (performance by the cast and artistic choices). Here I have selected excerpts from one interview from each venue to give a flavour of the responses gathered, which I will then discuss in my reflections for this chapter. For clarity, interviewees are referred to as School Responder 1, 2 or 3 (SR1, 2 or 3), University Responder 1 (UR1) and Village Responder 1, 2 or 3 (VR1, 2, 3).

Luwinga School



(*Fig 4*: Luwinga School Audience Response Data)

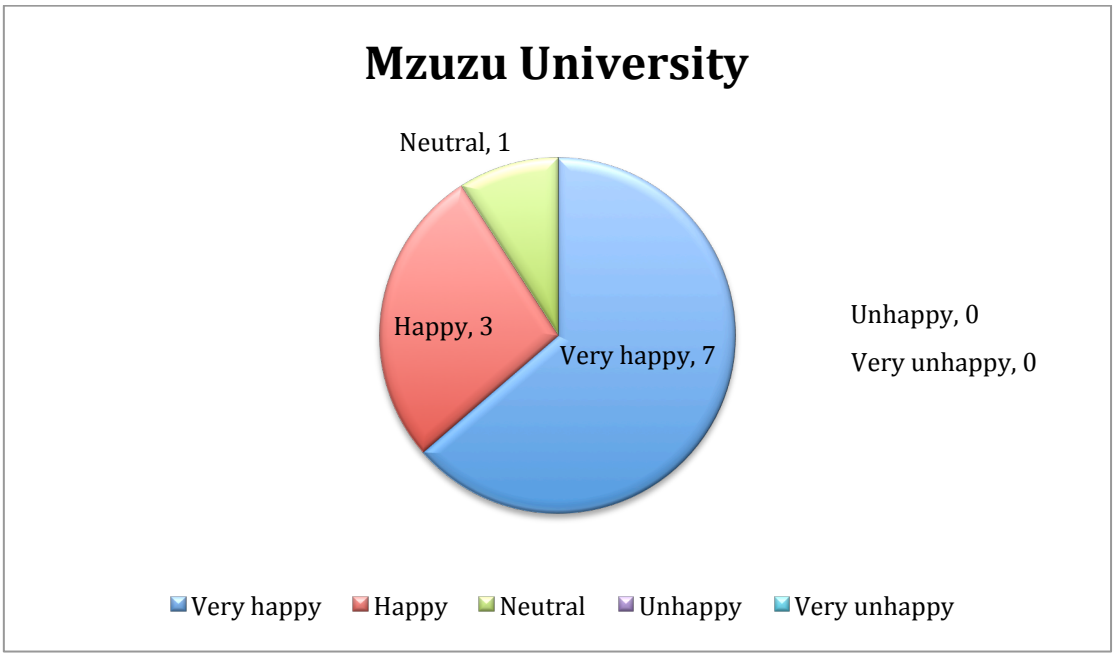
60 per cent of those surveyed were young adults, suggesting that they formed the dominant age group at this venue, which, as it was a school, is unsurprising. Average satisfaction for this venue was 4.8 out of 5, indicating that the production was very well received.

I asked SR3 (female) what it was like watching a performance of Shakespeare in Chichewa.

> SR3: Kind of our language. Some of the words we didn't even know what they mean but now we know what they mean. I think when exams come I don't think we are going to fail. (Laughs) I don't think we'll have special problems because we have already seen those activities (Appendix E).[39]

[39] Anonymous audience members interviewed by Amy Bonsall after Luwinga School performance, 2016, Personal recordings archive, School 1-AB-Mzuzu-8.4.2016.

Mzuzu University



(*Fig 5*: Mzuzu University Audience Response Data)

Out of ten responses calculating the average by ranking, eleven responses gave an overall rating of 4.5 out of 5 – slightly lower than the school performance but still showing that the audience appreciated the production.

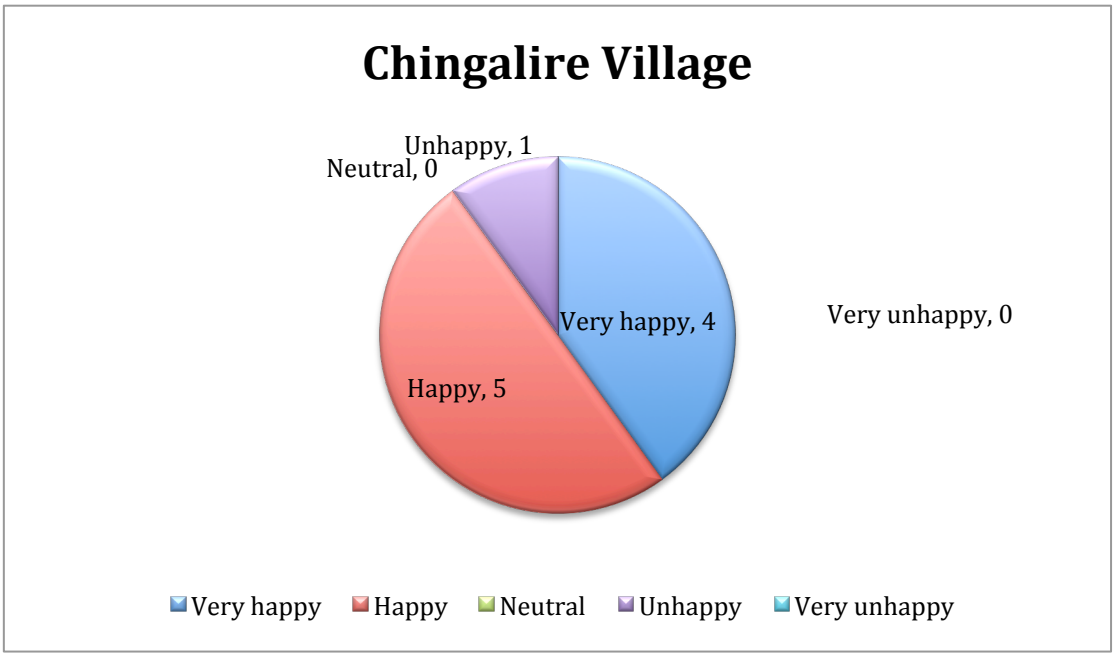
The age breakdown was more balanced in this sample: young adults made up 54 per cent of responses, with the remaining 46 per cent middle-aged adults, indicating that the audience was comprised of both students and staff from the university.

A female survey respondent said 'Translation done well. Thought it wouldn't work but did well'.

UR1 was asked about his thoughts on the performance at the University:

> UR1: OK. The production is just too nice. The only thing I can say is this is very important for Malawi as a country cos it's addressing more issues concerning our culture and on the same guise I can say it is depicting much of the Romeo and Juliet but in the sense of some very important issues concerning this country. I can say there are some very important issues like the battle for (unclear) the exposing the effects of the early marriages, which happen in this kind of local culture (Appendix F).

Chingalire Village



(*Fig 6*: Chingalire Village Audience Response Data)

Out of ten responses, the average rating of 4.2 out of 5 makes this venue the lowest satisfaction quotient of the three. However, the score indicated that the audience still enjoyed the production.

Young adults made up 30 per cent of responses, middle-aged respondents 20 per cent, mature adults 30 per cent and unknown 20 per cent, showing that the village audience responses reflected the greatest range in ages overall in comparison to the other two venues.

AB: I just wanted to see what you thought of the performance. Could you translate?

Translator: They say it was very nice.

AB: Excellent. What did you like about it?

Translator: Ok, basically what they are saying is they are secondary school students so they are learning *Romeo and Juliet* in English but in some areas they were finding it hard to understand, but now in Chichewa now they could understand the whole play. So they have really benefitted a lot from it.

[…]

VR2: I myself it will help me we take the image of these characters so that we may come out with good essays.

VR3: For all the process it think it can help us describe much more about the play and teach our other friends (Appendix G).[40]

After the village performance I asked if there were aspects of the production that the interviewees did not like. VR1, 2, and 3 focused upon the final scene where Romio threatens Balthazar. VR1 made a particularly insightful comment about our interpretation of the interaction between Romio and the Sing'anga:

> Translator: Ok, what he is trying to say is that the scene where Romeo is trying to buy the medicine to kill himself in the actual play, *Romeo and Juliet*, the English one, it seems Romeo as he was trying to get the medicine from the apothecary, the apothecary is refusing out of fear, I think out of the law, I don't know yeah, so, but it seems the way of you acted it the apothecary just gave it easily [sic](Appendix G).[41]

Reflections

The responses at the school were in line with my expectations that the production would appeal because it could aid the students with their studies. SR1 connected the English version of the text studied in school with the Chichewa abridged text performed. SR1 and SR2 strongly agreed that watching the production in their language made the production 'easy' to understand. SR3's response shows how watching the production had helped her to understand the relationship between text and performance, and that this gave her confidence in understanding the play.

A young female audience member at the school, via a survey, stated that she felt 'some characters were not in their character', and that some of the characters, namely Julieti and Fr Lawrence, lacked nuance and could improve their intonation. This feedback showed that she had been deeply engaged with the production and that the character detail, or lack thereof, created by the actors had an impact upon

[40] Amy Bonsall, Anonymous audience members interviewed by Amy Bonsall after Chingalire village performance, 2016, Personal recordings archive, 1–AB–Lilongwe-9.4.2016.
[41] Bonsall, 'Chingalire Village Audience Interviews'.

her reception of the production. This is particularly interesting because it contradicts what Banda and others in the cast had said Malawian audiences would enjoy. They had maintained that they preferred the heightened comic and demonstrative performance style, but this response shows this was not always the case.[42]

At the university performance, one response was particularly revealing. The female respondent had been concerned that the translation would not work well but once she had seen the performance she concluded the translation was 'done well'.[43] To gather this response at the university is an indication that the colonial mindset that assumes Shakespeare performance in Malawi can only work well in English still prevails. The play does explore issues that can have meaning to Malawian audiences, such as child marriage as mentioned by UR1, but by presenting the production in the vernacular it was able to locate itself as local and still be entertaining. It has the potential to challenge the elitist, colonial space that Shakespeare production in Malawi still usually inhabits.

I found the responses from the village to be the most surprising. I had expected the audience might be reluctant to feed back to us or to be the least engaged with the production; I had anticipated that few people in the village would be interested in seeing our production. In fact, there were at least ten times as many in the village audience as the university, which challenges notions of the elitism of Shakespeare and literary performance in Malawi. It must be noted that the chief of the community, Ben Mankhamba, is unusual in that he encourages companies to come and perform in his village, and so there is an established performance culture there. VR1 gave a robust and clearly well-educated response to the character of the Sing'anga. I had not thought such intellectual and confident criticism would come from a student in a rural village. We had intended that the character be a Sing'anga and as such, this particular character had no concerns about readily handing over the poison for money. The original Apothecary is an entirely different character

[42] 'Survey Responses: Audience Members at Luwinga School Performance', ed. by Amy Bonsall, 2016.
[43] 'Survey Responses: Audience Members at Mzuzu University', ed. by Amy Bonsall, 2016.

from a different culture serving a different cultural function; VR1 had read our Malawian interpretation of that interaction as an equivalent to the original. I had expected that the university audience would be the one to offer the most educated responses, but in fact it was the village, as can be seen in VR1's response. VR1, VR2 and VR3 were all critical that the text had been edited and that some of the characters were cut entirely, and they demonstrated considerable detailed knowledge of the text. In my opinion, this confidence may have come, in part, from the play being in Chichewa but it also showed that they had attained a good education, though whether this education was received locally or at an urban school I am unsure.

The survey data shows that at all performances the responses were around 90 per cent positive or very positive which is a clear outcome; the audiences were overwhelmingly 'happy' with the production. Interestingly the university responses were 64 per cent very positive, in comparison to 50 per cent each at the school and the village. This may indicate that the more highly educated an audience is the more positively they connect with a literary text such as *Romio ndi Julieti* or, conversely – and this is more in line with the comments made in the interviews – that the school students and even more so the villagers were actually *more* critical of the production than their counterparts at the university. This is particularly relevant in light of the comments made by Magalasi and his students in Zomba. Indeed, what is most interesting about the responses is that they seem to undercut the groupings defined by Magalasi and his students completely, and my own expectations discussed above. This highlights how this production, at least, had defied the expectations of both Malawian and British scholars as to how audiences would respond to the production, clearly indicating that there is considerable scope for further research. What the audience categories do not account for is the fluidity between them; students from rural areas can board in schools in urban areas, or one rural teacher with an expertise and flair for drama or Shakespeare specifically might have considerable impact upon a large number of rural students. I was both happy and humbled to receive feedback that indicated I had achieved the mounting of an intercultural production that ultimately pleased a wide range of Malawians.

The Actors' Responses to the Project

In order to examine the impact of the rehearsal process and production on the actors I include a post-show interview with Tybalt (Vitumbeko Kumwenda, 'VK'), Balthazar (Wakisa Kalinga 'WK') and Fr. Lawrence (Alfred Njikho, 'AN'). Jane Plastow ('JP') conducted the interview. While the interview is presented in its correct order, I have only included the parts that are directly relevant to this thesis:

JP: So what feedback did you get from anyone? What did they say to you?

WK: Ok, I think I will talk about, mostly I will talk about the students who are learning Romeo & Juliet as a subject, in English courses, in English that is in secondary schools I think the feedback was quite good. And they really enjoyed it and they were really following it. I think that will help them, OK for that matter most of the students in secondary schools, and I myself am one of them who at secondary school find it difficult to understand English, Shakespearean English.

JP: English students do as well [laugh].

VK: On what my friend has just said here, yeah the feedback I got from some of the audience especially the school students is that this experience, you know them watching the play, it has helped them to really understand the play, Romeo & Juliet, because as we all know that Shakespearean English is difficult for most learners to understand, so as bringing the production in Chichewa to the students it has made them today understand the play what it is all about and also appreciate the artistic value of the play.

[…]

JP: I wanted to ask you about the Chichewa. So I know usually in Malawi, serious plays are in English and comedies are in Chichewa? If you think about it that's slightly odd, isn't it?

VK: Sure.

JP: So, what did it make you think about doing Shakespeare in Chichewa? I mean would you now be tempted maybe to translate something else into Chichewa, would you carry on wanting to do plays in English? […]

VK: I think for me, as an actor, the experience of acting a Chichewa play I think is extraordinary and is something that I have never done before, this is my first time. And as a matter of fact I think I would say I feel more, more liberated to act in Chichewa than in English.

[…]

VK: Yeah, because it takes me to the typical everyday experience as a Malawian as, you have just said that, it's my language and most of the times I speak Chichewa and English is only spoken in offices or whatever. So to me it is so fantastic that…

[…]

JP: But in terms of actual strategies for putting on a play, for making it work, what interested you, what did you disagree with, or anything?

[…]

WK: Sure, whenever you're working with a new director and you're passionate in anything, theatre included, it's either an extraordinary experience or a hectic experience. For me it was an extraordinary experience because we worked as a team and as actors we were always heard. We had two weeks to prepare. Such a difficult production to come up with in so little time provided and with a director, Amy Bonsall, being so open to actors, strict in some way, but open to say no you're not supposed to do that, but if an actor suggests that this suits the cultural experience in Malawi, the director could take that up and maybe try and bond it with whatever she'd prepared for the production.

JP: So would you say it was more of a kind of group production than maybe sometimes you work?

WK: No it wasn't, most of it wasn't more like a group production.

JP: So, I'm trying to get my finger on what was different for you in the way that she was directing.

WK: Oh, the way that she was directing? What was different is it was new, we could do some things that we've never done before like, like my colleague pointed out the first [?] and stuff but which was very very very important to our production because it helped us a lot, such as the warmups. Normally we would just get to the production: 'We're here guys, hey let's perform, open the gates', but she was in some ways different because she was

very much focussing on actors' energies, concentration and so she would bring up these concentration activities and stuff.

[…]

JP: […]. I really wanted to ask you, do you think this was a Malawian production? Or an English production?

AN: Well, I wouldn't say really it was a British or Malawian production but it was a production meant for Malawian audience. I wouldn't say it was a production really Malawian, because of some things that we done. Talk of the Prince. The Prince in Malawi, it's a cultural entity, it is looked as a chief, the way the chief is looked at and, just as the friar was looked at in the play, that this is a godly man and respected, the Prince in Malawi, the chief that is, is also looked at in the same way that people kneel down and everything. And I would say we tried to make it much as Malawian as we could, but maybe due to time of our preparation I could put it in the middle.

[…]

JP: […] if I was Amy, what would you kind of want to say to her at the end, I mean you don't have to just say nice things but you know, but that you'll take away from this process that you think you might use yourselves in future.

AN: Well, when actors um concerned both parties should be heard, quite a lot. We know a production needs to have a direction that we supposed to produce a play which is supposed to come out like this. But if there are like other concerns the director should sit down, maybe if there's no need to discuss that in the public maybe looking at the will not to wash the dirty linen in public [sic]. Have those concerned discuss that in private with the director so that in the end you come up with a very good, er, a production. That's the first thing. The second thing is when you are working with a new grouping all together perhaps you could go really deep into talking to those who are well-established in the group, ask them about who is better for what, then try and match with the same to come up with a very good production. All in all everything was just superb.

[…]

VK: What my friend has just said, I think that if Amy, if I were to speak to Amy what I would tell her is that, yeah I like her directing, she's a good director, but perhaps I think like what I observed during the early days of rehearsal she wasn't giving the actor the, I would say, the freedom, to express him or herself. Because like, you know, acting, you know it starts with

> the play, I mean the script, we say that the script is just the skeleton of the play, you don't have to do exactly what's in the script it's just a schedule to guide you, it's a guide. So it starts from there and then even the director is just supposed to give direction but not really to control so much the actor that he somehow tends to be acting in a robotic way to say that ok, this is exactly what Amy said then I should do the exact same thing without maybe having some additions of his own. So basically that's what I felt in the first days of rehearsal, the early days, but I think as time went, I think maybe that was because of lack of trust, because like it comes with working with a new group, so I think she didn't trust us that much, but with time, as time progressed I felt like she now came to trust us and I think all that was now I think was over (Appendix I).[44]

Reflections

At the outset of the interview both WK and VK immediately discussed the importance of the play being translated into Chichewa, as it highlighted how crucial the translation was to the audience's reception of the production. They stated that the audience understood the production and that school students in the audience also enjoyed it. This highlights why it was necessary to mount a full production of the text. For the students, it was surely the pleasure in the performance combined with the translated text that made the play accessible and aided their appreciation of the play beyond its educational value. The language of the production was also highly significant to the actors. They were asked to consider how the language used challenged the usual performance practices in Malawi. I found it is extraordinary and sad that *Romio ndi Julieti* was the first time VK had spoken his first language, Chichewa, in a performance.

The responses given by the actors reflecting on the process revealed some of the difficulties that I had in trying to understand how the cast were engaging with the rehearsals and whether the process was working for them. WK mentioned that he did not think that the production was a 'group' production. In the context of how Western director-led productions are managed, our production was a group effort. However, it had become clear by the end of the rehearsals that MUTAG did not rehearse in the same way; their productions evolved over a very long time, and so,

[44] *Post-Performance Interview with Performers, Chingalire Village*, 2016.

even though I had felt sure the group would feel that they had considerable input, by the end of the project I was not surprised to find that they did not all agree. I also wonder if the dialogue being scripted added to this perceived lack of agency felt by some in the group, considering that most of their performances use improvised text.

AN's assertion that the production was neither Malawian nor British, but a production intended for a Malawian audience, is pleasing because that is what I always aimed for the production to be. The time constraints did prevent us from exploring more deeply the many Malawian cultural, societal and political possibilities that the production afforded us. In order to entirely resolve cultural anomalies, such as the character of a prince for an audience who live in a republic, the essence of the play would need to be altered. Kenani had decided not to do that, and I was bound by that decision.

The responses to the final question of the interview provide a summary of how and why the most difficult issues I experienced during the process occurred. From AN's response it was evident that I had been correct in realising that giving public feedback during rehearsals was problematic for the cast; but he revealed that this was not because feedback could not be given in public, but that my talking directly to the cast somehow contravened a convention whereby all ideas needed to be discussed with (possibly) the patron of MUTAG, and AN, as student leader of MUTAG. If the leaders of MUTAG were directing the work then clearly this is a system that could work effectively – unfortunately, in the case of this production, I was never made aware of this practice. The methodology I used for the project would not have worked under these limitations as the methods I employed placed the decision-making upon the actors and myself working spontaneously and reflexively during rehearsal. Despite all of the difficulties, AN still said that 'everything was superb', proving that even problematic interactions can still yield positive and fascinating results for all involved; the project was playful, fun and exciting.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

Contrary to the Prince's final proclamation, 'Sindinamvepo nkhani yopwetetsa moyo bgati iyi ya Romio ndi Julieti'[1] – 'I have never heard of such a sad story than this one of Romeo and Juliet'[2] – the story of the project that brought *Romio ndi Julieti* to production was not one of sadness. It was an example of intercultural theatre practice which generated theatrical successes and failures, joy and frustration, innovation and exploration, and ultimately resulted in a production that brought immense enjoyment to hundreds of people.

This conclusion seeks to marry my research findings with my practice-led research, which resulted in my direction of the production of *Romio ndi Julieti*. It is essential to stress that these three performances were the practical conclusions or art works that form 50 per cent of my practice-led thesis. In a crucial sense, then, the performances themselves constitute the conclusion to my thesis. Therefore, the third performance on DVD 2 is integral to the illumination of my findings, and I indicate throughout when such discoveries can be seen. The process of researching and creating this production has added to the sum of knowledge about, and theoretical discourses on, Malawian drama, intercultural theatre and Malawi's contribution to global Shakespeare. As the written thesis has been reflexive so too is this conclusion. It incorporates my thoughts on the possible implications of this research. Finally, I state the limitations of the study and potential for future work.

I set out to create a collaborative production of a Shakespeare play using the most appropriate methodology I could find to satisfy my definition of a successful intercultural theatre production. Having interrogated three African language productions of Shakespeare in Cape Verde, Nigeria and Mauritius and investigated the history of Shakespeare production in Malawi, I defined my parameters for the practice-led element of the project in the introduction to chapter three. Having completed my research, I have now refined these parameters down to three

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Romio ndi Julieti*, trans. by Stanley Onjezani Kenani (Blantyre: Dzuka Publishing Company Limited, 2016), p. 112.
[2] See Appendix E.

essential elements that I assert should be present for me to define an intercultural theatre project as 'successful'. An intercultural theatre production should:

- Be led by a creative team who are aware of and sensitive to the various cultural implications of the production, and who will utilise performance modes and forms from the relevant cultures
- Seek to leave a legacy that has the potential to be valuable to all invested parties and
- Result in high-quality performance, measured by the responses of the company, audiences, project leader and independent critics.

Consolidation and Creation

This study brought together scattered information about Shakespeare production in Malawi and set down a history of its development in one document for the very first time. Shakespeare production in Malawi was initially generated as an extra-curricular offshoot of the colonial education system from as early as 1951. Tracing the history of Shakespeare productions from the colonial period through to the stable multi-party democracy from 1994 onwards shows that productions of the Bard's plays remain either closely linked to education, or are works generated by intercultural partnerships, as evidenced in chapter two. I conclude that Shakespeare production remains an elitist enterprise; there have been no professional productions of Shakespeare generated exclusively by Malawian artists for a commercial theatre audience. This finding is important because the study of Shakespeare is still a core feature of the MSCE English exam and yet there is almost no opportunity to see plays professionally performed live. That so few Malawians accessed Shakespeare, either through the curriculum or at all, was highly significant to the practice element of my research. It allowed me to identify where my practice could fit within the Malawian cultural landscape. I could better understand what the implications of my practice, and the resulting production might be; namely that undertaking a production in English risked perpetuating the alienation of those who speak in the vernacular. The audience feedback from the school and village demonstrated that seeing our production truly brought the play to life and considerably deepened the spectators' understanding of the play. This

confirmed that, when undertaken sensitively and knowledgeably, productions of Shakespeare's texts *can* be enjoyable and entertaining to audiences in Malawi.

Romio ndi Julieti was the first time Shakespeare was performed exclusively in the vernacular from a considered and poetic translation. The production showed that a workable performance text could result from such a script. The actors from both Zomba and Mzuzu stressed to me during the rehearsal process and in the final post-project interview that adapting and transposing the play into a Malawian context illuminated the themes and the characters for them. As discussed in chapter three, the cast at Mzuzu were able to stretch their performance skills in rehearsal to create a new type of Malawian Shakespeare performance style, utilising a Malawian gesture-based physical characterisation combined with a Western-facing internal emotional journey. This style was evident throughout the whole production but particularly in the performances of the Nurse, Mercutio, Benvolio, Capulet and Fr Lawrence. The Western divisions of genre do not necessarily hold in Malawian drama. Therefore, the emotional, linguistic and narrative demands of a Shakespeare tragedy required a degree of adjustment from the players to inhabit their characters with emotional depth during the most tragic parts of the play, while also maintaining the essence of the external comedic technique. Our performative solutions included harnessing contemporary Malawian performance forms – including: the *M'bwiza* dance; songs such as *Ndili ndi chisoni* when Julieti is found dead, and drumming by master artist Gopole – which facilitated the combining of emotional depth and comedy which can be seen on DVD 2. These solutions carried the dialogue, narrative and performances and, in so doing, synthesised a different form of Chichewa-stylised performance from that usually employed in serious drama in Chichewa. The actors' embodied response to the language supported our creation of a culturally appropriate yet performatively innovative show. Mzumara stressed that in his opinion this would not have been the case had the production been undertaken in Shakespeare's English.[3] One of the audience members at the university commented that she had thought, before seeing the performance, that the translation 'wouldn't work', but it clearly

[3] Mzumara to Bonsall, 'Email: Malawian Drama'.

surpassed these expectations.[4] We created a production in which the translation did work because it was not only linguistic; in performance it also became embodied, performative and emotional.

I crafted certain scenes, as discussed in chapter three, quite differently than if we had been using the original text. I saw the play in an entirely new way. This, significantly, shows that intercultural theatre practice has the potential to provide new insights into canonical texts, which have the potential to challenge the generally accepted Western approaches to such works and open up new areas of both artistic practice and scholarship. For example, the final production on DVD 2 shows that the Malawian physical, slapstick comedy used to perform the fight between the Montague and Capulet gangs in Act 1 scene 1 was well received by the audience as is made clear by their audible responses to the action. This is a clear example of how scripted action in an intercultural production can be rehearsed, performed and received quite differently from productions of a text in its home or in a monocultural frame. The relationships between Montague and Lady Montague, and Capulet and Lady Capulet in Act 3 scene 3 became very important as the lower social status of women took on a visual and cultural significance in the Malawian context. When the couples interacted with the Prince, Lady Montague was on her knees, and the Malawian audience vocalised their recognition of such behaviours through their gasps as the scene played out. I do not believe this would have been convincing in an English language production of the play because the English text weights a production towards Western cultural signifiers.

This project provided an opportunity for actors to experience performing in a serious piece of theatre in Chichewa for the first time. The actors involved in both the workshop stage and the final performance stressed that their involvement had inspired them to create translations of existing plays and serious drama in Chichewa in the future and that the rehearsal techniques, such as the speed run and improvised run, were particularly useful to them. In the post–production interview Wakisa Kalinga stressed that:

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[4] Bonsall, 'Mzuzu University Survey Responses'.

> I think it [the speed and improvisation runs] made me to communicate to my fellow actors, to the guys who I am doing the acting with, because since it was freestyling I had to pay attention to what he or she was saying so I could respond in the right manner. So I think it improved our communication and also it made me to bond with the character more, because like I was like what would Tybalt say to this. So I bonded more with the character. And then the second activity I think it just made me to, it brought the energy in me because I was speaking very fast but I was trying, at the same time I was trying to stick to the script.[5]

The cast of the final production had been exposed to rehearsal techniques new to them and they were clear that their ideas about how they could perform had changed as a result of this collaboration.

My project has resulted in the publication of a Chichewa translation of *Romeo and Juliet.* This text will give Malawian students and the wider Chichewa-speaking population access to Shakespeare in the vernacular for the first time. The translation allows Chichewa speakers to inhabit Shakespeare's play on a truly imaginative plane where previously they might have been hindered by the language barrier, either as readers or as members of an audience. Kenani's translation is significant because he has 'flexed' Chichewa and shown that the language can be used to convey heightened texts. That *Romio ndi Julieti* has been published may encourage more vernacular plays and translations of English language play texts to be published nationwide, thus encouraging growth in the field.

Prior to this study there had been no investigations examining how Malawian audiences reacted to commercial theatre productions. My research and studies into audience reaction had indicated Malawian audiences would appreciate watching Shakespeare in Chichewa. The live responses of the audience indicate this hypothesis was correct and, furthermore, that audiences enjoyed the performances. My observations of the audiences, the survey responses and post-show interviews also support this conclusion. This is evidenced by the live responses of the audience audible on DVD 2.

[5] See Appendix I

I believe that Shakespeare production does have a place in Malawi, but at its most relevant and accessible it needs to be produced and supported locally, in service of its local audiences. Having traced the development of Shakespeare and drama in Malawi, it seems to me that there are various reasons why Shakespeare production remains largely an intercultural or schools-based practice. That, hitherto, productions of Shakespeare were almost exclusively in English and closely associated with education, rendered the work elitist. Furthermore, Shakespeare performance is usually script-based and formally rehearsed before performance, which necessitates actors being both literate and skilled in a European style of acting, whereas Chichewa comedy is improvised and demands a different type of imaginative and performative expertise. Shakespeare texts commonly need editing, which is onerous in terms of time and expertise; that is not to say it cannot be done, but Malawian theatre professionals, aside from Rubadiri, Chisiza and Kenani, choose to expend their creative energies elsewhere. Even when edited the plays require a large cast, meaning they are costly to mount and even more expensive to tour. Shakespeare productions, therefore, are commonly confined to urban centres, perpetuating the view that Shakespeare is for elite and educated audiences.

Intercultural theatre production was a valuable approach to exploring Shakespeare production in Malawi because of the country's colonial history. While my moderately etic position on occasion caused problems in the rehearsals, due to cultural misreadings by both parties, the desire to ensure that our experiment would be concluded by performing the play in front of a live audience was, I believe, a significant driver for the company to overcome our issues and to forge compromises for the good of the production. As discussed in chapter three, it was from the most challenging moments of the rehearsal that some of the most insightful realisations came. In this instance, intercultural theatre practice achieved working *with* local performance forms rather than seeking to appropriate and remove those forms in order to enhance Western performance or to produce work for a Western audience. I had anticipated using older 'traditional' pre-colonial forms within the final production, and it surprised me that, in the event, we exclusively favoured harnessing contemporary forms. This phenomenon

highlighted the importance of dialogic collaboration. Producing an intercultural Shakespeare production in the vernacular using contemporary Malawian performance modes but rehearsed using both Malawian and Western rehearsal methods has expanded the potential scope of such productions in the country.

This thesis has shown that from at least 1958 Shakespeare performance in Malawi was intertwined with a recognisable intercultural practice. This predates the area of scholarship that came to be known as intercultural theatre by at least a decade. Commercial Shakespeare production in Malawi remains an intercultural enterprise, and so I disagree with Patrice Pavis's treatment of intercultural theatre as an intellectual concept that it is falling out of use. On the contrary, *Romio ndi Julieti* has shown that intercultural theatre, when a carefully researched and truly joint artistic project, can assist in allowing Shakespeare's works, and no doubt those of other writers, to gain new resonances with contemporary Malawian audiences. The term 'intercultural theatre' in the Malawian context remains a useful, specific term to describe such an enterprise.

The power and joy of the intercultural Shakespeare experience were best evidenced by the village performance, the one that my research had suggested would see the least engagement. In the village the production was more than 'just' the performance of a play. It felt more like a community event for it seemed as though the whole village had gathered to watch *Romio ndi Julieti*. I observed that once the play had started very few audience members at any of the venues left even though, as they had not paid for a ticket, there was no motivation for them to stay if they did not find the production engaging in some form. The audience responses during the play and responses in the surveys and interviews at all three venues were similar and overwhelmingly positive. I conclude that, in this instance, when local audiences were presented with work in the vernacular there was less of a difference between the educated and urban audiences and the rural audience than I had anticipated. It is possible that when his text is performed in the vernacular in Malawi, Shakespeare's work crosses the usual rural/urban divides.

Limitations of study

It would have been advantageous to conduct a follow-up survey at least six months after the production with both cast members and with some members of the audience in order to measure any lasting impact of the work on individuals. Informal discussion with Mzumara has indicated that there was a considerable lasting impact, but without having included a further study and data collection I cannot pose this as a conclusion.[6]

Pre-colonial performance traditions from other ethnic groups have influenced how drama has developed in Malawi, however the scope of this research made it necessary for me to focus upon only those specific examples when they arose and directly impacted the work. South Africa and Zambia have long been connected with Malawi through migration. I have not engaged with these aspects of cultural influence because they do not directly impact on Shakespeare performance in Malawi but also because they warrant investigations of their own.

Future work

There is further work to undertake documenting the productions of Shakespeare that took place in Malawi from the time of the missionaries to the present day, and on finding how and why specific plays were incorporated into the Malawian school curriculum. While identifying and documenting Shakespeare production in Malawi was a feature of this study, it was done in order to contextualise contemporary Shakespeare production there. The scope of this study placed weight on exploring a Shakespeare text through practical production. In chapter two I noted that P. Gibbs suggested that adaptations were undertaken from the 1950s onwards indicating there is more evidence about Shakespeare productions to be found; to do so falls beyond the reach of this thesis.

A greater number of survey results from a higher proportion of audience members at a wider variety of theatre performances would be needed to gain a greater

[6] There is much work to be done in measuring the impact of intercultural theatre production in Malawi on audiences and local theatre practitioners. That work would not be possible without the painstaking, original contribution to the field within this thesis.

understanding of trends in Malawian audiences. My research has opened the door to, for example, a comparative study investigating reactions to different styles of drama, or considering the language preferences of Malawian theatre audiences. What motivates audience members to go to the theatre and whether performance of plays have a lasting impact on their audience are questions that could be crucial for producers and directors working in Malawi, for fundraisers, and for those involved in shaping government cultural policy.

If I were to direct another Shakespeare production in Malawi, and I certainly expect to, I would explore co-directing with a Malawian director using a Shakespeare text as the framework for a production that is rehearsed using the improvised methods used in Chichewa drama because the rehearsal that utilised this method created particularly interesting performance results.

This project has allowed me to understand and situate the work of Nanzikambe and Bilimankhwe within the intercultural theatre and African Shakespeare discourse. It would be useful to publish an analysis of their working methods and their outputs in order to introduce their work to a wider scholarly audience.

Final Thoughts

Figure 1, the flow of knowledge, depicts how my directorial practice now sits alongside my scholarship. While this research was practice-led, I realise that theory can, and in the case of intercultural theatre practice in a country like Malawi *should,* be synthesised with robust scholarship in order to equip an incoming intercultural director with the framework needed to conduct such a project with cultural sensitivity. I am far better equipped to understand, analyse and discuss my practice and my personal positioning in relation to my work than I was prior to the commencement of this study. During the rehearsals of *Romio ndi Julieti,* when my understanding of what Shakespeare production could be was challenged through our intercultural process, I realise that I returned to familiar Western practice in moments of stress, the poor dress rehearsal for example. My practice was at its most successful when I moved beyond such traps and began experimenting with merging useful Western techniques such as a speed run with the Malawian

practice of improvising rather than using scripted text. That rehearsal was a turning point. The work of the company became something different to that which either they or I could have created in isolation. That was the rehearsal when the whole company was freed by intercultural practice to truly create something new. I became a situated director.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Survey results

Nov 2014 Malawi Research Trip Results

The results were obtained from the following students and teachers at the following venues using the questionnaires below.

The responses are tabulated in sections 2 to 6.

Is the work of Shakespeare of relevance to Malawi?

School Students

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as you are able. Bullet points are acceptable. Please feel free to use extra paper if applicable.

a) Have you heard of William Shakespeare?

If no:

b) What performance/cultural activities do you enjoy?

If yes then:

c) Where and when did you hear of him?

d) Do you enjoy learning about him/his work?

e) Do you see Malawi in the work of Shakespeare?

f) Would you like to read/see Shakespeare in some of the local languages of Malawi? Chichewa for example? Why do you think this?

Teachers in Secondary Schools

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as you are able. Bullet points are acceptable. Please feel free to use extra paper if applicable.

a) Do you teach Shakespeare currently to your students?

If no:

b) Have you ever taught Shakespeare and if so where? If never, please discuss what is taught in English and Drama currently.

If yes:

c) Do you think Shakespeare is relevant to modern Malawi and why you think this?

d) How do your students respond to the work of Shakespeare and why do you think this is?

e) Do you think there is any value in translating the plays of Shakespeare into some of the local languages of Malawi? Chichewa for example?

f) What is your knowledge of the history of Shakespeare in Malawi?

Actors from Nanzikambe

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as you are able. Bullet points are acceptable. Please feel free to use extra paper if applicable.

a) Have you ever performed/participated in a production of Shakespeare?

If yes:

b) What was the production and who was it directed and produced by?

c) What do you think were the strengths of the production?

d) What were its weaknesses?

e) Do you think that the production was relevant to modern Malawi?

If no:

f) Do you think Shakespeare's work has any relevance to modern Malawi and can you explain why you think this?

g) What is your knowledge of the history of Shakespeare in Malawi?

Staff and Students from Chancellor College Theatre Studies Department and International Academics and Theatre Practitioners with a significant interest in Malawi.

a) Was Shakespeare of any significance or interest to you when you were at school? Please explain why/why not.

b) Would you like to see more of the work of Shakespeare developed in Malawi, or less of it? Please explain why.

c) Do you think the work of Shakespeare has any relevance to Malawi in general? Please explain why

d) Do you think *Romeo and Juliet* is a play that would be of interest and relevance to a Malawi audience?

e) Do you think there is any value in translating the plays of Shakespeare into some of the local languages of Malawi? Chichewa for example?

f) What is your knowledge of the history of Shakespeare in Malawi?

Table 1. Venues surveyed

No	Place	Number of respondents
1	Nanzikambe	3 returns but 6 consent forms
2	Chancellor College	12 returns but 8 consent forms
3	Maranlabha Boys Academy	1 teacher survey; 3 student survey and 3 consent forms
4	Bangwe Secondary School	2 teacher survey; 3 student survey and 1 permission to interview form
5	Awesome God Secondary School	3 student survey; 1 consent form and 1 Consent to interview form with description of school

Section 2 Nanzikambe Actors

Table 2.1. Productions in which performed

Response (3 respondents)	Remark
A Midsummer Night's Dream (*African Dream*) produced and directed by Kate Stafford	All 3 respondents had performed in the production of *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Amy Bonsall
3 *Romeo & Juliet* directed by Amy Bonsall	
Macbeth- School production produced and directed by Mr Mugaba	

Table 2.2 Strengths of Productions

Play	Strength
A Midsummer Night's Dream	African traditional setting and dress plus a number of Malawian songs and dances
Romeo and Juliet	African setting; costume depicted African culture; traditional dances
	In Chichewa and actors expressed themselves naturally; They understood what they were saying; great cast; music and dance added to magic of the play
	Good & knowledgeable director. Good cast who understood play; everyone worked together
Macbeth	Casting good; Students good at Shakespeare and understood text; Visual and those not familiar with story could follow it; Themes came out clearly

Table 2.3 Nanzikambe Weaknesses of Productions

A Midsummer Night's Dream	Not Clear if setting in Malawi apart from songs and dance in different Malawian languages; Not clear which Malawian tribe it was from; Confusion due to mixture of European and African props. Unclear whether post or pre-colonial. Language strictly Shakespearian.
Romeo and Juliet	Unclear whether setting was pre or post- colonial; Arab trading had a great influence on Malawian culture which would have informed the dress and props used. Different coloured cloths pointed to Arab & European; tendency towards colonial period. Insufficient time to explore?
	Short time on rehearsals; little time to relate to world of Shakespeare & Malawian understanding.
	Insufficient rehearsal time and translation time to Chichewa
Macbeth	No proper costume

Table 2.4 Knowledge & history of Shakespeare in Malawi

1	Taught at secondary school. In Malawi history of Shakespeare is linked to literature in senior classes at secondary school.
2	Banda UK educated & considered prestigious and relevant for Malawian students to study Shakespeare texts. British former colony thus Shakespeare play (texts?) donated to Malawi; Missionary schools exposed old school academics to Shakespeare
3	Hard to understand Shakespeare in Malawi owing to his "English"; Teachers' inability to explain texts owing to their lack of knowledge.

Table 2.5 Is Shakespeare of relevance to modern Malawi?

1	Relevant as most plays carry a universal theme – love; politics; betrayal; murder; suicide; parental involvement in the affairs of their children etc.
2	Relevant as universal themes and not time restricted
3	Relevant because learnt in schools especially in English Literature in secondary schools. Romeo and Juliet is most well-known.

Section 3 Chancellor College

12 returns from staff and students of Chancellor College Theatre Studies Department

Table 3.1 Responses to Yes/No questions to staff and students at Chancellor College

Question	Remark
Did you study Shakespeare at School?	Yes/No 11/ 1
Was Shakespeare's work of interest to you when you were at school?	Yes/No 10/2

Would you like to see more of Shakespeare's work developed in Malawi?	Yes/No 11/1
Do you think Shakespeare's work has any relevance to Malawi?	Yes/No 12/0
Which of Shakespeare's plays do you think is of most relevance to modern Malawi?	Romeo & Juliet 5 Tempest Hamlet 3 Macbeth 10
Do you think *Romeo and Juliet* would be of relevance to a Malawi audience?	Yes/No 12/0
Do you think there is value in translating the plays of Shakespeare into the local languages of Malawi?	Yes/No 10/2

Table 3.2 What is the history of Shakespeare in Malawi?

No historical attachment; interesting to know how his name came to be mentioned in Malawi.
Lots of books by Shakespeare in schools giving insight into issues. History of Shakespeare is very rich. Many Malawians have studied him and know his biography and works. His plays have been of interest to many groups.
Shakespeare came with the missionaries as part of great works to be studied in 1940s schools. Evidence of Shakespeare productions at Malawian secondary schools in Thyolo, Dedza & Livingstone. Subsequently Chancellor College English Dept. taught and produced Shakespeare as well as secondary schools from the time of independence to now.
Shakespeare there for secondary school theatre but not professional theatre level. Shakespeare history has been in Malawi since 1960s in upper 2 secondary school classes.
Colonial legacy of English studies and settled in curriculum thereafter
Little discussed about Shakespeare history in Malawi except at senior levels such places as Chancellor College.
Little Shakespeare history in Malawian primary and secondary schools. General knowledge is that Shakespeare is one of the legendary artists. At Chancellor College Drama & Literature students get more Shakespeare history.
Shakespeare traditionally taught at 3rd & 4th secondary school years. *Julius Caesar*; *Macbeth* & *Romeo and Juliet* read.
Shakespeare's work appeared in Malawian community in 1970s especially in education section as literature rather than drama. In 1980s Shakespearean literature transformed into drama.
Learning of English Literature in Malawi centres on modern global literature; Elizabethan and local indigenous literature.

Section 4 Maranlabha Boys Academy

Table 4.1 Teacher Survey (1 Teacher)

Do you teach Shakespeare to your students?	Yes
Do you think Shakespeare is relevant to modern Malawi	Yes

Do your students like reading Shakespeare aloud?	Yes
Do your students like writing about Shakespeare?	No Not applicable
Do your students enjoy performing Shakespeare?	Not applicable
Do you think there is value in translating the plays of Shakespeare into some of the local languages of Malawi?	Yes

Table 4.2

Do you think Shakespeare is relevant to modern Malawi?	Themes in the play *Romeo and Juliet* are very relevant. Theme of love and family conflicts; Parents getting involved in their children's affairs and even suicidal death emanating from love disappointments. In Macbeth issues to do with witchcraft and political witch hunting are all relevant.

Table 4.3 Survey for School Students in Malawi. 3 Students

Have you heard of William Shakespeare?	Yes/No 3/0
How did you hear of him?	Home 2 School 2 Friend 0 Other 0
How old were you?	14-17 (2) 18+ (1)
Would you like to read/see Shakespeare in the local languages of Malawi	Yes/No 2/1
Do you enjoy learning about him/his work?	Yes/No 3/0

Section 5 Bangwe Secondary School (Government School)

Table 5.1 Teacher Surveys (2 Teachers)

Do you teach Shakespeare to your students?	Yes/No 2/0
Do you think Shakespeare is relevant to modern Malawi?	Yes/No 2/0
Do your students enjoy the work of Shakespeare?	Yes/No 1/0
Do your students like reading Shakespeare aloud?	Yes/No 1/0
Do your students like writing about Shakespeare?	Yes/No 0/1
Do your students like writing about Shakespeare?	1 Not applicable
Do you think there is value in translating the plays of Shakespeare into some of the local languages of Malawi?	Yes/No 1/0

Table 5.2 Reasons that Shakespeare is relevant to modern Malawi.

Many people will know how to write poems and learn good behaviours through his writing
The works of Shakespeare fore-shadow some of the events now happening in Malawi

Table 5.3 Do you know the history of Shakespeare in Malawi?

Shakespeare's works have been there for a long time in Malawian schools only that after some years they keep changing the books from *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet.*

Table 5.4 Bangwe Secondary School Students' Survey

Have you heard of William	Yes/No 3/0

Shakespeare?	
How did you hear of him?	Home School 3 Friend Other
How old were you?	14-17 3
Would you like to read/see Shakespeare in the local languages of Malawi?	Yes/No 2/1
Do you enjoy learning about him/his work?	Yes/No 3

Section 6. Awesome God (PVT) Secondary School (Private School)

Table 6.1 School Students (3 students)

Have you heard of William Shakespeare?	Yes/No 3/0
How did you hear of him?	Home School 3 Friend 1 Other
How old were you?	14-17 2 18+ 1
Would you like to read/ see Shakespeare in the local languages of Malawi?	Yes/No 3/0
Do you enjoy learning about him/his work?	Yes/No 3/0

April 2016 Post-Show Audience Survey Example and Results

Blank Survey

Respondent information (to be ticked by the questioner)

(date and location of performance)

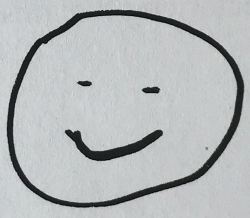
Male
Female

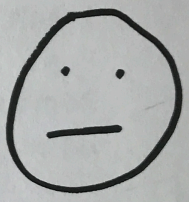
Young adult
Middle aged adult
Mature adult.

Was the production…?

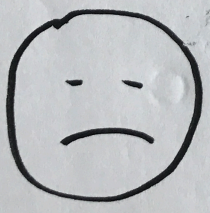
Very smiley face

smiley face neutral face





sad face



very sad face

Which character was the most good?

Lord Capulet
The Prince
Friar Laurence

The Nurse

Which Character was the most good?
Tybalt
Paris
Romeo
Juliet

Which character was the most bad?

Lord Capulet
The Prince
Friar Laurence
The Nurse

Which character was the most bad?
Tybalt
Paris
Romeo
Juliet

Any other Comments?

Location	Village					
All Respondents	Female	Male	Unknown			Total
	1	7	2			10
	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown		
	3	2	3	2		10
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	
	4	5		1		10
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	
	Character most good	1		8	1	10
	Character most bad	6	1	1	2	10
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	
	Character most good			7	3	10
	Character most bad	9	1			10
Female	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown		
	1					1
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	
	1					1
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	
	Character most good			1		1
	Character most bad	1				1
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	
	Character most good				1	1
	Character most bad		1			1
	Comments	We have learnt that falling in love at a younger age is bad. It is bad to fall in love with a member of a rival family.				
Male Young Adult 2 in total	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	
	1	1		1		2
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	
	Character most good			1	1	2
	Character most bad	2				2
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	
	Character most good			2		2

	Character most bad	2				2
	Comments	Interesting/ Assist Academically/ Helped educate villages on dealing with rival family issues				
Male Middle Aged Adult 2 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	
	2					2
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	
	Character most good			2		2
	Character most bad				2	2
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	
	Character most good				2	2
	Character most bad	2				2
	Comments	All good				
Male Mature Adult 3 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	
		2		1		3
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	
	Character most good			3		3
	Character most bad	2	1			3
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	
	Character most good		1	2		3
	Character most bad	3				3
	Comments	Unfinished (2)/ Cuts disturbed the story (3) Good (1) Knew story (1)				
Unknown 2 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	
	1	1				2
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	
	Character most good	1		1		2
	Character most bad	1		1		2
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	
	Character most good			2		2
	Character most bad	2				2
	Comments	Poor costume (2) Juliet shy (1) Play good (2)				

Location	School						
All Respondents	Female	Male	Unknown				Total
	2	6	2				10
	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown			
	6	3		1			10
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	5	4	1				10
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	5	3		2		10
	Character most bad	2	2	2		4	10
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet		
	Character most good	1	1	5	3		10
	Character most bad	3	1	1	2	3	10
Female 2 Respondents	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown			
	2						2
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	No One	
		2					2
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	1			1		2
	Character most bad			2			2
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			2			2
	Character most bad	1			1		2
	Comments	Some characters were not in their character/ Intonation in some characters i.e Friar Lawrence/ Juliet need to add on emotions					
Male Young Adult 4 Respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	No One	
	2	1	1				4
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character	2		1	1		4

	most good						
	Character most bad	1				3	4
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good	1	1	1	1		4
	Character most bad	1			1	2	4
	Comments	Costumes poor. Well acted/ All actors good/ Romeo change of mood is needed/ Lady Capulet to raise voice/					
Male Middle Aged Adult 3 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	2	1					3
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse		
	Character most good	1		2			3
	Character most bad	1	2				3
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet		
	Character most good			1	2		3
	Character most bad	1	1	1			3
	Comments	Actors loved the performance/ Friar Lawrence needs to be on time/ Romeo seemed to want to hang himself but in the play its about stabbing. Lady Capulet voice too low/ Good play					
Male Mature Adult 0 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good						
	Character most bad						
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good						
	Character most bad						
	Comments						
Unknown 1 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	1						
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	1					

	Character most bad					1	
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			1			
	Character most bad					1	
	Comments	Costumes poor/ Poor construction of play/ Need of stage sectioning					

Location	Mzuzu University						
All Respondents	Female	Male	Unknown				Total
	9	2					11
	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown			
	6	5					11
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	No One	
	7	3	1				11
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	3	2	1	5		11
	Character most bad	4	4	2		1	11
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			7	4		11
	Character most bad	6	4		1		11
Female 9 Respondents	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown			
	5	4					9
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	No One	
	6	2	1				9
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	3	1	1	4		9
	Character most bad	2	4	2		1	9
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			6	3		9
	Character most bad	6	3				9
	Comments	Good (3). Translation done well. Thought it wouldn't work but did well. Romeo was not crying naturally. Mercutio & Benvolio were the most good and entertained the audience. Overall good but some actors hanging back. Would have bigger audience if performed during the day because of bad weather. Prince was not acting well. Should have been performed during school time.					
Male Young	Very	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very	No	

Adult	Smiley				Sad	One	
	1						1
1 in total		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good				1		1
	Character most bad	1					1
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good				1		1
	Character most bad		1				1
	Comments	Interesting. Would like to have more traditional dress					
Male Middle Aged Adult	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad	No One	
		1					1
1 respondents		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good		1				1
	Character most bad	1					1
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			1			1
	Character most bad				1		1
	Comments	Juliet's cry was not natural. Good show & easy to understand					
Male Mature Adult	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
respondents		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good						
	Character most bad						
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good						
	Character most bad						
	Comments						
Unknown	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
respondents		Lord	The	Friar	The	No	

		Capulet	Prince	Laurence	Nurse	One	
	Character most good						
	Character most bad						
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good						
	Character most bad						
	Comments						

Location	Village/ School & University						
All Respondents	Female	Male	Unknown				Total
	1+2+ 9 = 12	7+6+2 = 15	2+2 = 4				31
	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown			
	3+6+6	2+3+5	3+	2+1			31
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	4+5+7	5+4+3	1+1	1			31
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	1+5+3	3+2	8+1	1+2+5		31
	Character most bad	6+2+4	1+2+4	1+2+2	2	4+1	31
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good	1	1	7+5+7	3+3+4		31
	Character most bad	9+3+6	1+1+4	1	2+1	3	31
Female	Young Adult	Middle Aged Adult	Mature Adult	Unknown			
	1+2+5	4					1+2+9= 12
	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	1+6	2+2	1				1+2+9= 12
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	1+3	1	1+1	1+4		1+2+9 = 12
	Character most bad	1+2	4	2+2		1	1+2+9 = 12
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			2+6	1+3		1+2+9 = 12
	Character most bad	1+6	1+3		1		1+2+9 = 12
	Comments	We have learnt that falling in love at a younger age is bad. It is bad to fall in love with a member of a rival family./Some characters were not in their character/ Intonation in some characters i.e Friar Lawrence/ Juliet need to add on emotions/ Good (3). Translation done well. Thought it wouldn't work but did well. Romeo was not					

		crying naturally. Mercutio & Benvolio were the most good and entertained the audience. Overall good but some actors hanging back. Would have bigger audience is performed during the day because of bad weather. Prince was not acting well. Should have been performed during school time.					
Male Young Adult 2+4+1 = 7	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	1+2+1	1	1	1			2+4+1 = 7
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	2		1+1	1+1+1		2+4+ 1 = 7
	Character most bad	2+1+1				3	2+4+1 = 7
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet		
	Character most good	1	1	2+1	1+1		2+4+1 = 7
	Character most bad	2+1	1		1	2	2+4+1 = 7
	Comments	Interesting/ Assist Academically/ Helped educate villages on dealing with rival family issues/ Interesting. Would like to have more traditional dress					
Male Middle Aged Adult 2+3+ 1 = 6 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	2+2	1+1					2+3+1 = 6
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse		
	Character most good	1	1	2+2			2+3 + 1 = 6
	Character most bad	1+1	2		2		2+3 +1 = 6
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet		
	Character most good			1 + 1	2+2		2+3+1 = 6
	Character most bad	2+1	1	1	1		2+3 + 1 = 6
	Comments	All good/ Actors loved the performance/ Friar Lawrence needs to be on time/ Romeo seemed to want to hang himself but in the play its about stabbing. Lady Capulet voice to low/ Good play. Juliet's cry was not natural. Good show & easy to understand					
Male Mature Adult 3 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
		2		1			3
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse		
	Character most good			3			3
	Character most bad	2	1				3

		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet		
	Character most good		1	2			3
	Character most bad	3					3
	Comments		Unfinished (2)/ Cuts disturbed the story (3) Good (1) Knew story (1)				
Unknown 2+1 respondents	Very Smiley	Smiley	Neutral	Sad	Very Sad		
	1+1	1					2+1
		Lord Capulet	The Prince	Friar Laurence	The Nurse	No One	
	Character most good	1+1		1			2+1
	Character most bad	1		1		1	2+1
		Tybalt	Paris	Romeo	Juliet	No One	
	Character most good			2+1			2+1
	Character most bad	2				1	2+1
	Comments		Poor costume (2) Juliet shy (1) Play good (2)/ Costumes poor/ Poor construction of play/ Need of stage sectioning				

Appendix B – List of workshop participants

Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba

4TH year students following the fine arts degree programme

Chikondi Mlozi
Gertrude Mlanga
Linley Banda
Jamia Wasiri
Alinafe Gama
Jali Samson
Fabiyawo Kadammanja
Grant Njeula
Daud Njerengo
Iman Mpangeni

Appendix C – List of cast and creative team *Romio ndi Julieti*

MZUZU University, MUTAG members

Romio ndi Julieti

Edited by Amy Bonsall, translation consistency (ensuring that cuts I made in English were integrated for sense and grammar into Chichewa) by Misheck Mzumara:

Director – Amy Bonsall

Assisted by
Misheck Mzumara (lecturer in Drama at Mzuzu University)
Hussein Gopole (professional theatre, drumming and dance artist)
Hazel Alban (for Bilimankhwe) - Designer
Misheck Banda - Linguistic assistance
Hussain Gopole and company - Drumming and dance

Produced by
Bilimankhwe Arts (provided funds towards the production and the expertise of designer Hazel Alban to design and make props and costumes).

Mzuzu University Theatre Group (provided Mzuzu University Theatre Group as the cast of the production, rehearsal space and performance space, organised a Malawian media drive to publicise the production, organised the logistics of transportation of the cast from venue to venue, were responsible for the health and safety requirements of the work).

Leeds University (provided a small bursary which contributed to covering the cost of my transport out to Malawi, covered the cost of insuring me for the duration of the field research).

Cast

Romeo – Alinafe Limbani

Julieti – Wezi Banda

Fr Lawrence – Alfred Njikho

Prince – Diverius Willard

Montague/Fr John – Hussein Gopole

Lady Montague – Leah Mhone

Capulate – Misheck Mzumara

Lady Capulate – Julie Mkandawire

Paris – Kelvin Chiyoyola

Benvolio – Tony Kalumbi

Tybalt – Vitumbiko Kumwenda

Peter/Balthazar/Gregory – Wakisa Kalinga

Mercutio – Wokomaatani Kayenda

Nurse – Rita Boaz

Apothecary/ Sing' anga – Trust Matewere

Stand in for Capulet – William Maulidi,

Appendix D – Table of classical Chichewa words and list of songs and dances used within the production

*Table complied by Misheck Mzumara

Classical Chichewa in Romeo and Juliet Script	**Equivalent words in Modern Chichewa**	**Meaning**
Mwazi (in first Kolasi)	Magazi	Blood
Malo a Ufulu (speech by Wachifumu)	Khoti	Court
Msuweni (Benvolio talking to Romeo for first time)	Khazeni	Cousin
Chindunji (Romeo and Benvolio first conversation)	Kulondola	Being Right or correct
Zilimwe (Capulet talking with Paris for the first time)	Nyengo yotentha	Dry Season (But in the script it has been used to mean year) - Two dry seasons
Zaka Khumi ndi Zinayi (Capulet talking of the age of Juliet to Paris)	Zaka fotini	Fourteen years old
Mgonero (Peter and Romeo reading the letter by Capulet)	Chakudya chamazulo	Supper
Ziphadzuwa (Benvolio and Romeo talk soon after Pitala exists)	Akazi okongola	Beautiful girls
Namwino (Character – Nurse)	Nesi	Nurse
Ganando (at Capulets party, Tybolt talking of Romeo)	Kape	Useless person
Mopsopsonana (love talk of Romeo to Juliet in their first meeting)	Kudyana milomo (this expression is used particularly amongst the youth) Most people would still use Ku kisana	kissing
Zenera (Romeo	Windo	Window

peeping through seeing Juliet)		
Tchuthi (Conversation between Juliet and Nurse after Tybolt got Killed)	Holide	Holiday

Songs and dances used in the production

Songs

Ndi lonjezo la Mulungu - (a Christian song) used during Romio and Juileti's wedding

Boyi puna, paseri pa Zomba – (a traditional song used by both Yao and Chewa) used straight after Romio and Juileti's wedding

Ndili ndi chisoni - (a popular Christian song) used when Julieti is found dead and during her burial.

Dances

Manganje - (a Yao initiation dance) used in the Capulets Ball

Chisamba – (a girls initiation dance) used in the Capulets Ball

Appendix E - English working translation of the Chichewa performance script

*Translation by Misheck Mzumara

Chorus
Between two families equal in respect
(In a beautiful city of Verona where our story is happening)
Hatred has begun again, chaos everywhere, blood gushing out in fights.
Unfortunately two children fall in love from these families
And then commit suicide
Their death ends the strife between their parents.
In two hours we will be watching a story of their love and these troubled times. We will also see the anger of their parents, the anger that only the death of the children can put to an end. Stay quiet and listen, you will enjoy the story.
More especially when we are able to show you more than we are able to tell in these first words.

Chorus exits

ACT 1 SCENE 1
Sampson/Gregory and servants from Capulet family enter while carrying spears and swords and shields.

Sampson
Dogs from the family of Montague make me angry, that I CANNOT LIE.

Abraham enters…they fight… Benvolio enters and tries to separate them
Enter Tybalt.

Tybalt
I hate the word peace in the same way I hate graveyards of sinful people or the way I hate all from Montagues.

Benvolio and Tybalt fight. The rest also fight. Enter Capulet in nightgown together with Lady Capulet.

Capulet
What is this noise about? Give me my sword.

Enter Montague and Lady Montague

Montague
You dog, Capulet *Lady Montague tries to pull Montague* don't touch me, leave me.

Prince Escalus
You rebels, haters of peace, people who love fighting with swords.
Its 3 times you have been causing chaos in this city.
If you do this again, you will pay with your lives.

The rest of you go. You Capulet, come with me. You Montague, you should come to the place of peace this afternoon, where I settle disputes, and I will tell you at that time what I want you to do. As for the rest of you, I have said already, go! Or else you'll be killed.

Everybody leaves except Montague, Lady Montague and Benvolio.

Lady Montague
Alright, where is Romeo then? Have you seen him today? I am glad he wasn't here at this fracas.

Benvolio
Lady, because I was thinking quite a lot in my head I went for a walk in the morning under the Mkuyu tree where the sun sets in the city I saw your son walking about, just like me. I went to meet him, but when he saw me he hid himself.

Montague
Many have seen him in such places in tears he looks to be desolate

Benvolio
Uncle, do you know what is making him behave that way?

Montague
I don't know he refuses to tell me

Benvolio
Have you tried everything and he still is refusing?

Montague
I have tried my best some of my friends have tried to talk with him, but to no avail

Enter Romeo

Benvolio
Here he comes – leave for a little while, he is going to tell me. Maybe he'll refuse! But we will see.

Montague
I just pray that things should work and that he should tell you *to his wife* lets go.

Montague and Lady Montague exit

Benvolio
Good morning cousin.

Romeo
Good morning

Benvolio
Are you in love perhaps?

Romeo
I have been spewed out of the mouth of the one I love.

Benvolio
You have been spewed out!

Romeo
The problem is that even thought love has no eyes it still shows us the way. Where are we going to eat? [he sees blood] oh! So there was a fight here? Alright, don't tell me, the root of this fight is hatred and more especially, love. Oh what kind of love where people have to shed blood? What kind of love where people have to hate each other? Love that one cannot tell where it is coming from. Happiness that makes one feel pity, stupidity. Good things heaped carelessly. Love is heavy but it can also be light; brighter, but also dark; hot but also cold; sick but also alive; sleepy, but also awake. Love is not in the way we think. That's the way I look at love. Are you laughing?

Benvolio
No cousin, I'm crying.
Tell me, who is it that you love?

Romeo
Speaking the truth cousin. Falling in love with a woman.

Benvolio
I knew

Romeo
There, you were right
The woman is beautiful

Benvolio
Beautiful ones are easy to catch

Romeo
There you have missed she is refusing to be impaled by an arrow of love.

Benvolio
You mean she swore to be a virgin forever?

Romeo
Yes, she swore.
But she doesn't know that by doing so she wont benefit from her beauty.

Benvolio
Can I advise you don't think of her?

Romeo
Teach me how to stop to think about her.

Benvolio
Give freedom to your eyes, there are more beautiful ladies in this world.

They exit

ACT 1 SCENE 2
Enter Capulet and Honourable Paris with Peter in front.

Capulet *[continuing with a story]* but Montague swore just like me. His punishment is equal to that of mine, as such it cannot be difficult like us to keep peace.

Paris
What you two want is good. It is just unfortunate there has been disagreements between the two of you for a long time. But what are you saying about my story?

Capulet
As I said earlier, my child is still young. She hasn't even reached 14 years old. We should wait for two more years before we start thinking about her getting married.

Paris
There are younger than ladies than she is who are married and have children.

Capulet
Children who marry young get old sooner.
This child is a wound on my tongue (*Malawian proverb*)
My whole hope is on her
Alright, go and talk with her, see if her ear will be happy with you. It's up to her to say yes or no. If she says yes, I will put my blessings and my words of acceptance. Tonight we have a party which we always have been having for many years. I've invited many friends, you too can come. Tonight you will see stars that brighten the skies from down here.

Gives paper to Peter

You go now boy, walk around Verona and find the people whose names are written down here. Tell them they are invited here this evening.

Exit Paris and Capulet

Peter
So he says I should look for people whose names are written down here.

Enter Benvolio and Romeo

Romeo

Good afternoon

Peter
Good afternoon boss
Boss, do you know how to read?

Romeo and Benvolio look at each other, Peter starts walking away

Romeo
Stop friend, I know how to read *he reads*

Mr Maritino and his wife and the children of my uncle the Capulets, his wife and his younger girl children, girls Roseline and Livia, Mr Valentio and his cousin Tybalt.

Good people, where should they come to?

Peter
Up

Romeo
Where, to supper?

Peter
At our house

Romeo
Whose house?

Peter
My boss' house

Romeo
You are right I should first have asked you who your boss is.

Peter
Don't ask, my boss is the big man Capulet *(katakwe)*
If you are not from the Montague family then you're welcome to take wine with us.

Exit Peter

Benvolio
Roseline, the beautiful Roseline who you love will be there and other beautiful girls from Verona. Go and compare her with the other ladies I will show you. These ones you see to be very beautiful like angels, will appear as crows at that time.

Romeo
I'll go with you

Exit Romeo and Benvolio

ACT 1 SCENE 3
Enter Lady Capulet and Nurse

Lady Capulet
Nurse, where's my daughter?

Nurse
Indeed, where is this child? Juliet! Juliet!

Enter Juliet

Juliet
Mother I'm here, you were looking for me

Lady Capulet
Yes. I will tell you why I was looking for you

Nurse
Alright
She is just big in size but I know her age very well

Lady Capulet
She is not yet 14

Nurse
I could have sold my 14 teeth if I had them, so you say she is not yet 14, I have never taken care of a beautiful child like you Juliet. I pray that I should be alive on the day you get married.

Lady Capulet
Marriage is what we would want to talk about with you.
Tell me child Juliet. How do you look at marriage?

Juliet
It is something respectable, which I have never thought about it at all.

Nurse
Something respectable! You have sucked such wisdom from your parents.

Lady Capulet
It's about time you start thinking about marriage. Any way let me just mention that Paris, the real Paris wants to marry you.

Nurse
Mother. He is a good person that one.
Shaaaaa

Lady Capulet

There is no flower here in Verona even the flowers of the rainy season that can be compared to Paris [to Juliet] tell us what are your thoughts? Can you love this man? We have invited him to our party tonight, look at his face so that you see how handsome he is. All that he has will be yours and there is nothing you are going to lose.

Nurse
Nothing she is going to lose?
Tell her that she'll get the most wonderful thing. She will become pregnant.

Lady Capulet
(*Answer quickly*) Do you want Paris or not?

Juliet
I should see him first. Then we will see if I will love him.

Exit all

ACT 1 SCENE 4
Enter Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio

Mercutio
No boss lets dance
When you sink, you will kill love which is pliable like bamboo

Romeo
Love is pliable?
I view love to be coarse, noisy and prickly like a thorn.

Mercutio
If love is coarse, you should also be coarse
When it pricks you, you should also prick it.
Give me a mask
I don't want to be associated with any wrongdoing, the mask will speak for me

They give each other masks

Benvolio
Let's knock and enter

Romeo
I had a dream last night

Mercutio
Me too

Romeo
What was your dream about?

Mercutio
My dreams told me that dreamers lie a lot

Romeo
They don't lie, my friend

Mercutio
That means you are with Queen Mabu

Benvolio
Who is Queen Mabu?

Mercutio
She's a birth attendant of Kamdothi. He travels on a small cart, smaller than a grain of sand. The spokes of his cart are like the legs of a spider. The one who drives the cart is a louse. His size is much smaller than a worm from a tired maid's finger. Queen Mabu's cart travels at night passing through the brains of people who are in the lake of love, making them dream of love. She travels on the lips of women and the women dream of kissing. Sometimes she travels on the nose of a priest and the priest dreams of people offering abundantly. It is the same Queen Mabu who makes people dream of making love to Young girls. She is the one …

Romeo
Stay quiet Mercutio, you are talking nonsense

Mercutio
True – I am talking of dreams

Romeo
I don't know why but I look at this party as the beginning of something not good. The end of which will be my death.
All right. There is someone who is guiding my life. It is up to that person to take me to anywhere he wants to.

Exit

ACT 1 SCENE 5
Enter Capulet and his cousin Tybalt, Lady Capulet, Juliet and others of their house. They meet Romeo, Benvolio, Mercutio and other visitors wearing masks

Capulet
You are all welcome. Gentlemen, you are welcome. Music – play music! *(Music starts and they dance)*

Romeo
(To a servant) Who is that young lady? Her brightness is as if she wants to teach a lamp how to shine. Her beauty is like gold earrings on the cheek of a black person. This beauty is way beyond measure. This one should die and rot? In comparison with the other women, she is like a dove amongst crows. Once this dancing is over I

will check where she is and my rough hand will touch her hand. Has my heart loved anybody else until now? My eyes were cheating me, for I have never seen such beauty before.

Tybalt
That's the voice of someone from the Montagues. *(To a servant)* Give me my sword.

Capulet
What is happening, younger brother?

Tybalt
Uncle that one is from the Montague family. Our enemy! A stupid person who has come here to spoil our party

Capulet
Isn't that one the young man, Romeo?

Tybalt
Yes, that's Romeo, a stupid fool

Capulet
Calm down, cousin, leave him alone. He is not as proud as the others. The truth is that there are many people commending him here in Verona, to be a well-behaved boy. I cannot disgrace him in my house, no matter what. So you should calm down. Just pretend you haven't seen him. Those are my thoughts, and if you respect me, remove the anger from your face because we don't behave that way at a party.

Tybalt
It is necessary that we should be dealing with such people once they are available as such. I won't leave him alone.

Capulet
I have said you leave him alone. What is your problem? It is me saying that. Who is the elder here, you or me?

Tybalt
Uncle, these people are interfering

Capulet
That's your problem

Music starts again and visitors continue dancing

Tybalt
Forcing me not to start a fight is making my body shake. All right, I will go. But this Romeo, although he thinks that he has been clever today, he will face it some other time.

Exit Tybalt

Romeo
[Taking Juliet's hand] Your hand is like a holy place where I, an unholy person am not supposed to reach. If you are disappointed with my touch, my lips are waiting, just like those in need of salvation. They are ready to ask for forgiveness through kissing with your lips.

Juliet
You who is in need of salvation do not lie that it is your hand. Those on a pilgrimage wanting salvation, they keep on touching hands with statues of the saints. When these hands touch it is like they are kissing.

Romeo
Do the holy, and those on a pilgrimage wanting salvation not have lips?

Juliet
They do have, but they use it for prayers.

Romeo
Okay, holy one. Allow my lips to do what the hands do. I pray that you should kiss me. Please answer my prayer so that my faith should not falter.

Juliet
Those in prayer are those that go to the holy ones if they want their prayers to be answered

Romeo
Then don't move as I offer my prayer *(they kiss)* I am now clean. My sins have been removed from my lips and have gone to your lips

Juliet
You mean my lips have taken sins?

Romeo
Taking sins from my lips? Your beauty can lead someone to sin. Come here, let me get my sins back*. They kiss*

Juliet
The way you kiss is that you have learned that in books.

Nurse
Madam Juliet, your mother wants to talk with you

Exit Juliet

Romeo
Who's her mother?

Nurse

Her mother is the Madam of this house. And she is a good mother. And this child you are talking to, it me who has taken care of her. Speaking the truth, whoever will marry her will be a very lucky person indeed.

Romeo
Shaa … she is a Capulet! There will be trouble here. I am giving my life into the hands of my enemies.

Benvolio
[To Romeo] We should get going. It is better to go when things are still at its peak.

All exit except Juliet and Nurse

Juliet
Nurse, come here! Who was that man?

Nurse
His name is Romeo. And he is from the Montague family. He is the only son of your enemy number one.

Juliet
Speaking to herself Oh no! the only person that I have loved is the son of an enemy.

They exit

ACT 2 SCENE 1
Enter Romeo

Romeo
Should I go somewhere else when my heart is somewhere else?
I must follow where my heart is

Exit Romeo

Enter Benvolio and Mercutio

Benvolio
calling out Romeo, cousin Romeo

Mercutio
He is wise, he has gone to sleep

Benvolio
He was running towards this direction and he jumped over that fence where the fruit trees grow. We should call him Mercutio.

Mercutio
I will call him as if I am a conjurer.

Romeo, mad Romeo, lover, Romeo I call you in the name of Roseline and her shiny eyes, her protruding forehead, her shaky thighs. *(legs)*
And that small island that is near her thighs. In all this I command you to come out and come before our eyes.

Benvolio
He can hear you, you will make him angry

Mercutio
I want him to come out once her hears the name of the woman he loves.

Benvolio
He is behind those trees. He is just happy with the night. They say love has no eyes, its like walking in the dark.

Mercutio
If love has no eyes, how does it see? Where we are its very cold, you can't sleep, its time we get going.

Benvolio
Lets go
If you don't want to come out from where you're hiding, that's your problem.

They exit.

ACT 2 SCENE 2
Enter Romeo

Romeo
It is easy to joke about scars if you have never had a wound.

Juliet appears on a veranda upstairs

What is shining at that window, it is the east and Juliet is the sun that is rising. Rise sun and defeat the jealous moon,
had she known how I love her, she speaks,
although she isn't saying anything.
See how her cheek leans upon her hand.
If I could be fortunate and and touch that cheek.

Juliet
Oh no…

Romeo
She speaks
Speak again angel

Juliet
Oh Romeo Romeo,

Why are you called Romeo?
Forget your father and change your name
If you can't do that swear that you love me
And I'll no longer be a daughter of Capulet

Romeo
Should I wait so that she speaks more?

Juliet
The only problem is that you are my enemy
There is nothing that can change if you are no longer a Montague
What is Montague?
It's a hand, a leg, arm, face, or another part of the body
Choose another name Romeo
Isn't a name just a name?
A rose flower cannot change how it smells even if it called by a different name.
The same for Romeo cannot stop being handsome, even if he's called by a different name. Change your name Romeo. Throw your name away. Its just a name, and if you do that
I will be all yours

Romeo
I believe in everything you have said. If you truly love me, I will change my name
And for now onwards I'll no longer be called Romeo

Juliet
Who are you? Why are you hiding in the dark listening to my thoughts?

Romeo
I don't know what to tell you that I am
Because now I hate my name
I hate my name because my name is an enemy to you

Juliet
Are you not Romeo?
Are you not a Montague?

Romeo
I'm not any of the things you hate

Juliet
How have you managed to enter here, inside the fence? And why are you here?
If my relatives find you, they will kill you because of who you are

Romeo
The wings of love have enabled me to climb this fence
Even a stone fence cannot stop love
When someone is in love, he is able to do anything
I am not afraid of your relatives

Juliet
I am able to do anything so that they don't find you here
I'm not able to see because of this darkness
You could have seen me blushing with happiness
As a human being, I'm supposed to lie, that I haven't said what I have said
But let that go
Do you love me?
I know that you say yes and I'll believe you
But when you exaggerate in swearing that you love me
Then I will know that you are lying.
God laughs at people who are in love who swear falsely
Romeo, if you love me, tell me.

Romeo
I swear by the moon

Juliet
Don't swear by the moon, the moon changes all the time
every month the moon is in different positions
I don't want your behaviour to be like that of the moon

Romeo
What should I swear by then?

Juliet
Don't swear at all
If you want to swear, swear by your name
Because you are now like my god who I am praising
If you do that, I will believe you

Romeo
Like someone I love from deep down my heart

Juliet
Stop don't swear

Romeo
Will you leave me so unsatisfied?

Juliet
What do you want me to do so that you will be satisfied?

Romeo
I'll be satisfied once we make solid promises

Juliet
I've already given you my heart even though you had not said yet anything about love.

Nurse calls from within

I hear some noise from within. I'll be back

Romeo
Blessed night, blessed!

Juliet
Three words Romeo that I love and we will part.
If what you want is indeed about love, about respect, send me a message tomorrow. I will send someone and you should tell them where we are going to wed, and when. I'll put all my hope under your feet my lord. And I'll follow you wherever you do on this earth.

Nurse calls from within

Mother Mayi

Juliet
I'm coming

Nurse
Mayi Mother

Juliet
I'm coming.
Now you go, I'll send someone tomorrow.

Romeo
My whole life is…

Juliet
Good night.

Exit Juliet

Romeo
A loved one returns home fast
Just like a school boy throws away his school bags when he has come from school.

Enter Juliet

Juliet
At what time should I send someone?

Romeo
Nine o'clock

Juliet
I will forget so are you going to wait up forever?
I'm remembering one thing
That I get carried away chatting with you

Romeo
I will still wait, even though you are not remembering.
I will forget that I have my home,
my home will be here where I am standing

Juliet
The day is coming, I want you to go.

Romeo
I wish I was your bird.

Juliet
Me too honey.
Sleep well.

Exit Juliet

Romeo
I believe you will sleep well.
I wish I could have remained here so that I could sleep peacefully with you.
I am now going to meet my priest, to ask for advice and also to make him aware of my luck.

Exit Romeo

ACT 2 SCENE 3

Enter Friar Lawrence carrying a basket

Fr Lawrence
The smiling morning is taking over the evil night

Enter Romeo

Romeo
Good morning father

Fr Lawrence
The lord should bless you
The lord should forgive you if you have done something sinful
Where you with Roseline perhaps?

Romeo

With Roseline father, I have forgotten about that one and the troubled thoughts that she was causing me

Fr Lawrence
You have done well my son, so where were you?

Romeo
Don't ask me again, let me tell you
I was at a party in the house of my enemy

Fr Lawrence
Be clear my son

Romeo
I have fallen in love with the daughter of rich Capulet
I'm loving her, and she is also loving me.
I'm begging you from deep down in my heart, marry us today.

Fr Lawrence
Holy Francis. Why this change?
Have you dumped Roseline whom you loved so much?
Now I know that the love of the youth is just on the face, and not in the heart.

Romeo
Please don't chastise me

Fr Lawrence
Lets go
I will bless your wedding in secret.
Maybe the wedding between you two would help in bringing peace between your two families.

Exit

ACT 2 SCENE 4
Enter Benvolio and Mercutio

Mercutio
Where is this Romeo?
He didn't come yesternight

Benvolio
Maybe at his fathers place?
No, no there he didn't go there, I heard it from a servant.

Mercutio
It's that light skinned whore Roseline, she is troubling him and now he has gone mad

Benvolio
Younger brother of Capulet, Tybalt (*can mean nephew in Chichewa*)
Has sent a letter to Romeo's father

Mercutio
Maybe he wants to start a fight

Benvolio
Romeo will answer him, he will face it.

Mercutio
A letter cannot wait for Romeo, anybody who knows how to write can reply.

Benvolio
What I mean is that if he wants to start a fight, Romeo will respond that he is ready to fight with him.

Mercutio
Oh gosh, Romeo is gone
He is so weak with love
Can he have the strength to fight Tybalt?

Benvolio
Who is Tybalt?

Mercutio
He is stronger than a lion, everything about him is like he has read a lot of books.
When he is fighting it is like he is reading a poem
Counting time, distance and strength.

Enter Romeo

Benvolio
Here comes Romeo
Romeo has come

Mercutio
Father Romeo, good morning
Bonjour
That's a French greeting!
Since you have put on a trouser (*mokhwefula*) the way the French people do. (*the black American style*)
You cheated us that night

Romeo
Good morning all of you
What do you mean when you say I cheated you?

Mercutio

You were hiding from us, can't you see what I mean there?

Romeo
Sorry Mercutio
I had other things to do
It was so important that I forgot to say bye as it should be

Enter nurse

Romeo
What has arrived is good news

Nurse
Good morning, men

Mercutio
Good afternoon our mother

Nurse
Is it already in the afternoon?

Mercutio
Yes it's in the afternoon
Time does not stay at one place
Now the finger of time has poked at 12 o'clock

Nurse
Go away, what kind of a person are you
Anyway, where can I find Romeo?

Romeo raises up his hand

Nurse
If you are indeed Romeo let's meet aside. I have some words

Romeo
I'll follow you

Mercutio
Stay well mother … mother… mother … hahahaha!

Exit Benvolio and Mercutio

Nurse
Romeo, remember I told you that we should talk. My younger madam sent me to find you. Let me say this if you want to cheat her you do wrong, because she is still young. If you just want to play around with her, you will do the most evil thing that one can do to a woman.

Romeo
Nurse, pass my regards to your mother. Tell her to find a way to come to Fr Lawrence's place this afternoon. Fr Lawrence will bless our wedding

Nurse
In the afternoon? She will come

They exit

ACT 2 SCENE 5
Enter Juliet

Juliet
I sent the nurse at 9 o'clock. Maybe she is not finding Romeo? That's not possible. She is old. If she was still girl she could have been back by now. Girls bounce like a ball.

Enter Nurse

Here she comes. Oh Nurse, tell me – how is it? Have you spoken with him? Now Nurse, what is wrong? Why are you looking sad?

Nurse
I am tired. Leave me alone for a while. My bones are aching heavily

Juliet
I wish we could have exchanged. You taking my bones and I taking the message that you have brought. Please tell me, Nurse

Nurse
You haven't chosen wisely. You don't know how to choose a man. He is not that respectful, all the same he is as quiet as a sheep

Juliet
I already know that. But what is he saying about our wedding?

Nurse
Your loved one as someone honest, where is you mother?

Juliet
Where is mother? Where is your mother? Just tell me what has Romeo said?

Nurse
Do you have permission to go for prayers today?

Juliet
Yes

Nurse

Hurry, go to Fr Lawrence's' place. There is a man who is waiting to marry you.

Juliet
Wish me well. Thank you Nurse.

They exit

ACT 2 SCENE 6
Enter Fr Lawrence, Romeo and Juliet

Fr Lawrence
The heavenly father should smile at this wedding so that nothing happens which would make us feel we shouldn't have done so. Let's deal with this fast, because, sorry, I cannot leave you two before I bless this wedding.

The wedding happens. They exit

ACT 3 SCENE 1
Enter Mercutio, Benvolio and others

Benvolio
Sorry Mercutio, let's stop here. It's too hot, and members from the Capulet family are also walking about. We can meet them and there will be a fight. With this heat people lose their tempers fast, because blood runs fast

Mercutio
You are like that person who enters a bar, takes out his sword and puts it on the counter, and says: "I pray that I should not use you, my sword". But after taking two, will lift the sword and want to cut the barman for no reason.

Benvolio
Friends, am I really like that?

Mercutio
It's not a lie

Enter Tybalt

Benvolio
Here comes the Capulets

Mercutio
I have nothing to do with them

Tybalt
Good afternoon, gentlemen. Can we talk for a short while? Mercutio, you like chatting with Romeo.

Mercutio

Chatting? Who do you think we are? Musicians?

Enter Romeo

Tybalt
Peace be with you. My friend that I am seeking is this one who has come. Romeo, you are a very bad person.

Romeo
Tybalt, there is a reason why I love you, which is making me not to be angry with you, despite that you have called me a bad person. I am going. I know that you do not know me well.

Tybalt
Stop it. Don't hide in your words, you boy. Turn and pull out your sword.

Romeo
I won't turn. I have done nothing wrong to you

Mercutio
Such a defeat is demeaning and bad. We should make use of our swords. *He releases his sword* You dog, Tybalt, are you going to stand?

Tybalt
What do you want?

Mercutio
You cut. I want your life. The say you cats have many lives.

Mercutio and Tybalt fight

Romeo
Releases his sword Stop, Tybalt! Stop you good Mercutio!

Romeo tries to separate them. Tybalt stabs Mercutio and runs away

Mercutio
I am hurt. A curse should fall on all our families

Benvolio
What, are you hurt?

Mercutio
Yes. He has just scratched me, but it's big.

Romeo
Be strong my friend, it is not a big wound

Mercutio

It is not as deep as a well, neither is it as open as a church door. But still, it will cause damage. Maybe I won't even reach tomorrow before I die. My time has come. A curse should fall on all the two families. But I still don't believe that that dog, mouse, rat, cat, can stab me and kill me. That monkey fights like he mastered that art by reading mathematics books. Why did you come between us, Romeo? Had you not blocked me, I could not have been stabbed. A curse should fall on all the two families. Soon I will be food for worms. You two families are completely cursed.

Exit Mercutio and Benvolio

Romeo
Juliet, your beauty has made me weak like a woman.

Enter Benvolio

Benvolio
Romeo, Mercutio has passed away.

Enter Tybalt

Romeo
The one alive is the victor – when Mercutio has been killed there is no need now to feel pity towards anybody. My anger should guide me. Tybalt you can now call me a bad person as you said earlier. The spirit of Mercutio is hovering above us, waiting that you should go together to heaven. Whether it is you or me that does not matter.

They fight. Tybalt falls and dies

Benvolio
Romeo, let's run away. Some people are coming and Tybalt is dead. Don't just stand there. The priest will pronounce judgement that you should be killed once they get you. Run!

Romeo
I have a lucky misfortune

Exit Romeo. Enter Montague, Lady Montague, Capulet, Lady Capulet and the Prince.

Prince
Where are these evil people who started this fight?

Benvolio
Allow me your honour to explain what has happened. That one lying there is Tybalt, who has been killed because he killed your brave relative Mercutio. And Tybalt has been killed by Romeo.

Lady Capulet

Tybalt? Son of my uncle – my goodness! Prince there should be justice. Romeo has killed Tybalt – Romeo should be killed.

Prince
Because of what Romeo has done, he is banished from Verona.

They exit

ACT 3 SCENE 2
Enter Juliet

Juliet
The sun should set so that the night should come quickly! When the night comes, when everybody is snoring, Romeo and I will be tight cuddling and nobody will know. Come night, come Romeo! You are like a light that is coming in the middle of the night. When I die the Lord should turn Romeo into the leader of stars and your face, it will turn to be like stars, then it will make the night to be so light. Then the day should come earlier and people will forget about the sun because of the light stars of your face. The house of love, but I have not yet entered, today I am not happy, I'm feeling like a child always waiting for tomorrow, going on holiday and waiting for new clothes.

Nurse enters with a rope

Why are not looking happy?

Nurse
Today is a grief day, he's dead, he's dead, he's dead. Oo Tybalt he was my friend, number one, oo Tybalt he was polite, he was a respected person, I would like to me to be the first person to die.

Juliet
You said what had happened so far, you said Romeo and Tybalt both killed? Tybalt was my cousin and I loved him. Romeo was my husband and I loved him too.

Nurse
Tybalt's dead and Romeo banished from this city. Romeo killed Tybalt and the punishment is to be banished.

Juliet
You said the fist of the hand of Romeo is the one who bleeds the blood of Tybalt.

Nurse
Yes, it's his.
We cannot trust men every one is a liar. Men are bad people, shame on Romeo.

Juliet

You want me to say something bad about my husband? My husband who would say good things about you. If me a wife for 3 hours should be saying something bad about you, I think my cousin was in the wrong, he wanted to kill my husband, I want to cry. I will cry happily because my Romeo is alive, but not because Tybalt is dead. Tybalt is dead and Romeo has been banished? That's a big story, not these others. Being banished is something that saddens me the most, than the death of 10 Tybalts.
Nurse, where is my father and my mother.

Nurse
They are weeping the death of Tybalt.
Are you going to weep with them? Should I come with you?

Juliet
Lets go downstairs.
Nurse, I'm going to sleep in my marriage room. Only death and not Romeo will take away my virginity.

Nurse
Go to your room, I will look for Romeo and I will tell him to come and comfort you. I know where he is. Listen, your Romeo will come tonight, I'll find him. I think he's hiding in a certain room at Fr Lawrence's place.

Juliet
Giving the nurse a ring
Please go until you find him, and give him this ring. Tell him to come here so we bid each other farewell.
They exit

ACT 3 SCENE 3
Enter Romeo then enter Fr Lawrence

Romeo
Father, how is it, what's the judgement by the prince?

Fr Lawrence
He has not been too hard with you. You are not going to die, but you have been banished from this city.

Romeo
Banished! Feel sorry for me and tell me that he has said that I should be killed. It is better to die than to be banished. Please don't tell me about banishment.

Fr Lawrence
From today you have been banished from Verona, I don't see that as a big story because the world is big.

Romeo
Death and purgatory is better than to be banished from Verona.

Fr Lawrence
Wrong. I've never seen a young man so disrespectful and ungrateful as you. Judgement for your deed is death, but the prince has felt sorry for you, instead has just banished you. He has been so kind with you hear so, be grateful.

Romeo
He has treated me unkindly, he hasn't felt pity for me. Verona is my heaven because Juliet is here. Cat, dog, mouse and any other animal here in Verona will be able to see Juliet, but Romeo won't be able to. So you are saying banishment and not death? Didn't you have poison or a sharp knife or any other weapon, which you could have used to kill me with fast.

Fr Lawrence
I'm protecting you so that you don't think a lot about the word banishment. This protection is in what we call 'philosophy'. Philosophy will comfort you even though you have been banished

A knock

Someone is knocking – hide, Romeo.

Nurse
[*off stage*] allow me to come in I have come from mother Juliet

Fr Lawrence
opening the door you are welcome

enter Nurse

Nurse
Father, tell me, where is Romeo?

Fr Lawrence
He is hiding down here, crying.

Nurse
These people are the same, even Juliet keeps on crying. It's pathetic. Sad. Just like Romeo, she has slept and is talking talking in her sleep and then waking up. Stand up, stand up.

Romeo
Nurse!

Nurse
Yes bwana? Death does not choose, it will find us all.

Romeo

Were you talking about Juliet? How is she? And what is she saying about me? Does she look upon me as a murderer? What is she doing? And what is she saying about our love?

Nurse
She is not saying anything, abwana. She keeps on crying. She falls on her bed and then wakes up, then calls the name of Tybalt, then Romeo, then she falls again.

[*Romeo releases his sword*]

Fr Lawrence
Wait, don't do things with a lost hope. I thought you were wiser than this. You have killed Tybalt, and you want to kill yourself? Don't you know that if you want to kill yourself then you are also killing your wife who is not one body with you? Juliet is alive. Don't forget that they wanted to kill you because of Juliet. Be happy that you are still alive. Tybalt wanted to be alive, but you have killed Tybalt. Be happy that you have a life. That is why the judge never said that you should be killed, but that you should be banished. Be happy. Your life is full of blessings. The full happiness has not started yet but it is coming. But just like a noisy girl in class, you are just worrying about everything, about how unlucky you are and about your loved one. Listen. People who behave in the way you are doing, die a cruel death. Go. Meet your loved one as you agreed during your marriage. Climb and get into her bedroom and comfort her. But get out of there quickly before the watchmen are in their places. Then run to Manchua where you will stay until that time when everybody will know that you and Juliet are a family. Maybe when these two families know about that, they will be united. We will ask the priest to forgive you. That will be the time of great happiness than this sad time when you have to go. Come here Nurse, pass my regards to Mother Juliet and tell her that she should do whatever she could do to make sure that everybody sleeps earlier at her place. With what has happened, they will indeed want to sleep earlier because they are full of sadness. Romeo will come.

Nurse
I wish I could spend the whole night here listening to your wisdom. Learned people! I'm impressed [to Romeo] I will tell the madam that you will come.

Romeo
Tell her. And tell her that I am ready to face her anger.

Nurse
Here's a ring, she said I should give it to you. I must hurry, it's dark.

She gives the ring to Romeo. Exit Nurse

Romeo
Now I am feeling better

Fr Lawrence
Now you can go. Goodnight.

They exit.

ACT 3 SCENE 4
Enter Capulet, Lady Capulet and Paris

Capulet
Things have gone haywire, sir. We didn't find time find to talk to her daughter so that you should get married. Listen. She loved her cousin Tybalt too much in the same way I also loved Tybalt.

Paris
These sad times are not good times to talk about love. Mother, goodnight. Pass my regards to your daughter.

Lady Capulet
I will do that. I will also ask her tomorrow about what she thinks on this issue of having a wedding with you. She has locked herself in tonight because she is full of grief.

Capulet
Bwana Paris I will talk with her with all my energy so that she accepts your love. She will do anything that I will say. She will do anything, and probably many other things too. Mother, meet her before you go to sleep. Tell her about the love that my son Paris has for her. Tell her, listen to me – Wednesday – wait – what's the day today?

Paris
Monday my Lord

Capulet
Monday? Wednesday is too near. We should say Thursday. Thursday is the day I will tell her that you and her will get married. Will you be prepared? Maybe we shouldn't hurry up things. The party should not involve many people. Maybe invite two of our friends or only one.

Paris
I wish if Thursday was tomorrow.

Capulet
All right, go. We will meet on Thursday. [to Lady Capulet] meet Juliet before you go to sleep. Tell her about this wedding day. [to Paris] go well, my Lord. I must go and sleep.

Exit

ACT 3 SCENE 5
Enter Romeo and Juliet. They dance

Juliet
It's morning. That's all, start off and go.

Romeo
There is more light coming in and there is more pain coming into our hearts

Enter Nurse

Nurse
Madam,

Juliet
Yes Nurse?

Nurse
Your mother is coming to your room. It's morning, be careful.

Exit Nurse

Juliet
Window: light is coming in. Life is coming out.

Romeo
I'm going. Kiss me for the last time. I must go down.

They kiss and Romeo goes down

Juliet
I don't know how I am, I can predict about bad things. The way you are looking down there, you look like a corpse in the grave. Maybe I'm becoming blind, but you look pale.

Romeo
I'm going

Exit Romeo.
Enter Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet
What is wrong, Juliet?

Juliet
I am not fine

Lady Capulet
Are you going to cry over the death of your cousin forever? We will revenge, don't worry. Don't cry. I will send someone to Mantua where that rebel is hiding. Our person will put poison in Romeo's drink, and Romeo will meet Tybalt in the grave.

Once that happens, I'm sure you will be happy. But now I've brought you good news, my daughter.

Juliet
Grief is there when someone is sick. At a funeral that's where there are stories. What is the story?

Lady Capulet
Listen my daughter. At the holy pulpit of Peter, Thursday morning a brave man, young, honourable Paris will make you a happy wife.

Juliet
Please tell father I am not ready to get married. And if I am going to get married, I swear it will be with Romeo, my husband whom you know I hate, not Paris. That's the story.

Lady Capulet
Here comes your father. Tell him yourself, and see how he is going to react when he hears what you are saying.

Enter Capulet and Nurse

Capulet
When the sun sets dew falls but on this day of the death of the son of my uncle what fell was not dew, but rain. How is it my wife? Have you told her?

Lady Capulet
Yes I've told her, but she is refusing. She says thanks but no thanks. This stupid girl, she would just die and get married with her grave.

Capulet
Wait, my wife. I can't understand. How is that possible? She is refusing? Is she ever grateful? Is she not happy getting married to such a person? Doesn't' she know that these are her blessings? Doesn't she know that she is not the right one but she is just lucky to get married to such an honourable man

Juliet refuses by shaking her head

Capulet
What is that? If you have smoked weed, you useless lizard, go to hell!

Lady Capulet
Shameful! Are you angry?

Juliet
Father, I fall before your knees, begging you – allow me to say one thing.

Capulet

No way you useless girl! Let me tell you: go to church on Thursday. If not, never ever look me in the eye again. Don't speak, don't answer me.

Lady Capulet
Your anger is too much.

Capulet
She's making me angry. Think about it. I don't know how to joke. Thursday is coming. Put your hand on your heart and listen to my advice. If you show good behaviour as my daughter, I will marry you to my friend. But if you don't want to listen to me as my daughter, I won't care whether you become a beggar or you lack food, or you die in some trenches. I swear from deep my heart I won't allow you to come here again and I'll never do anything for you. Believe in what I am saying. Think about it. I will never say these words again.

Exit Capulet

Juliet
No mother, don't chase me away

Lady Capulet
Don't talk with me, because there is nothing I can say. Do what pleases you, because now I am tired of you

Exit Lady Capulet

Juliet
Nurse, what should we do so that this wedding does not happen?

Nurse
Let me say this. I look at it that you'd be happy in this second marriage more than in the first one. Even if you won't be happy in the second marriage, all the same the first marriage is over. Even if Romeo should be as good as Paris, he is not staying here. So you can't be happy together in the same way as you would be with Paris.

Juliet
Is what you're saying coming from deep down in your heart

Nurse
Yes it's coming from deep down in my heart as well as deep down in my life. If that is not so, then let me be a cursed person.

Juliet
You have comforted me a lot. Go and tell my mother that I am gone. I have made my father become angry with me. As such I am going to Fr Lawrence's confessional to ask for forgiveness of my sins.

Nurse
All right, that's a good story.

Exit Nurse

Juliet
I will go to the priest, and I will listen to what he would say. If everything fails, I have the power to cut short my life and die.

Exit Juliet

ACT 4 SCENE 1
Enter Fr Lawrence and Paris

Fr Lawrence
You have said it is Thursday? It is too near.

Paris
It is my in-law to be, Mr. Capulet who wants it like that. So I don't want to delay him.

Fr Lawrence
So you say you don't know the thoughts of the lady? That's trouble. I'm not happy with it.

Paris
The lady is weeping so much about the death of Tybalt, that is why I have not talked with her about love. Love won't be possible if someone is weeping.

Enter Juliet

Paris
I am happy to meet you, my wife

Juliet
Maybe once we get married, that's when you will all me 'my wife', but not at this time.

Paris
Not 'maybe', it is this Thursday and it is not far

Juliet
I don't know, because it's only God who knows everything.

Fr Lawrence
True.

Paris
Have you come to confess?

Juliet

If I say yes, it will be like I'm confessing to you.

Paris
I feel sorry for you. Your whole face has lines of tears.

Juliet
Do you have space so we could meet?

Fr Lawrence
We could meet right now, my child. *To Paris* may you give us some space?

Paris
I cannot come in between Juliet's confessions. I will wake you up Thursday morning [kisses her on the cheek] stay well. I leave you with this kiss

Exit Paris

Juliet
I can't think anymore. If it was a disease, I would say it's incurable. There is nothing that anybody can do to help!

Fr Lawrence
Juliet, I know everything that has happened

Juliet
I know that he wants to marry me – don't tell that to me, unless you know of a way that I will make this wedding fail, or not take place. [*shows a knife*] I will end this problem right now with this knife. God joined my heart to that of Romeo and you officiated our wedding

Fr Lawrence
Wait, my child. I see some hope. I see that you are brave enough to the point of killing yourself so that you don't marry Paris. That means you can do what I'm about to tell you so that you end this problem in your hands. If you are ready, tell me so that I tell you what you need to do to end this problem.

Juliet
I cannot marry Paris, even though you say I must fall off a high cliff but I can manage to make myself faithful to my loved one.

Fr Laurence
Let's do this: Return home happily. Tell them that you will marry Paris. Tomorrow is Wednesday. Make sure you are alone tomorrow night. Never let the nurse in your room (*Shows her some medicine*) Once on your bed, get these medicines mix them with beer and drink. You will feel cold. Then your throat will stop breathing. Your body will become cold. You will stop breathing. Your lips and your cheeks will turn pale, and your eyes will close. You will not move and your body will be just like that of a corpse. You will be like that for forty – two hours, then you will wake up from a deep slumber. That means the bride will think you are dead when he

comes to pick you up for the marriage ceremony. As per custom they will dress you in your best clothes, put you in a coffin then take you to the Capulet's graveyard. I will let Romio know of our plan. He will come here and both of us will wait up to until you wake up. Then he will take you to Mantua. This plan will assist you escape from what is about to happen. This will only be possible if you won't change your mind or if you won't be afraid to the extent of foiling the whole plan.

Juliet
Give me the medicine.

Fr Laurence
Now go. Be brave and do not be hesitant. I will send a letter to Romeo to Mantua through a priest

Juliet
Stay well father

They exit in different directions

ACT 4 SCENE 2
Enter Capulet, Lady Capulet and Nurse

Capulet
(*To Nurse*) What? Juliet has gone to meet Friar Laurence?

Nurse
Yes Bwana

Capulet
May be he will assist her. She is very rude this naughty girl

Enter Juliet

Capulet
Where have you been my stubborn daughter?

Juliet
I went somewhere where I have been told that it is a sin not to listen to what your father says. *She kneels down*

Capulet
That is how things should be. Let me now meet Paris

Juliet
Nurse, come with me to my wardrobe

Capulet
Nurse, go with her. We will have her wedding tomorrow

They exit

ACT 4 SCENE 3
Enter Juliet and Nurse

Juliet
These are indeed good clothes. Tonight, please nurse, let me be alone

Exit Nurse

Juliet
I am going. Only the Lord knows when we will meet again. Alright, here is the medicine. What will I do if they don't work? Will I still get married tomorrow? No, this knife here will do its job. Knife sleep here (*She puts down the knife*) What if, may be the priest wants to kill me? May be he doesn't want to be put to shame once people discover that he weds me to another man when he already wedded me to Romio? I am now afraid that the medicine might be poison. No, may be its not poison, he is a holy and honest person. But what will happen if Romeo doesn't come to rescue me from the grave where I will be? This is dangerous. Will I not suffocate for luck of air? There is no enough air to breathe in the grave. Wont I suffocate as a result if Romeo doesn't come? Romeo, Romeo here is a drink, I am drinking for you.
A song is sung

ACT 4 SCENE 4

Nurse
Madam! Ooh No! ooh No! No! Juliet has passed away!, ooh noo! Cursed be the day when I was born! Madam! Boss!

Enter Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet
Ooh nooo! My only daughter! Ooh noo! I had my faith in her! Wake up! I will go with you!

Enter Capulet

Capulet
You are lying! I will check for myself. Ooo no! her body is cold, blood is not flowing, her knees are hard. She has been dead for a while

Nurse
Bad day!

Lady Capulet
Painful times

Capulet
Death which has taken her to make me cry, has now tied my tongue, I won't speak
Enter Friar Laurence, Paris and Singers

Fr Laurence
Is the bride ready to go to church?

Lady Capulet
A day of misfortune, a day of sadness, a bad day today!

Nurse
What a painful, most painfull and unfortunate day this is!

Paris
Ooh no my love! There is no need for me to stay alive

Capulet
My daughter, my life not my daughter, is gone, Ooh noo! My daughter is gone. She is going to be buried. I will never be happy again.

Friar Laurence
Dry your tears and put flowers on the remains. As per custom, take the body to church. As per our tradition it is necessary to weep but the truth is that we should all be happy that she has now gone to heaven.

Capulet
All the things we prepared for the wedding party will now be used during the funeral ceremony.

They all exit

ACT 5 SCENE 1
Enter Romeo and Balthazar

Romeo
Have you brought news from Verona? How about Juliet?

Balthazar
I saw her lying in her family grave and I immediately rushed here to tell you

Romeo
Is that true? I defy you stars that predict of good fortunes! You know where I stay. Get for me a paper, pen and a horse. I will return to Verona this very night. Leave me alone and just do what I have asked you to do. Did the friar give you any letter for me?

Balthazar
No boss

Romeo
It doesn't matter. Go

Exit Balthazar

Romeo
Juliet, I will lie with you tonight. I remember of a seller of medicine that stays close by. Here is his house. Where are you?

Enter Apothecary

Apothecary
Who calls me so loud?

Romeo
Come here old man. I know that money is now difficult to come by. Take this four thousand kwacha. I need poison that kills fast, the one which when one takes, one dies immediately. *(He gives out the cash to the apothecary while taking the medicine)* I will take this medicine, this is medicine not poison, to Juliet's graveyard. That is where I will put them into use.

They exit

ACT 5 SCENE 2
Enter Friar John and Friar Laurence

Friar Laurence
Friar John. Are you already back from Mantua? What did Romeo say?

Friar John
I went to meet my friend, also a priest so we could travel together. He was here in Verona visiting the sick. We meet health personnel who thought we were all coming from visiting the sick suffering from this highly communicable disease. They put us under quarantine. As a result, I did not go to Mantua.

Friar Laurence
Then who has delivered the letter to Romeo?

Friar John
It was not delivered. Here it is *(he gives the letter to friar Laurence)*

Friar Laurence
Bad luck!

Exit Friar John

Friar Laurence
I need to go to the graveyard alone. After three hours, Juliet will wake up. Once she finds out that Romeo does not know of our plan, she will be very angry with me. I

will send another letter to Mantua though. I will hide Juliet up to until Romeo comes. But this alive corpse! She is all-alone in the graveyard of the dead.

Exit Friar Laurence

ACT 5 SCENE 3
Enter Paris, his servant with a torch

Enter Romeo who then gives a letter to Balthazar

Paris
Give me the torch. Go and be alone somewhere. Switch off the torch so that I should not be visible. *(To Romeo)* Leave the evil doings that you are doing you from the Montagu's or else you will die

Romeo
Let me die then.

Romeo and Paris fight

Paris
(He falls) Ooh! I am dying! If you are merciful, open the grave and bury me with Juliet

Paris dies

Romeo
It is Paris, the one who was supposed to marry Juliet. Was it not said so? Or I am just dreaming?

Romeo *opens the grave to see Juliet inside*

Grave? Juliet is sleeping in it. Ooh! My loved one you are still so beautiful. I will rest here forever. I will forget all the misfortunes I have encountered. Eyes, see for the last time. Arms hug for the last time, Lips, ooh! You are the doors of breath. Kiss for the last time my promise I have made with death *(Romeo kisses Juliet and then brings out the poison)* Come you bitter poison, come you evil one. You driver of the lost ones, let us make a ship hit a rock. In the name of the one I love *(Romeo drinks the poison)* The medicine seller spoke the truth, these are indeed good medicines. Let me die while kissing her.

Romeo dies

Enter Friar Laurence carrying a torch, metal bar and a shovel

Friar Laurence
Holy Francis! Help me! Who's there?

Balthazar

I am a friend, I know you very well. Romeo…

Friar Laurence
Romeo is pale, who is this one? Even Paris? Paris is covered in blood. When have these dreadful things happen?

Juliet wakes up

Juliet
Father, where is my husband?

Noise is heard

Friar Laurence
We must escape now. I will make you a nun.

Juliet
No, I won't come with you. I will remain here.

Exit Friar Laurence

Juliet
What is this? It's a gourd in the hands of my loved one? It seems he has died after taking poison. He has taken all without leaving some for me. I will kiss your lips. May be some portions of the poison are still there so that I die with kissing the poison. ***(She kisses Romeo)*** Your lips still have some heat. I must hurry. Here is the knife. My body will be your place. You should be stained while inside my body. Me I should die. *(She stabs herself with Romeo's sword and she dies)*

Enter Prince and his servants

Prince
What crimes are these that happen during the night like this that bring us out of our blankets?

Enter Capulet and Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet
Some in the streets have been shouting "Romeo." Other, "Juliet." While some others, "Paris." All rushing to our graveyard.

Enter Montague

Montague
My Lord, my wife has passed away during the night. She has died of grief because of the banishment of Romeo. What is it that is remaining of me, an old person? *(He notices Romeo's body)*

Prince

Bring forth the suspects.

Friar Laurence
I will make the story short because my days on this earth are numbered. Romeo, who is lying down there was Juliet's husband. And Juliet lying down here was Romeo's wife. I blessed their marriage on the day Tybalt died. Romeo was banished because of the death of Tybalt. Juliet was full of grief because of Romeo's banishment. To end her grief, you parents decided to marry her to Paris. She came to me confused and requested me to assist her so that her second marriage should not happen. She told me that she would commit suicide if I was not going to assist her. I gave her sleeping pills which I make myself through the wisdom I have. The medicine worked as they should and she indeed appeared to be dead. After that I wrote a letter to Romeo, asking him to come so that together we take out the body of Juliet at the time when the effects of medicine in her body are about to end . Unfortunately, the one I sent, Friar John failed to deliver the letter. Yester day night he handed back the letter to me. I came to take her out of the Capulet's grave to hide her in my house up to until when Romeo and I communicate. But when I arrived here, a few minutes before Juliet could be awake, I found Romeo and Paris already dead. When she woke up, I asked her to come home with me and endure the pain of the death of her loved one patiently. But I run away quickly because of the noise that was coming closer. She was very much troubled in thought and I believe she has killed herself.

Balthazar
I told my boss about Juliet's death. When He heard of it he rushed from Mantua to here to the graveyard on a horse. *(Shows the letter)* At dawn, he gave me this letter that I have to deliver to his father.

Prince
Bring the letter here, so that we should read it. *(He gets the letter from Balthazar and silently peruses through it)* This letter says exactly as what the friar has said. It talks about their love and about Juliet's death. Do you now see what has happened because of the hatred that is between you Capulet and Montague? The Lord has used love to kill your hatred. Because I did not intervene when your hatred was starting, the Lord has punished me too. My relatives have died too. We all have been punished.

Capulet
Eish! My uncle Montague, give me your hand. This hand is the dowry for my daughter. I will not ask you to pay me anything else than this.

Montague
I want to add more. I will make a gold statue of Juliet. There will never be an honest and faithful girl like Juliet

Prince
We have brought peace in the middle of sadness this morning. Even the sun is feeling sorry hence failing to rise. Let us go back to our homes, where we will

continue discussing this story. Some will be forgiven, others will be punished. I have never heard of such a sad story than this one of Romeo and Juliet.
The end

Appendix F - *Romio ndi Julieti* Post Production Interview with SR3 Luwinga Secondary School, 8 April 2016.

AB How old are you and are you studying Romeo and Juliet at school?

Respondent 1 (Female) This is my first time as I'm in form 1.

Respondent 2 (Female) I'm in form 4. Actually the play and the book of Romeo and Juliet are just the same its cool.

AB Did you like watching it in Chichewa?

R1 That's what I like. It was very cool. I forgot. You are very cool

AB Tell me a few things you liked about it?

R1 I kind of like watching movies, tattoos. Here at school I like chatting with friends. Here at this school we are having this class. It makes me to have an experience of doing anything. That's what I always do.

AB Did it help you understand the play?

R1 Yes yes.

AB Did you like watching it in Chichewa? Did that make it easier or more difficult?

R2 Easy to understand because some of our friends do not understand English or only for the production of exams.

AB Was there anything of the production that you did not enjoy?

R2 May be. Everything was just fine.

R1 Both of them died at the end. I wasn't happy.

AB You wanted them to carry on fighting. Laughter. Wanted the drama to continue.

R1 Yes yes.

AB You have just joined us. Is there anything you would like to say about what you felt about the performance? Did you like it or did you not like it?

Respondent 3 (Female) The performance was very good. I liked it very much.

AB How was watching a performance of Shakespeare in Chichewa?

R3 Kind of our language. Some of the words we didn't even know what they mean but now we know what they mean. I think when exams come I don't think we are

going to fail. Laughs. I don't think will have special problems because we have already seen those activities.

AB So you think it will help you with exams?

R1 Yes I do.

R3 It was very cool.

AB Thank you for your time. Thank you for coming.

Appendix G – *Romio ndi Julieti* Post Production Interview with UR1 Mzuzu University, 8 April 2016.

AB I'm just speaking to one of the members of the audience this evening at Mzuzu University after the production of Romeo and Juliet. May I just have your thoughts about the production please?

UR1 OK. The production is just too nice. The only thing I can say is this is very important for Malawi as a country cos its addressing more issues concerning our culture and on the same guise I can say it is depicting much of the Romeo and Juliet but in the sense of some very important issues concerning this country. I can say there are some very important issues like the battle for (unclear) the exposing the effects of the early marriages which happen in this kind of local culture. This can improve as we can see the Juliet who is being forced into marriage by her parents, we can see that she is nine (?) which means this kind of early marriage is somehow afforded and we can see this kind of Romeo and Juliet is also bringing to light much co-existence in the society whereby you can see in the terms of challenges, people are coming to mourn each other whereby we can see the Tybalt, the Romeo dead. This is also the same thing which happens here in Malawi just because people believe in co-existence, we believe in the power of unity whereby when somebody challenges, more especially the first thing in a funeral rite they come together, they mourn together in the same way they can do with a wedding.in the way they are trying to wed Juliet to Paris I saw they had prepared a feast where they should enjoy themselves. And we can see some of the issues like, I can see where by we are having this kind of party whereby the guys from Montague side and like gate crashing the party for this Capulet. This is most common in our Malawian culture more especially Africa. Somebody can just join a party uninvited, we can see people, yeah. So this is also similar where umm, I can say in Chichewa, this kind of culture is common but it's got a negative side whereby we can see the people, peoples enemies' they can grow in some kind of culture. We can also learn from this kind of enemy we can try to solve an enemy by this kind of marriage by Romeo and Juliet is being used to solve the enemy which is there standing between their families. So, we can say at the very end of this kind of play that the Montague and the Capulet they are coming together just because of this kind of an enemy so it is interesting. As a poet and also as a dramatist I really enjoyed this kind of one but in, one thing I can say I think that the guys from Leeds University, they are doing a much job, this will not only improve the arts in this kind of dramatist people but it also try to improve the culture which is there in this kind of country where by when we are watching this kind of play, when we are like reading this kind of book, Romeo and Juliet in Chichewa more people will try to catch such kinds of poems which can be applied to our culture so that we can have an improved and better? Cultural (next word unclear). I really enjoyed it but I can just add something on the aspect of costume whereby I can just say the costume its self is just interesting but you can just more especially bring it

to more Malawian culture dressing where by as we are playing as we are exposing the culture of Malawian's at the same point we should have a such kind of interest in bringing a Malawian dressing, we have different dressing here in Malawi like the Mianda (sp) we have some cloth in Chichewa we have the Cholundo such thing which can bring more life to this kind of culture. So it was really interesting, I really enjoyed it and I encourage them to find much in proving this kind of thing this, Romeo and Juliet. Thank you very much.

AB Thank you.

Appendix H – *Romio ndi Julieti* Post Production Interview with VR 1,2, and 3

Chingalire Village, 9 April 2016.

AB I just wanted to see what you thought of the performance. Could you translate?

Translator *translates all of the question asked into Chichewa and translates the answers back into English.* They say it was very nice.

AB Excellent. What did you like about it?

Translator Ok, basically what they are saying is they are secondary school students so they are learning *Romeo and Juliet* in English but in some areas they were finding it hard to understand, but now in Chichewa now they could understand the whole play. So they have really benefitted a lot from it.

AB I'm very pleased. Is there anything that they did not like about it?

Translator He is saying that most of the play was good but the scene where Romeo went to the grave he wanted to kill himself, Balthazar was supposed to be controlling Romeo not to kill himselves but in the play it seems Balthazar just watching Romeo alone kill himself and he some times Romeo threatened to kill Balthazar 'if you stay here I'll kill you so you better go' so that wasn't captured in this.

Translator What did you want to say? Audience member responds in Chichewa. Ok, what he is trying to say is that the scene where Romeo is trying to buy the medicine to kill himself in the actual play, Romeo and Juliet, the English one, it seems Romeo as he was trying to get the medicine from the apothecary, the apothecary is refusing out of fear, I think out of the law, I don't know yeah, so, but it seems the way of you acted it the apothecary just gave it easily yeah so Paris (*Chichewa conversation*)

AB Any other comments?

Translator Ok, they are taking about Juliet, Juliet and the nurse. In the actual play they are very active characters, we know Juliet is someone who is energetic in trying to talk about love, the same way about nurse. The nurse is known to be someone who is very energetic the way they have seen it, some how, the nurse and Juliet they are somehow a bit slow in energy so I'm guessing in casting next time, these characters should show much more energy than they did it today but, umm (switched to Chichewa) so these are the percentage they feel that the play was good 80%, 75% so that just means that seriously they have liked the play and most importantly because it has helped to compliment an understanding of the play they are learning in classes.

AB Wonderful. Does anyone else want to make any comments?

Audience member: I saw you were keeping some characters like Abraham and Sampson in this play.

Translator He is complaining about the missing of some actors.

AB Unfortunately the real play would run at about 4 hours which is too long if you are traveling so it had to be cut, sorry! May be when we get the money we can do the bigger play.

General recap from Translator

AB Can you say just one sentence as to how this is going to help you in class?

Translator

Audience member 1 According to my suggestion I think it is easy to write an essay now.

Audience member 2 I myself it will help me we take the image of these characters so that we may come out with good essays.

Audience member 3 for all the process it think it can help us describe much more about the play and teach our other friends.

AB Great, do teach your other friends. Zikomo.

Appendix I – *Romio ndi Julieti* Post Production Interview with Tybalt (played by Vitumbeko Kumwenda, 'VK'), Balthazar (as cast, Wakisa Kalinga 'WK') and Fr. Lawrence (Alfred Njikho, 'AN'). Jane Plastow ('JP'). Chingalire Village, 9 April 2016.

Jane Plastow (JP)
Vitumbeko (V)
Wakis (W)
Alfred Njeko (AN)

JP So, this is interviews with…please just introduce yourselves gentlemen.

V Vitumbeko 4th year student. Mzuzu University.

JP And you were playing?

V I was playing Tybalt.

W I am Wakisa. a 2nd year student at Mzuzu University. I was taking a number of roles. I was taking Peter, Balthasar, Gregory.

JP Brilliant. Oh and we have? Can you just introduce yourself for the camera?

AN Alright. I am Alfred Njeko. I am a level 4 student at Mzuzu University, doing bachelor of Arts education, and I am the president of Mzuzu University Arts Group.

JP And you were playing?

AN Friar Laurence.

JP Brilliant. Thank you gentlemen. So, let's start with today. How was this compared to any other experience you've had. Anyone?

AN Alright, if I may start. This was quite an extraordinary experience because in my experience at Mzuzu University with MUTAG. We've never travelled to any cultural centre, or a setting whereby we would meet just community, the community to expose to them a story they might have heard of or not and to see the audience love our production the way they did or the way I saw it, it was really really nice and it made me as an actor, to think, wow, maybe we need not to just take these plays every play to maybe a particular place where there is a stage for a conventional theatre performance but we need to explore other alternatives to go in societies where people could really appreciate productions to do with their culture.

JP Where you surprised at all, to maybe one of the other interviewees, at the response you got from the villagers. Do you think they really understood it, how did you think it went?

W Yeah, in my view, Romeo and Juliet being a story that is widely known in Malawi, being a story that is taught in schools, in secondary schools that is, I think that the feedback was quite interesting. Knowing that I've had an inspiration on somebody. Ok, I've inspired some minds, which what times maybe link what we've performed here with the questions they might have during exams and the like.

JP So what feedback did you get from anyone? What did they say to you?

W Ok, I think I will talk about, mostly I will talk about the students who are learning Romeo & Juliet as a subject, in English courses, in English that is in secondary schools I think the feedback was quite good. And they really enjoyed it and they were really following it. I think that will help them, ok for that matter most of the students in secondary schools, and I myself am one of them who at secondary school find it difficult to understand English, Shakespearean English.

JP English students do as well [laugh].

V On what my friend has just said here, yeah the feedback I got from some of the audience especially the school students is that this experience, you know them watching the play, it has helped them to really understand the play, Romeo & Juliet, because as we all know that Shakespearean English is difficult for most learners to understand, so as bringing the production in Chichewa to the students it has made them today understand the play what it is all about and also appreciate the artistic value of the play.

JP Yeah, I wanted to ask you about the Chichewa. So I know usually in Malawi, serious plays are in English and comedies are in Chichewa, huh? If you think about it that's slightly odd isn't it?

V [Shrug] Sure.

JP So, what did it make you think about doing Shakespeare in Chichewa? I mean would you now be tempted maybe to translate something else into Chichewa, would you carry on wanting to do plays in English? How do you feel about the experience from that language point of view?

V I think for me, as an actor, the experience of acting a Chichewa play I think is extraordinary and is something that I have never done before, this is my first time. And as a matter of fact I think I would say I feel more, more liberated to act in Chichewa than in English.

JP Well it's your language [laughs].

V Yeah, because it takes me to the typical everyday experience as a Malawian as, you have just said that, it's my language and most of the times I speak Chichewa and English is only spoken in offices or whatever. So to me it is so fantastic that…

JP Yeah do you find, maybe to the other two of you, do you find it was easier to kind of find a way into a character when you were speaking in Chichewa than if you were using English, or not?

AN That would be a bit debatable. We're doing a Shakespearean play and had it been that we were doing it in Shakespearean writing, in English, it is very difficult to articulate some of the ways that Shakespeare wrote. But all in all as an actor, what you look at is not the language you are beginning with, what you look at is the character that you are asked to act out on stage, or anywhere else.

JP So do you think it makes a difference whether you are asked to act a character in Chichewa or in English? Is one easier or does it make no difference for you?

AN I don't think there is one easier, maybe for the audience to watch maybe it would be easier for them to follow because of the cultural concepts and all. But for an actor, er, I will speak for myself, I always take up a chance or a challenge to act out any role.

JP OK. You got any thoughts about the language and acting and how you feel as an actor?

W Yeah sure. I think acting in Chichewa I think I can also say this is my first time to perform in Chichewa and I think it was quite, it was…I mean it gave me that energy. Of course, the way the audience responded to what I was doing to some extent gave me that energy to say, ok, I think I can, I think I can act out some qualities to this character, that is regarding to how the audience were responding. So I think to me acting in Chichewa was an interesting experience.

JP Yeah. No I mean just so you know I work in many different countries in Africa and I think it's very weird for me that here in Malawi you put serious plays on in English, because the language the people speak is Chichewa or Yao, or whatever. In most other African countries I know these days people put on theatre in their own language. This is a kind of colonial hangover from my evil ancestors, I would argue. [Laughs] So I would say my challenge to you would be to actually maybe some of you write some stuff or translate some stuff, because you can definitely get to a wider audience, can't you, in Chichewa? What about then, compared to as a society, if you are putting on a play and then working with Amy, what things struck you as kind of interesting, difficult, different in the kind of process…I know it was more intense than the way you normally work…

V The production with Amy?

JP Yeah.

V Oh right.

JP But in terms of actual strategies for putting on a play, for making it work, what interested you, what did you disagree with, or anything?

V Myself, working with Amy was an amazing experience, cos like I've been acting in MUTAG for, er, I think now….I don't know since when but it has been a long time and I've been working with the same directors and so I was used to them and Amy came in as a stranger you know, as a "stranger", so being directed by Amy has also shown me how different directors work. Like, yeah obviously she has got her own style and what I love the most in her style is how she prepared us, like we had 2 active days. The first one we were told to freestyle the play, then the second active day it was us know sticking to script but speaking very fast, like fast-forward kind of thing. So I feel like those two active days to me, they are the ones that struck me the most.

JP How did that help you? As an actor how did that help you?

V Ok, as an actor the first experience I think it made me to communicate to my fellow actors, to the guys who I am doing the acting with, because since it was freestyling I had to pay attention to what he or she was saying so I could respond in the right manner. So I think it improved our communication and also it made me to bond with the character more, because like I was like what would Tybalt say to this. So I bonded more with the character. And then the second activity I think it just made me to, it brought the energy in me because I was speaking very fast but I was trying, at the same time I was trying to stick to the script. So I think it taught me to [?] with the script and everything. So those are the two things that struck me most.

JP Ok, anything else from either of you guys?

W Sure, whenever you're working with a new director and you're passionate in anything, theatre included, it's either an extraordinary experience or a hectic experience. For me it was an extraordinary experience because we worked as a team and as actors we were always heard. We had two weeks to prepare. Such a difficult production to come up with in so little time provided and with a director, Amy Bonsall, being so open to actors, strict in some way, but open to say no you're not supposed to do that, but if an actor suggests that this suits the cultural experience in Malawi, the director could take that up and maybe try and bond it with whatever she'd prepared for the production.

JP So would you say it was more of a kind of group production than maybe sometimes you work?

W No it wasn't, most of it wasn't more like a group production.

JP So, I'm trying to get my finger on what was different for you in the way that she was directing.

W Oh, the way that she was directing? What was different is it was new, we could do some things that we've never done before like, like my colleague pointed out the first [?] and stuff but which was very very very important to our production because it helped us a lot, such as the warmups. Normally we would just get to the production: 'We're here guys, hey let's perform, open the gates', but she was in some ways different because she was very much focussing on actors' energies, concentration and so she would bring up these concentration activities and stuff.

JP Ok. And you, what did you take that you might use you know in future acting from this experience?

AN I think much has already been outlined, but I would just say that I think that I might also decide to perform in Chichewa, I would look forward to performing in Chichewa again.

JP Ah-ha!

AN And more and more as my colleague has already said the warmups and the like won't just be jumping into production and things.

JP Ok. Now I don't want to get into names or anything, but I know that some people found some of the things Amy was asking you to do quite challenging, because they were quite different, and some people were saying this isn't Malawian, or whatever. So I really wanted to ask you, do you think this was a Malawian production? Or an English production? Or, how would you put it in the middle, yeah? How would you see it?

AN Well, I wouldn't say really it was a British or Malawian production but it was a production meant for Malawian audience. I wouldn't say it was a production really Malawian, because of some things that we done. Talk of the Prince. The Prince in Malawi, it's a cultural entity, it is looked as a chief, the way the chief is looked at and, just as the friar was looked at in the play, that this is a godly man and respected, the Prince in Malawi, the chief that is, is also looked at in the same way that people kneel down and everything. And I would say we tried to make it much as Malawian as we could, but maybe due to time of our preparation I could put it in the middle.

JP And would you say that, in terms of the style of the production, how was it different from a traditional Malawian…I know there was discussion about this thing of actors coming on while others were going off that seemed to be something that maybe you're not so used to? Can you say anything that, maybe one of you two, that you know was really different for you?

V Different from what?

JP From the traditional, whatever that means, style that you're used to in terms of actually staging a play. You know, what staging conventions, you know what I mean?

Speaker Unclear I think this play, ok, like from my experience of acting, the productions that I have been involved, previously, I think this play did not have much props. Like for instance if it were another production, let's say at the party we could have maybe had some chairs, you know, here and there; have people drinking, you know, eating something. So I think in that perspective I think this play didn't have much props on stage, that's what I'd say. Perhaps maybe it's because they knew where exactly we would perform, you know this place. Yeah, so sure.

JP Ok. So would there be anything that…er…if you were giving, if I was Amy, what would you kind of want to say to her at the end, I mean you don't have to just say nice things but you know, but that you'll take away from this process that you think you might use yourselves in future.

AN Well if I was saying…this to Amy right?

JP Mm-hm.

AN Well, when actors um concerned both parties should be heard, quite a lot. We know a production needs to have a direction that we supposed to produce a play which is supposed to come out like this. But if there are like other concerns the director should sit down, maybe if there's no need to discuss that in the public maybe looking at the will not to wash the dirty linen in public. Have those concerned discuss that in private with the director so that in the end you come up with a very good, er, a production. That's the first thing. The second thing is when you are working with a new grouping all together perhaps you could go really deep into talking to those who are well-established in the group, ask them about who is better for what, then try and match with the same to come up with a very good production. All in all everything was just superb.

JP Ok. Yeah I mean it was good.

V What my friend has just said, I think that if Amy, if I were to speak to Amy what I would tell her is that, yeah I like her directing, she's a good director, but perhaps I think like what I observed during the early days of rehearsal she wasn't giving the actor the, I would say, the freedom, to express him or herself. Because like, you know, acting, you know it starts with the play, I mean the script, we say that the script is just the skeleton of the play, you don't have to do exactly what's in the script it's just a schedule to guide you, it's a guide. So it starts from there and then even the director is just supposed to give direction but not really to control so much the actor that he somehow tends to be acting in a robotic way to say that ok, this is exactly what Amy said then I should do the exact same thing without maybe having some additions of his own. So basically that's what I felt in the first days of rehearsal, the early days, but I think as time went, I think maybe that was because of lack of trust, because like it comes with working with a new group, so I think she didn't trust us that much, but with time, as time progressed I felt like she now came to trust us and I think all that was now I think was over.

JP Ok, that's great. Anything to add? What would you like to say to Amy about working with her?

W Yeah, I think as much as I can also say that I appreciate the way she directs plays. But at least I think I can also say the same point as my friends here, for example the points they just highlighted. So that being an actor I think you also have something you also have, like, some kind of an input you can put in that play. So you don't just have to be like as I think I also have to like just to control us like robot, you have to create, I think I can say, the character world. You have to be creative enough to say that, ok, as this script is saying this if I can do this I think this can work out so well, so that if he, I mean if she, will have to get views from actors and see if they are really productive and if they can work out, I think that can be good.

JP Excellent.

AN Well last [?] The productions from Amy, the production which we had together was nice in a way that as a director sometimes you know that actors are not really up to their best, but as a director you didn't know to lose trust in them. And she didn't lose…

W Trust in us.

AN Trust in us, she kept on encouraging us after every rehearsal, you know there's an intensity of time, she kept on telling us you can do better, we can do better. That's good for an actor because you feel good about yourself.

JP Absolutely.

W It gave us courage.

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