



President's report: 2019

2019 has been an exciting year for the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa. The highlight was the eleventh triennial congress, held in Cape Town from 11-18 May and comprising three events: the academic conference "Shakespeare and Social Justice: Scholarship and Performance in an Unequal World" and "Making Shakespeare", a platform for theatre makers (both held at the Fugard Theatre), as well as "my shakespeare", a workshop for teachers (at the Baxter Theatre). In total, some 120 delegates from across South Africa and around the world participated in these events.

Reports on and videos from Congress events are available on Shakespeare ZA as follows:

- "my shakespeare" report

<http://shakespeare.org.za/blog/2019/6/7/my-shakespeare-revisited>

- "my shakespeare" presentations (videos)

<http://shakespeare.org.za/blog/2019/8/13/my-shakespeare-presentations-available-online>

- "Making Shakespeare" report

<http://shakespeare.org.za/blog/2019/6/21/making-shakespeare>

- "Making Shakespeare" and "Shakespeare and Social Justice" videos

<http://shakespeare.org.za/blog/2019/7/30/video-ssosa-congress-events>

The latter link includes the conference keynote lecture by Professor Ayanna Thompson on "Shakespeare and Blackface" or, "Shakespeare and Unfreedom". Articles developed from papers presented at the conference will be published in a special volume of *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* and another journal or collected volume (to be confirmed). The Congress was made possible by generous funding from the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the National Research Foundation, CN&CO, Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), the University of Cape Town and the African Centre for the Study of the United States at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Subsequent to the Congress, a new executive committee was elected via electronic voting. This committee will serve until the next triennial congress in 2022: Chris Thurman (President), Sandra Young (Vice-President), Buhle Ngaba, Kseniya Filinova-Bruton, Lauren Bates, David Schalkwyk, Bernice Borain. Carol Leff will remain as Treasurer, and Laurence Wright will be a non-voting member of the executive.

The Society has renewed its partnership with the Shakespeare Schools Festival South Africa (SSF-SA) and has committed an annual sum of R20,000 from the Shakespeare Education Trust to supporting the work of the Festival over the next three years.

Shakespeare ZA continues to grow as an online platform for teachers, learners, theatre makers, scholars and members of the public. The site has been slightly restructured and its educational resources expanded. SSOSA and SSF-SA have together published seven translations of abridged playtexts into isiZulu, isiXhosa and Afrikaans, and these can be downloaded in PDF format. In addition, the first steps have been taken in growing a digital archive of translations of Shakespeare's plays into South African languages (obtaining permissions has proved quite a challenge, but the digitising process is now underway). Thanks are due to Marguerite de Waal and Kirsten Dey for their expert management of Shakespeare ZA and its related social media accounts.

SSOSA continues to promote the work of South African theatre makers engaging with Shakespeare's plays. In August, the Society supported a collaboration between the Centre for the Less Good Idea, the Kwasha! Company (Market Theatre Laboratory), JAM (Johannesburg Awakening Minds) and POPArt Theatre that resulted in the experimental production *Umsebenzi ka Bra Shakes*. Facilitator Hayleigh Evans has written about this for Shakespeare ZA: <http://shakespeare.org.za/blog/2019/9/10/what-a-piece-of-man-is-a-work>

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to SSOSA's partners and friends at CN&CO, whose support (financial and otherwise) has made possible much of what we have achieved this year.

Chris Thurman

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