Country Setting, all of which were conducted with the utmost integrity and achieved with characteristic modesty.

I shall continue to miss Simon's wit and wisdom and, especially, my visits to 'Oldestairs' where over lunch or a cup of tea we would discuss *NTQ* articles, or problems arising in my other work to which Simon would offer elegant solutions; and our regular telephone conversations, often initiated by my curiosity concerning a new play that Simon might be typesetting or a query connected to some obscure piece of theatrical minutiae that only he would know. Whatever the initial reason for visiting or talking to him, we always slipped into familiar patterns of conversation regarding not only the work in hand but perhaps also updates on our respective families, recollections of plays and performances we had both seen in the past, the state of the current political situation, and the best kind of gossip; and, although both of us had mellowed somewhat over the years, these encounters were always revitalizing, thought-provoking, and rewarding.

It was a joy and privilege to have known Simon, this exceptional and gracious Man of Kent whose generosity of spirit and humanity shone through all he attempted and achieved. Simon was a rare person of principle and vision, and he should be celebrated now, and in the years to come, for the immense contribution he has made to theatre scholarship and practice. And for those of us who knew Simon and have reason to be grateful to him either personally or professionally or both, we must ensure that his legacy is secure and passed on for the benefit of those who come after.

DOI: 10.1017/s0266464x20000378

Nick de Somogyi

Simon Trussler: Man of Letters

'Page sixteen, line five, to read: cap-F-*Fuck off* – vocative roman comma – ff- and fi-ligatures throughout – *you arse* – UK spelling a-*r*-s-*e* , delete hyphen, one word, *hole* . . .' I trust that Simon (no fan of the Lord Chamberlain) would forgive my breach of linguistic decorum in evoking here the sometimes surreal nature of our fortnightly exchanges over the last twenty-odd years. For it was – among other things – my job to proofread the plays that, as the presiding genius of Country Setting, he copy-edited and typeset for Faber & Faber, and then (what with the pressurized deadlines of looming opening nights) phone or (latterly) Skype my dictated corrigenda to him directly. Given recent trends in modern drama, it always amused me to imagine what some inadvertent eavesdropper would make of our deadpan recitals of such otherwise inexplicable profanity. ('Well spotted. Done. Fuck off, comma . . .')

It might have made a decent scene in a play, it struck me, whether as farcical misunderstanding (Alan Ayckbourn), ludicrous absurdity (Simon Gray), vague menace (Harold Pinter), or wry anecdote (Alan Bennett) – all of whose works (and countless more) Simon Trussler's exhaustive expertise has secured into posterity. Of course, our Skype sessions ranged wider than identifying the odd typo, and the breadth and depth of his knowledge of theatre comprised a constant education and delight. After all, when we worked together on Alan Bennett's *Allelujah!* (2018), it had been (and I had to check this) fully fifty-seven years since Simon had 'giggled over' Bennett's mock-sermon from *Beyond the Fringe* on the tube home.

That memory comes from Simon's touching tribute in these pages (*NTQ* 83, 2005) to Clive Barker, whose production of Shelagh Delaney's *The Lion in Love* ('One of the first plays I ever saw in London') opened at the Royal Court in December 1960. 'I already knew that the theatre was where I wanted to be,' Simon recalled of this time – which, in time, he was, following a contrived encounter ('on the same evening I saw my first-ever Brecht') with Clive himself, who became a lifelong friend, and with whom he later co-founded *New Theatre Quarterly*; having meanwhile built a career as a theatre critic for *Tribune* and embarked on a portfolio of critical

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X20000378 Published online by Cambridge University Press

accounts for Gollancz that included studies of Osborne, Wesker, and Pinter (1969–1973).

Or rather than 'critical accounts' (I hear him insist), each of these was, altogether less combatively, '*An* Assessment by Simon Trussler'. As he wrote – presciently – in 1973:

> Of all living playwrights, Pinter surely stands most in need of rescue from the ivory-towered seeker after literary schools, or the doctorate-mongering writer of dissertations and image-gathering articles. It is in the belief that his plays can be brought down to earth, even if that earth is occasionally subject to erratic laws of gravity, that I offer the present study.

The flyleaf of that book praises the 'detailed textual reference' of Simon's appraisal, which it describes as a 'hallmark' of his approach – as it was, of course, for Pinter himself, whose horror at a reprinted old text ('Did the printer go mad twice or was it a series of acts of deliberate sabotage?') led to Simon being tasked with re-setting the entire canon, culminating in the 900 pages of his *Short Plays* (Faber, 2018); and whose rhetorical question ('And whatever happened to that old-fashioned thing – the proofreader?') was indirectly responsible for my own recruitment to the surreal Skype-dictations I have described ('. . . *but I know bugger* – space, cancel hyphen, *all about* roman-not-italic *Bucco* . . .').

Not that Simon was ever overly forthcoming as regards his vast reservoir of knowledge – in retrospect, amazingly. It was, rather, in the odd comment he would let fall during our work – explaining, for example, why N.F. Simpson was known as 'Wally' ('He's so old, he was nicknamed after Mrs Simpson when he was at school!'), or in the occasional, quietly shattering reminiscence ('Well, when *I* interviewed Joe Orton . . .'). But the breadth and depth of his theatrical knowledge certainly made him the very best *listener* of how a line of printed dialogue might play: for all my struggles to construe and repunctuate an ostensibly meaningless sentence in proof, he would unerringly find the right intonation, constantly defending and revealing the author's intended effect. (His views on those playwrights who blithely decide to dispense with 'traditional' punctuation and typography altogether were another matter.) Nor did his training as a theatre critic lie fallow: having apparently seen it all (or at least read it), it was an endless education to hear his forensic identification of such-and-such a new play being a cross-breed of Plays *x*, *y*, and *z*; or – only last summer – his assurance that some bright sub-editor would supply the following strapline for a review of Simon Woods's *Hansard* at the National: 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Bottomley?' Needless to say, none did – none having the same ready wit as Simon Trussler, both of whose academic titles (proudly held) speak volumes, both as a 'Reader in Drama' at Goldsmiths and an 'Emeritus Professor' at Rose Bruford College – professing, by merit of his extensive expertise, his unparalleled reading of drama.

The academy and the theatre have always been wary allies (all that 'doctorate-mongering'), to which in his own career, and now legacy, Simon added a triple pillar: his comprehensive command of print. From pasting strips of corrections for *Theatre Quarterly* with Cow Gum, via the new technologies of 'phototypesetting', to the brave new world of QuarkXPress and beyond, Simon apprenticed himself to a mastery of drama publication in the digital age. And it was these multiple skills that brought about his brilliant partnership, from the 1970s, with Nick Hern, then a young postgraduate academic, whose own regular contributions to *Theatre Quarterly*, and later tenure at Methuen (under its Drama Editor, Geoffrey Strachan), fostered a superb series of compact editions of classic plays, keyed to their RSC productions at the Swan Theatre in Stratford, and edited and introduced by Simon.

Following the founding of Nick Hern Books, in 1988, he and Simon jointly pioneered the new opportunities presented by developing technologies. It suddenly became possible to produce the finished text of a play in time for its opening night, thus combining its programme with its definitively printed first edition, and Simon's expertise, as both the typesetter of its new plays, and the editor of its Drama Classics series, swiftly became indispensable to the evolution and ecology of the NHB brand. 'Typeset by Country Setting'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X20000378 Published online by Cambridge University Press

became a mark of quality, guaranteeing the same elegance to the books it prefaced as the punning wit of his company's name, situated on his beloved Kent coast.

April de Angelis, Bertolt Brecht, Caryl Churchill . . . William Wycherley, Yasmina Reza, Zinnie Harris – the span of Simon's hands-on knowledge of drama was close to encyclopaedic, as witness his *Cambridge Illustrated History of the Theatre* – which was published in 1994, shortly before we first met. Our introduction was via the auspices of Nick Hern's guiding hand, and beneath the overarching superstructure of Shakespeare's Globe, as part of a venture to extend to readers the same clarity and immediacy to largely unknown 'Jacobethan' plays as they had come to expect from literally brand-new plays at other London theatres. The 'Globe Quartos' series, which I edited (NHB, 1997–2002), did not precisely flourish (another case of 'doctorate-mongering', perhaps); but the collaboration that Nick, Simon, and I established from the embers of that project lasted for over twenty years, and included our 'Shakespeare Folios' series.

The introduction to one of those – our edition of *All's Well That Ends Well* – includes a detailed section by him about the intricacies of the play's original printing, in the 1623 First Folio. He's writing here about how a play's first setters (or 'compositors') had to go about estimating the amount of individual pieces of type they would need to set the text from its manuscript copy:

> To set what I have already written in this section, a compositor would have required 635 e's, 334 a's, just 53 v's – and a mere 8 x's. Elizabethan compositors had no computers to make such instant calculations, and would have had to consider emergency measures if the lost play *King Xerxes* had ever been printed (probably, and acceptably, he would have become just 'King' in speech-prefixes and stage-directions).

That last sentence says a great deal about Simon, I think. His thorough expertise in both sixteenth- and twenty-first-century technologies, for one thing. (A 'drop cap' at the beginning of a chapter is not called that because it 'drops *down*' to the next line on the page, I learned, but because it was a separate carved ornament that was 'dropped *in*' to the finished plate of set type; 'But I won't bore you with the abstrusities of Quark XPress . . .') For another, his command of theatre history: since you ask, the lost *King Xerxes* is indeed recorded as having been performed in 1575. Then there is the authoritative fellowship he grants ('probably, and *acceptably* . . .') to his seventeenth-century counterpart, and the way in which what begins by sounding like a joke – of *course* Xerxes would be called 'King' in the apparatus! – yields to a sturdier realization of the learned technical field of 'Textual Transmission'. (Oh, so is it down to a matter of availability of type that has determined why it is the frostily anonymous 'Duke', rather than the providentially conquering 'Vincentio', who presides over *Measure for Measure*?) All of which in turn resolves into the practical and human dimension of those anonymous technicians through whose hands these endlessly lasting stories have been preserved.

Simon's astonishing knowledge of the art of playwriting was always hands-on, the 'detailed textual reference' of his attention constant to the writers whose plays he sought to perfect, but never forgetful of the vast and inspiring collaborative effort that lay behind them; or of the minor, too often neglected voices that also deserve a hearing. As he wrote in the Preface to his *Faber Pocket Guide of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (2006), 'I did want the book to include as many writers as possible besides those whose places in the living theatre have long been secure.'

'It was a love of collecting small precious things,' recalled his daughter Anna, in her memorial address, of Simon's various archives (of beer, books, jazz . . .). And the same was true of his work. Simon minded his p's and q's, because he knew, I think, that the miniature is often substantial; and that a proper care and attention to detail – as to people – is the best way to live, work, and behave. The world has been denied Simon's apparently long-pondered history of playtext-publication (presumably extending from a shortage of upper-case x's to a plethora of italic fucks). But of course what is wonderful is that so many other of his thoughts, ideas,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X20000378 Published online by Cambridge University Press

decisions, and insights will indeed live on in the medium he at once served, honoured, and mastered: print.

The last play Simon Trussler typeset was, insufferably poignantly, Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt* – that enduring monument to the preservation of lost voices. As the living theatres have gone dark all over the world, it is to the printed page we must temporarily – as endlessly – turn. And for that, as for so much else: Thank you, Simon. And *Allelujah!* Close up to full point.

DOI: 10.1017/s0266464x2000038x

Tributes from Faber and Faber

Dinah Wood

As editorial director for drama at Faber and Faber, I worked closely with Simon Trussler for over sixteen years.

When I first joined the publishing house, a senior editor told me, 'You either sink here or you swim.' Had it not been for my 24-hour hotline to Simon Trussler, I would most certainly have sunk. Not only did he take me quietly and patiently through the publication process many times; he was also funny, even or perhaps particularly when exasperated by our younger writers' creative punctuation. And he relished a grammatical dilemma. Here's a typical email correspondence from 2004:

ME: Hello Simon and Happy New Year! I begin it with a quick question: should the word 'party' have a cap in the phrase 'vicious Tory party politics'?

SIMON: Yes, in Faber style, though the Guardian and others tend to make everything lower case these days. Also helps to distinguish the viciousness of the Tory Party generally from the vicious politics it employs at parties (probably Jeffrey Archer's). Though I suppose if the quote is indeed describing party politics (as in 'playing party politics with people's lives') then lower case would be correct . . . Ah, the niceties . . .

We were overwhelmed by the responses we received to Simon's death from our playwrights, extracts of which are detailed by my colleague below. Foremost amongst these, though, was one from Tom Stoppard. Simon died while in the process of completing the first proof of Tom's latest play, *Leopoldstadt*, and so, in his author's note at the front of the just-published book, Tom refers with gratitude to the 'many gentle ruminative hours' they had spent on the phone preparing texts for the printer.

There could be no greater tribute.

Steve King

We never met. Our offices are in London, while Simon was unflinchingly resident in Kent. There, he ran his typesetting company from Country Setting, Oldstairs, Deal – a beautiful address that sounds as though it promises magical assistance.

Despite this distance, he was always an essential member of the Faber Drama team. Rarely would a day go past without a phone call (or six) with him to tease out some riddle with the setting of a play. He could be witty or vexed, as the words on the page compelled him, but only ever because he truly cared. Through his work with Faber, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Methuen, Nick Hern Books, and others, Simon worked for decades as a barely glimpsed, yet vital servant of British drama publishing.

His subtle influence was keenly felt by the playwrights whose work he beautifully set for us, as well. The outpouring from them, a few excerpts of which I will share here, was heartfelt. Martin Crimp spoke for so many when he wrote to say, 'Although I never met Simon, I felt really close to him.'

David Greig, Zinnie Harris, Anthony Weigh all felt completely safe in his hands. Anthony notes: 'I always felt like I was working with a true craftsman. Holding the book in my hand, I'm minded that its existence owes as much to Simon as anyone.'

This trust went beyond mere respect. Several authors confessed a need to impress the 'enigmatic typesetter from Kent'. For the

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