



# SHAKESPEARE AND LATINIDAD

Edited by Trevor Boffone and Carla Della Gatta

# Shakespeare and Latinidad

Edited by Trevor Boffone and  
Carla Della Gatta

EDINBURGH  
University Press

Edinburgh University Press is one of the leading university presses in the UK. We publish academic books and journals in our selected subject areas across the humanities and social sciences, combining cutting-edge scholarship with high editorial and production values to produce academic works of lasting importance. For more information visit our website: [edinburghuniversitypress.com](http://edinburghuniversitypress.com)

© editorial matter and organisation Trevor Boffone and Carla Della Gatta, 2021

© the chapters their several authors, 2021

Edinburgh University Press Ltd  
The Tun – Holyrood Road  
12(2f) Jackson's Entry  
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ

Typeset in 10.5/13pt Bembo by  
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire,  
and printed and bound in Great Britain.

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4744 8848 8 (hardback)  
ISBN 978 1 4744 8850 1 (webready PDF)  
ISBN 978 1 4744 8851 8 (epub)

The right of Trevor Boffone and Carla Della Gatta to be identified as the Editors of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, and the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003 (SI No. 2498).

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Contributor Biographies</i>	x
Introduction: Shakespeare and Latinidad <i>Trevor Boffone and Carla Della Gatta</i>	1
<b>Part I: Shakespeare in the US Latinx Borderlands</b>	
1. Staging Shakespeare for Latinx Identity and Mexican Subjectivity: <i>Marqués: A Narco Macbeth</i> <i>Carla Della Gatta</i>	21
2. ¡O Romeo! Shakespeare on the Altar of Día de los Muertos <i>Olga Sanchez Saltveit</i>	38
3. Passion's Slave: Reminiscences on Latinx Shakespeares in Performance <i>Frankie J. Alvarez</i>	45
4. The Power of Borderlands Shakespeare: Seres Jaime Magaña's <i>The     Tragic Corrido of Romeo and Lupe</i> <i>Katherine Gillen and Adrianna M. Santos</i>	57
<b>Part II: Making Shakespeare Latinx</b>	
5. In a Shakespearean Key <i>Caridad Svich</i>	77

6. *Caliban's Island: Gender, Queerness and Latinidad in Theatre for Young Audiences* 83  
*Diana Burbano*
7. *La Voz de Shakespeare: Empowering Latinx Communities to Speak, Own and Embody the Text* 90  
*Cynthia Santos DeCure*
8. *Shakespeare's Ghosts: Staging Colonial Histories in New Mexico* 97  
*Marissa Greenberg*
9. *Diálogo: On Translation and Adaptation* 112  
*Henry Godinez and José Luis Valenzuela*
10. *Shakespeare Through the Latinx Voice* 117  
*Michelle Lopez-Rios*

### **Part III: Shakespeare in Latinx Classrooms and Communities**

11. *Shakespeare With, For and By Latinx Youth: Assumptions, Access and Assets* 125  
*Roxanne Schroeder-Arce*
12. *Celebrating Flippancy: Latinas in Miami Talk Back to Shakespeare* 136  
*James M. Sutton*
13. *Diálogo: On Making Shakespeare Relevant to Latinx Communities* 154  
*José Cruz González and David Lozano*
14. *Romeo y Julieta: A Spanish-Language Shakespeare in the Park* 160  
*Daphnie Sicre*
15. *Politics, Poetry and Popular Music: Remixing Neruda's Romeo y Julieta* 165  
*Jerry Ruiz*
16. *'Lleno de Tejanidad': Staging a Bilingual Comedy of Errors in Central Texas* 170  
*Joe Falocco*

### **Part IV: Translating Shakespeare in Ashland**

17. *Creating a Canon of Latinx Shakespeares: The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Play on!* 181  
*Trevor Boffone*

18. What I Learned from My Shakespeare Staycation with <i>Macbeth</i> and <i>Richard III</i> <i>Migdalia Cruz</i>	196
19. Willful Invisibility: Translating William Shakespeare's <i>The Reign of King Edward III</i> <i>Octavio Solis</i>	202
20. Diálogo: On Performing Shakespearean Characters as Latinx <i>Alejandra Escalante and Daniel José Molina</i>	217
21. What's with the Spanish, Dude? Identity Development, Language Acquisition and Shame while Coaching <i>La Comedia of Errors</i> <i>Micha Espinosa</i>	224
<i>Index</i>	234

## Creating a Canon of Latinx Shakespeares: The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's *Play on!*

*Trevor Boffone*

Oregon Shakespeare Festival's (OSF) 2019 production of *La Comedia of Errors*, a bilingual adaptation by Lydia G. Garcia and Bill Rauch, isn't like any other production of *The Comedy of Errors*, one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays.<sup>1</sup> Something is different. Here, the two sets of twins are divided by the US–Mexican border – Antipholus and Dromio of the United States, and Antifolo and Dromio of Mexico. Once grown up, the twins in Mexico head to the United States to find their missing brothers. *La Comedia* seamlessly interweaves English and Spanish throughout the play, with some scenes being performed entirely in Spanish. The heart of the play is about acceptance of different cultures and perspectives. In many ways, the play is an ideal tale to stage a conversation about empathy and difference, a topic just as important now as when the play was first staged. *La Comedia* exemplifies how OSF has become a site to reimagine the work of William Shakespeare, specifically positioning Ashland, Oregon, as an epicentre in the development of a growing canon of Shakespeare remixed through a Latinx aesthetic. These so-called Latinx Shakespeares take what was once old and make it new again, opening up conversations about how the Latinx community engages with the Eurocentricity of Shakespeare.

Garcia and Rauch adapted their text of *La Comedia of Errors* from a translation of Shakespeare's play created by Christina Anderson for OSF's *Play on!* project, a multi-year venture that saw thirty-six contemporary playwrights translate the Shakespeare canon into contemporary English. In an article about this project, dramaturgs and theatre scholars Martine Kei Green-Rogers and Alex N. Vermillion ask, 'What does it mean to make a "new" play out of an "old" play? Why do we need to make a new play out of an old one?' Moreover, they add, 'Has something changed about our society and the way we view the older version of this story that needs to be addressed for the story to resonate with contemporary audiences?'<sup>2</sup> Green-Rogers and Vermillion

argue that 'for the continued relevance and survival of some stories, those stories must be changed and updated as language shifts and evolves'.<sup>3</sup>

Given the United States' demographic shift into a definitively Latinx country, coupled with the increasing necessity to build a theatre ecosystem that appropriately reflects this diversity, it should come as no surprise that playwrights of colour have taken it on themselves to address gaps in theatre. One recurring source of contestation is Shakespeare. In her landmark article 'From *West Side Story* to *Hamlet*, *Prince of Cuba*: Shakespeare and Latinidad in the United States', theatre scholar Carla Della Gatta lays the foundation for a new field of Shakespearian studies: 'Latino Shakespeares', or a 'textual adaptation or a performance in which Shakespearian plays, plots, or characters are *made Latino*'.<sup>4</sup> Della Gatta defines Latinx Shakespeares in various ways, focusing on adaptations of the Shakespeare canon for predominantly Latinx audiences as well as 'outreach initiatives' by Anglo theatre-makers who have attempted to explore assimilation through a Latinx lens.<sup>5</sup> Della Gatta rightly points to *West Side Story* as the epitome of Latinx representation in theatre in the twentieth century. That the Bernstein, Robbins and Sondheim musical adapts *Romeo and Juliet* in such a way as to create ethnically different rival gangs only adds to the limitations the musical places on constructions of Latinidad in our popular imagination.<sup>6</sup>

In what follows, I linger on the work of Latinx playwrights as part of OSF's *Play on!* project and question what it means for Latinx playwrights to translate Shakespeare. *Play on!* translations expand the confines of what Latinx Shakespeares can be, effectively updating the dated *West Side Story*-driven narrative. Yet, this work is not without issues and boundaries of representation when it comes to something so canonically Eurocentric as Shakespeare. Put simply: what is gained and what is lost? And, what does it mean for a Latinx playwright to share authorship with Shakespeare? While Latinx playwrights have taken on the task of translating Shakespeare's plays into contemporary English, they are still limited by the rules that *Play on!* has imposed. And yet, the mere act of a Latinx playwright translating Shakespeare is powerful in and of itself. Shakespeare's work can be a source of equity, diversity and inclusion when it is produced through a Latinx theatre aesthetic. This is to say that equitable Shakespeare is more than 'to be or not to be'.

In *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America*, Shakespearian scholar Ayanna Thompson questions whether 'Shakespeare's plays need to be edited, appropriated, revised, updated, or rewritten to affirm racial equality and relevance'.<sup>7</sup> As this chapter contends, the Shakespearian canon must be remixed through a Latinx lens to create a more equitable canon that not only positions Latinx playwrights as equals to Shakespeare, but also actively pushes against the Eurocentricity of the American theatre, which has systematically disadvantaged Latinx theatre-makers and communities of colour.



## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Ashlandia

While Shakespeare certainly has his following and remains the most produced playwright in the world, there is no doubt that his work reinforces a traditional, Eurocentric branch of theatre. Besides the token few characters of colour such as Othello, most Shakespearian characters are read as ‘white’ even if the Bard’s plays can be performed successfully with colour-conscious casting. Moreover, when most theatre companies approach Shakespeare, they view his work through a lens of whiteness that often reinforces the typical racial power dynamics at work in the American theatre. To put it simply, many productions of Shakespeare don’t look like the United States in the twenty-first century.

Enter the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Bill Rauch. Founded in 1935 by Angus L. Bowmer, OSF is one of the oldest and largest non-profit theatre companies in the United States. With a season of eleven productions running on three stages from February to November, OSF is the largest repertory theatre in the world. In 2008, Rauch became artistic director, a moment that saw a cultural shift in the organisation.<sup>8</sup> Rauch’s efforts demonstrate that a theatre change-maker does not need to be Latinx to prompt – and participate in – Latinx Shakespeares. Rauch is from a community-collaborative background largely shaped by Cornerstone Theater Company, perhaps the pre-eminent US theatre specialising in grassroots, community-based collaboration. Theatre is a collaborative enterprise, and by embracing the values brought forth by Rauch, OSF has been able to shape the present and future of the American theatre.

But Rauch did not do this work alone. Rauch brought in Carmen Morgan and ArtEquity to evaluate the genetic make-up of the organisation. Through comprehensive, top-to-bottom equity, diversity and inclusion training under Morgan’s direction, OSF rewrote the narrative of American regional theatre. The company continues to cultivate new and innovative ways to support this work. For example, every doorway features a sign inviting *everyone* into the space. ‘WE WELCOME: all races and ethnicities, all religions, all countries, all gender identities, all sexual orientations, all abilities and disabilities, all spoken and signed languages. EVERYONE.’ This invitation is echoed on the company’s website: ‘OSF invites and welcomes everyone. We believe the inclusion of diverse people, ideas, cultures and traditions enriches both our insights into the work we present on stage and our relationships with each other. We are committed to diversity in all areas of our work and in our audiences.’ OSF’s Audience Development Manifesto points to the duality of its mission: to present the works of Shakespeare and to celebrate the rich diversity of the United States. As such, the manifesto explains, ‘we must pro-actively build an audience that reflects our nation’s diversity in its many

expressions'.<sup>9</sup> The manifesto rightly points to the realities that OSF faces in rural Oregon, naming racism and laying the groundwork for how to address it not only within the walls of OSF but also throughout the region.

Naturally, this work of equity, diversity and inclusion extends to theatre programming, including commissions, staged readings, new play development and full productions. After Rauch's arrival in Ashland, OSF began producing fewer plays by Shakespeare and instead shifted to theatre for marginalised groups as well as Shakespeare performance more broadly. While the name Oregon Shakespeare Festival conjures images of a season filled with the Bard's work, on average the company only produces three to four works by Shakespeare per season. This work is supplemented by plays from other classic writers, modern and contemporary works, and world premieres. Some of these new works directly engage with Shakespeare. The 2017 season, for example, saw Lee Hall's *Shakespeare in Love* and Randy Reinholz's *Off the Rails*, which is an adaptation of *Measure for Measure* focused on the 'Kill the Indian, and Save the Man' period. Moreover, OSF regularly programmes full productions of Latinx plays such as *The River Bride* by Marisela Treviño Orta (2016), *Mojada: A Mexican Medea* by Luis Alfaro (2017), *Destiny of Desire* by Karen Zacarías (2018) and *Mother Road* by Octavio Solis (2019).<sup>10</sup> As such, OSF positions contemporary playwrights – and specifically writers of colour – alongside Shakespeare. While Shakespeare may indeed be the main attraction, audiences ultimately engage with much more than the Bard's work when visiting Ashland.

Although full productions remain the crown jewel of any theatre company and the most visible public-facing programming, OSF has been laying the seeds of equity in ways that are not just seen on its stages. With respect to Latinx theatre, we can locate one seed in the Festival Latino, in Rauch's inaugural season. Festival Latino was a five-day tribute to Latinx culture (23–27 July 2008), which saw the company offer open captions in Spanish of OSF's productions in addition to cultural events sprinkled throughout the week. The OSF plaza was adorned with decorations evoking Latinx cultures and was home to free outdoor performances by local and regional Latinx artists as well as students from Guanajuato, Mexico, one of Ashland's sister cities.

Festival Latino ushered in a new era of inclusion at OSF that saw the company make a more intentional effort to engage with Latinx artists and audiences. After several years of producing CultureFest, an extension of the successes of Festival Latino, OSF continued this work with the Latinx Play Project (LxPP), a biennial weekend-long festival that began in 2013 and that has seen theatre-makers from across North America flock to Ashland.<sup>11</sup> The mission of LxPP is 'to develop and present new plays and provide a forum for artists, producers and audiences to discuss and advance Latinx theatre at OSF and nationwide'.<sup>12</sup> This work led to the Brown Swan Lab, an initiative

using resources from the LxPP and the Black Swan Lab to bring two cohorts of Latinx playwrights to Ashland to develop new work in a lab setting for two weeks.<sup>13</sup> Aside from hosting festivals and gatherings, OSF also brought in Luis Alfaro as its first playwright-in-residence. Between 2013 and 2019, and supported by funding from the Andrew S. Mellon Foundation, Alfaro served as a strategic liaison to strengthen OSF's engagement with Latinx communities and theatre artists. OSF produced Alfaro's *Medea* adaptation, *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* (2017), supported new work by the playwright through development and staged readings, commissioned him to translate for *Play on!* and backed his community engagement efforts to welcome audiences of colour to OSF in a more authentic way.

Needless to say, OSF has shown more of a commitment to supporting the work of Latinx theatre artists than have most regional theatres. That this work takes place in rural Oregon only adds to the importance of creating Latinx spaces in unlikely destinations. It's no coincidence that the Latinx theatre community often refers to Ashland as 'Ashlandia'.

### ***Play on!* Translating the Shakespeare Canon**

In addition to programming such as the American Revolutions Series, the Korean Stories Project, the Black Swan Lab and the Latinx Play Project, OSF has engaged diverse communities through its controversial *Play on!* project.<sup>14</sup> On 29 September 2015, the company launched *Play on!*, a thirty-nine-play, three-year project commissioning playwrights to translate the works of Shakespeare. In addition to supporting playwrights, the project has contracted dramaturgs, theatre professionals, advisers and other voices in the field to support the work. The project commissioned a playwright and a dramaturg for each play. *Play on!* was supported by a \$3.7 million grant from the Hitz Foundation and was led by Lue Morgan Douthit, director of literary development and dramaturgy at OSF. The project's initial three-year tenure at OSF was successful, leading the project's producing team to form a spin-off not-for-profit company, Play On Shakespeare, also based out of Ashland.

The mission of the project is 'to enhance the understanding of Shakespeare's plays in performance for theatre professionals, students and audiences by engaging with contemporary translations and adaptations'.<sup>15</sup> OSF sees *Play on!* as a way to translate Shakespeare's work into contemporary English, thus creating a new canon of companion pieces to the original texts and, thus, a fresh way for theatre-makers to engage with the Shakespeare canon. The company's goal is for these new plays to be performed, published, read, adapted for the stage and used as teaching tools. While the initiative was met with outcry in some circles, OSF maintains that these translations will not

replace the original canon. The original Shakespeare plays are not going away. They will remain front and centre in Ashland and beyond.

Aside from striving to make Shakespeare more accessible to a plurality of audiences, *Play on!* incorporates three core values from OSF: excellence, inclusion and stewardship. According to Rauch, 'We are striving for inclusion, not only in the gender and racial diversity of the artists involved, but in the entire project's purpose to provide more access to Shakespeare's work to the widest possible range of readers and listeners.'<sup>16</sup> Notably, of the playwrights commissioned, more than 50 per cent are women and more than 50 per cent are people of colour, thus bringing voices and perspectives that are often left out of mainstream American theatre, especially when it comes to the hyper-traditional world of Shakespeare. As Della Gatta notes in 'Shakespeare, Race and "Other" Englishes', the diversity factor cannot be ignored as it challenges 'dominant structures to recognise translation of Shakespeare into English, and people of colour as qualified translators'.<sup>17</sup> Speaking of *Play on!*, Douthit claims:

We began this project with a 'What if?'. There are differences between the early modern English of Shakespeare and contemporary English. What if we looked at these plays at the language level through the lens of dramatists? What would we learn about how they work? Would that help us understand them in a different way? 'Translate' is an inadequate word because it implies a word-for-word substitution, which isn't what we're doing. I'm going for something much more subtle.<sup>18</sup>

To help facilitate this work, OSF gave playwrights and dramaturgs two basic rules. First and foremost, each team had to retain the integrity of the original script. They could not cut or edit the script. Rather, they were charged with translating the play line by line, adapting the play to contemporary English as needed. Naturally, some language would need translating, and some would not. This decision was entirely up to the playwright and dramaturg. Second, playwrights had to be as rigorous with language as Shakespeare was. The playwright had to take into account the metre, metaphor, rhyme, rhythm, rhetoric, themes and character arcs of the original play, while also maintaining the setting, time period and any specific references. In this way, OSF has made it very clear that these translations are *not* adaptations. According to Green-Rogers and Vermillion, 'the goal of the project is to create companion texts to Shakespeare's plays that are meant to illuminate the original text while also standing on their own as pieces of new writing that may be performed'.<sup>19</sup>

Even so, the project announcement was met with a wave of criticism. Many people misunderstood its objectives, focusing on the word *translation* and fearing that *Play on!* would tarnish not only the works but also OSF's and

other companies' approach to producing Shakespeare. There was fear that these translations would replace the original canon – at least in Ashland. In an opinion piece in the *New York Times*, Shakespeare scholar James Shapiro claimed that the project set a 'disturbing precedent' that would potentially taint 'the only thing Shakespearean about his plays': the language.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, in the *Wall Street Journal*, linguist John McWhorter pointed to how cultural and lingual shifts negatively affect how audiences hear and, therefore, understand Shakespeare; McWhorter suggested that we 'embrace Shakespeare for real and let him speak to us' in contemporary English.<sup>21</sup> And in the *New Yorker*, literary historian Daniel Pollack-Pelzner placed *Play on!* within a historical context, noting how Shakespeare has been adapted and staged over the centuries. Needless to say, these varying opinions – all by Anglo men of a certain age – demonstrate the ways in which straying from the traditional Shakespeare canon can lead to controversy.

In her article 'Historicizing Shakesfear and Translating Shakespeare Anew', dramaturg Lezlie C. Cross analyses the 'Shakesfears' that have driven criticism of *Play on!*, situating them historically. As Cross proves, anxieties surrounding producing Shakespeare have been commonplace since the Restoration.<sup>22</sup> Despite claims from detractors, dramaturg Martine Kei Green-Rogers claims that Shakespeare did not intend to bewilder or bamboozle audiences through confusing and clever wordplay; rather, Shakespeare 'wrote of subjects familiar to the audiences of his time using both colloquial and very elevated language. The subject and language of his plays were *accessible* to all who attended the plays or could afford a copy of a quarto of his work.'<sup>23</sup> So why not create more accessible Shakespeare in the twenty-first century?

The Shakespeare canon is often polarising: people either love it or hate it. Admittedly, I loathed Shakespeare from the time I was forced to read *Romeo and Juliet* in the ninth grade until I saw a high school production of *Richard III* nearly two decades later in March 2017. *Richard III* changed me. Adapted and directed by Steward Savage at Carnegie Vanguard High School in Houston, this production encouraged me to see Shakespeare's work through a fresh lens. No longer did it seem inaccessible or 'boring', but it spoke to me in new ways that I never imagined possible. I saw it five times. In a fitting end to spring 2017, I made my first trip to OSF. My experiences of these two entities – Savage's *Richard III* and the reinvented OSF – opened my eyes in a way that the American regional theatre had not. Since then, I have been *open* to Shakespeare. All it took was one production to show me that Shakespeare didn't have to be the boring, difficult to understand text that I remembered. It could be something so much more. How could the experiences of Latinx audiences parallel my own journey with Shakespeare, through an engagement with the Bard's work as co-authored by Latinx playwrights?

## Latinx Translations of Shakespeare

Typically, when Shakespeare is produced, everyone *except* the playwright is involved. This is contrary to the majority of contemporary theatre-making, in which the playwright's voice is heard beyond the text. Even if the playwright is not involved in the production, the creative team can still draw on the playwright's notes, interviews and the like. *Play on!* is thus groundbreaking in that the project places playwrights at the centre of Shakespeare in a substantial way for the first time since the plays' own era. Eight of the thirty-nine translations were the work of Latinx playwright-translators, each paired with a dramaturg of their choosing: *All's Well That Ends Well* translated by Virginia Grise, dramaturgy by Ricardo Bracho;<sup>24</sup> *Coriolanus* translated by Sean San José, dramaturgy by Rob Melrose; *Cymbeline* translated by Andrea Thome, dramaturgy by John Dias; *Edward III* translated by Octavio Solis, dramaturgy by Kimberly Colburn; *Henry VIII* translated by Caridad Svich, dramaturgy by Julie Felise Durbiner; *Macbeth* and *Richard III* translated by Migdalia Cruz, dramaturgy by Ishia Bennison; and *Richard II* translated by Naomi Iizuka, dramaturgy by Joy Meads.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most powerful aspects of *Play on!* is embodied in how these eight translations situate Latinx playwrights and William Shakespeare as co-authors, with the Latinx name appearing side by side with that of the canonical figure. In other words, these Latinx Shakespeares position both authors as equal, a powerful act given the politics of contemporary US theatre, in which Shakespeare is the most produced playwright while Latinx playwrights remain undervalued. Even if Virginia Grise, say, faithfully translates *All's Well That Ends Well*, she still brings to the process a grassroots, Latinx theatre-making aesthetic, politic and sensibility that cannot be understated. Regardless of the content of the play or the play's textual and visual aesthetics, *Play on!* facilitates a politics of co-authorship and doubleness. This doubleness has redefined Shakespearean performance in the United States, as Della Gatta notes: 'if we do not talk about Latinos onstage, or why they are not onstage, or how Latino culture is being portrayed or being ignored, we are not talking about American Shakespearean performance'.<sup>26</sup>

The doubleness of the playwright credit is a matter of equity. We can see how this doubleness functions if we return to the production of *La Comedia of Errors* from OSF's 2019 season (not listed among the eight above because translator Christina Anderson is not Latinx, although adapter Lydia G. Garcia is). On OSF promotional materials, Garcia, Rauch and Anderson were given as much billing as Shakespeare himself. The difference is only name recognition and cultural capital. But by positioning these names alongside each other, OSF shifts the conversation away from whiteness and instead focuses on the relationship between language and power.

To take one example from among the eight Latinx-authored translations, Migdalia Cruz's journey translating *Macbeth* speaks to the ways in which even a playwright working centuries after Shakespeare, in a completely different sociopolitical landscape, in a country that didn't even exist at the time, and with a host of identity markers seemingly the polar opposite of the Bard, can find power in working alongside Shakespeare. Allow us to briefly examine Cruz's work with *Play on!* For Cruz, working on a play like *Macbeth* was strategic; Cruz felt the play was the closest to her own 'thematic sensibilities'. Cruz explains, 'I feel a kinship to the themes of this play: mourning, ambition, blood, supernatural intervention, murder, ghosts – and a strong female lead, not so common in Shakespeare's tragedies.' As she began to translate *Macbeth*, Cruz explains, 'As I unraveled the language and did my research about everything from bawdy terms to Elizabethan proverbs to Scottish royal history, I found I could change small things that clarified the plot and the more obscure language.'<sup>27</sup>

In line with the rules of *Play on!* translations, Cruz considered the original metre and rhythm of the work as well as the ways in which Shakespeare uses alliteration. Cruz explains, 'It still feels awkward to think about "changing Shakespeare," but I was determined to only change things that helped to clarify the journey of the characters. It is still Shakespeare, and the audience does still need to listen to his (and my) poetic language and make sense of it in both vocabulary and emotional sense.' Some changes were small, like 'palter' (which became 'deal false'), others more intricate, she says, 'where if I changed a word, then I needed to change the following rhyme so I could keep the rhyme or rhythm. It was definitely a rompecabeza, as we say in Spanish – "a head-breaker" or major puzzle.'<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious example of the ways in which Cruz brought her identity to the translation process lies in her use of Spanish. As a bilingual writer, Cruz is able to tap into multiple linguistic systems in addition to the different registers that Spanish and English allow. As far as Cruz's *Macbeth* is concerned, the playwright chose to use 'tú', the informal Spanish word to address people you are more familiar with, to replace dated English words such as 'Thee', 'Thy', 'Thou' and 'Thyself'. In her language notes, Cruz explains that 'tú' is 'how you address: servants, children, lovers & friends'. While this decision may seem minor, it is in fact a change that fundamentally alters the politics of the script. Regardless of the ethnicity of the actor cast in the role, they inevitably become a code-switching bilingual Spanish–English speaker, at least to a certain extent. Further, this choice potentially renders these characters Latinx, especially considering Migdalia Cruz's co-authorship. To gloss over the translation choices that Cruz made and blur the script's Latinidad would be to assume that all renditions of Latinx identities and cultures must be prominently featured in order for the play to be considered

Latinx. A Shakespearean translation with Spanish pronouns penned by a Latinx author is as much a Latinx play as *Zoot Suit*, *Anna in the Tropics* or *Water by the Spoonful*.

### ***La Comedia of Errors, Inclusion and Community***

In many ways, Bill Rauch's tenure at OSF was much like a game of chess in which strategic moves took place as the fabric of the organisation shifted towards meaningful equity, diversity and inclusion work. First, OSF transitioned from diversity initiatives to community outreach. Ultimately, projects such as *Play on!* helped OSF engage in equity that enabled true inclusion projects such as *La Comedia of Errors*. While each *Play on!* translation has had its own unique journey, *La Comedia* is singular in the ways in which it was used as a vehicle to build inclusion in the local community. As this section demonstrates, *La Comedia* featured a nuanced community engagement plan that utilised spaces at OSF and the surrounding Rogue Valley in addition to digital spaces. These efforts build on each other and push the boundaries of what a Latinx Shakespeares can be and how the Latinx theatre canon can be expanded in even the unlikeliest of settings.

While Rauch spearheaded the production, *La Comedia* featured a predominantly Latinx production team as well as an all-Latinx cast.<sup>29</sup> Even though Lydia G. Garcia is credited as adapting Christina Anderson's translation of *The Comedy of Errors*, Garcia's work is that of a co-author and, as such, merits discussion alongside the work of other Latinx playwrights involved with *Play on!* That OSF can feature such a Latinx-heavy cast, creative team and production team is a testament to the type of work that OSF has been doing to foreground inclusion since Rauch's arrival. His involvement is an important reminder that non-Latinx allies in predominantly white institutions can be key figures in pushing for equity and inclusion initiatives. It is very possible that without Rauch, OSF would not be at the forefront of equity, diversity and inclusion measures in the American regional theatre or in the field of Shakespeare performance. *La Comedia* is a fitting example of how this work can organically come together.

While the text and aesthetics of the performance are arguably the most forward-facing aspects of a Latinx Shakespearean production, *La Comedia* also expands our understanding of Latinx Shakespeares by foregrounding community engagement. Since *La Comedia* was always conceived of as a project for the community as much as a production in OSF's season, the organisation did things for *La Comedia* that are not the norm in Ashland. For instance, *La Comedia* had a press release and marketing materials in both languages. The webpage for the production was fully bilingual, with two columns running down the page, one in English and one in Spanish. In this way, promotion of



the show did not privilege one language over the other. Typically, on bilingual websites information in English appears first with the Spanish translation below, an act that prioritises English-speaking audiences and, as an extension, the values of both the production and the theatre company, values that reveal a non-inclusive bias. Because the languages were placed side by side, *La Comedia* offered equal access to potential English-speaking, Spanish-speaking and bilingual audience members, effectively sending a bold message that this production was for everyone.

Moreover, the production was positioned as both a show in the regular season at OSF and a community-hosted experience for the Rogue Valley and Latinx communities. Whereas typical OSF productions are housed in a single theatre on OSF's Ashland campus, the community-hosted experience is an off-site performance that travels around the Rogue Valley and is co-hosted by local organisations who have a meaningful relationship to specific groups of people – in this case, Latinx and Spanish-speaking peoples. The production is a one-act, ninety-minute adaptation that uses minimal props and costumes; there is no set, lights or recorded sound, making it highly stageable in a variety of performance spaces. OSF partnered with eighteen community organisations to enable deeper collaborations with different communities, and it created space for community members to exchange stories and continue a conversation about themes seen in the play. The production featured a team of Latinx community dramaturgs to facilitate these meaningful conversations before, during and after performances around the Rogue Valley.<sup>30</sup> Notably, these performances were all free and, thus, accessible to all regardless of financial means.

Unlike other OSF productions, *La Comedia* featured a special webpage laying out its community engagement work.<sup>31</sup> The community webpage features artwork specifically designed for this production. As the first thing one sees when opening the webpage, the leading visual serves a fundamental role in setting the tone for the production. The image features one large land mass, representing the original borders of Mexico before the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which saw the United States gain control of much of what is now the American Southwest. The Mexican flag wraps around the land mass on the right side of the image, demonstrating how this land was once and will always be native to peoples of Mexican descent. The US flag lies underneath Baja California as a reminder of the dual nationalities of the characters. The title of the play on the image is also positioned to invoke duality. 'La Comedia' appears above what is now the United States, and 'of Errors' sits alongside what is now Mexico. Finally, dashed lines represent the journey that the brothers in Mexico take to the United States to find their long-lost siblings. The map of their trip speaks to how even man-made borders ultimately cannot separate these Latinx families. Every aspect of the

website's art speaks to how the United States is as much a Latinx country as anything else: this land was once and will always be Mexican. As the popular saying goes, 'we didn't cross the border; the border crossed us'. And thus, places such as Ashland, Oregon, remain fundamental sites to perform Latinx identity, something that *La Comedia* highlights at every turn.

## Conclusion

In many ways, OSF was an ideal place for this work to originate, given the company's commitment to Latinx theatre over the last two decades. This commitment began with the Festival Latino, the Latinx Play Project and the Brown Swan Lab, and it has continued in the form of an increased commitment to producing the work of Latinx playwrights on OSF's three main stages, as evidenced in recent seasons with new works by Luis Alfaro, Marisela Treviño Orta, Octavio Solís and Karen Zacarías. *Play on!* transcended outreach and diversity initiatives by pushing the boundaries of what defines Latinx theatre, translation and adaptation. As such, this process is a model for other theatres and truly establishes a new ground for equity. This is to say that the movement stemming from 2008's Festival Latino has been outreach, the Latinx Play Project and Luis Alfaro's position as playwright-in-residence have been examples of diversity, and *Play on!*, finally, has ushered in a new era of equity.

According to Lezlie C. Cross, by democratising Shakespeare and making his work more accessible, *Play on!* 'wrests Shakespeare from the hands of the white male establishment with its inclusive array of playwrights and dramaturgs'. Moreover, Cross notes how centring a playwright of colour in a translated Shakespeare text presents the opportunity to bring new audiences to the theatre who might have traditionally eschewed Shakespeare.<sup>32</sup> So, I return to the central question guiding this chapter: What does it mean to have a Latinx playwright translate Shakespeare? First and foremost, commissioning a Latinx playwright to translate Shakespeare is empowering. Shakespeare is the pinnacle of privilege: white and male. When a non-Latinx theatre company's production of Shakespeare is an artistic and financial failure, the company will, oftentimes, continue to produce Shakespeare. When a non-Latinx theatre company's production of Luis Alfaro or Virginia Grise is an artistic and financial failure, the company places the blame on Latinx theatre and, ultimately, reduces future opportunities to engage with Latinx artists and communities of colour. Shakespeare has the privilege to fail; Latinx artists do not. In light of this dichotomy, by placing a Latinx playwright at the centre of a Shakespeare play, by granting Migdalia Cruz or Octavio Solís the chance to become a co-author with Shakespeare himself, *Play on!* destabilises the Shakespeare canon. While Virginia Grise's *All's Well That Ends Well* benefits from a recognisable title and Shakespeare's name, the work is still *hers*. It's a

Latinx play written by a Latinx playwright. It's a Latinx Shakespeares, and that's a powerful act of resistance.

## Notes

1. *La Comedia of Errors* ran 28 June to 26 October 2019 at OSF.
2. Martine Kei Green-Rogers and Alex N. Vermillion, 'A New Noble Kinsmen: The *Play On!* Project and Making New Plays Out of Old', *Theatre History Studies*, 36 (2017): 231.
3. Green-Rogers and Vermillion, 'A New Noble Kinsmen', 232.
4. Carla Della Gatta, 'From *West Side Story* to *Hamlet, Prince of Cuba*: Shakespeare and Latinidad in the United States', *Shakespeare Studies*, 44 (2016): 151.
5. Della Gatta, 'From *West Side Story* to *Hamlet, Prince of Cuba*', 151–2.
6. For more on *West Side Story* and the construction of Latinidad in US popular culture, see Brian Eugenio Herrera, *Latin Numbers: Playing Latino in Twentieth-Century U.S. Popular Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).
7. Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.
8. At the close of the 2019 season, Rauch left his position at OSF to become the inaugural artistic director of the Ronald O. Perelman Performing Arts Center at the World Trade Center in New York City.
9. 'Audience Development Manifesto', Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 2010. Available at [https://www.osfashland.org/-/media/pdf/Company/OSF\\_Audience\\_Development\\_-\\_Manifesto\\_2010.ashx?la=en&hash=E180F84483738EFEBFBCE6380749192FBCCD554C](https://www.osfashland.org/-/media/pdf/Company/OSF_Audience_Development_-_Manifesto_2010.ashx?la=en&hash=E180F84483738EFEBFBCE6380749192FBCCD554C) (last accessed 18 November 2020).
10. Nevertheless, as Della Gatta notes in 'From *West Side Story* to *Hamlet, Prince of Cuba*', when OSF stages Latinx Shakespeares, it does not produce other works written by Latinx playwrights in the same season: 'Plays written by or about Latinos are not mounted in the same year as Latino Shakespeares; the Hispanic/Latino diversity box is fulfilled by either one or the other' (155).
11. Latinx Play Project is supported by a generous grant from the WarnerMedia Foundation. For more on LxPP, see Trevor Boffone, 'The Latinx Play Project: Building a Movement in Ashland', *Theatre Times*, 10 May 2017. Available at <https://thetheatretimes.com/latinx-play-project-building-movement-ashland/> (last accessed 18 November 2020).
12. 'Latinx Play Project', Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 2019. Available at <https://www.osfashland.org/en/artistic/Latinx-play-project.aspx> (last accessed 18 November 2020).

13. The Black Swan Lab OSF invites actors and guest artists to incubate new work without performance pressures. The initiative was launched in 2009.
14. These initiatives began as a result of Bill Rauch's tenure.
15. 'Play On Shakespeare Mission', Play On Shakespeare. Available at <https://playonfestival.org/the-details/> (last accessed 18 November 2020). Notably, the initiative and the festival share the same mission statement.
16. Catherine Foster, 'Translating Shakespeare: The Play on! Project', *Prologue*, Spring 2017. Available at <https://www.osfashland.org/prologue/prologue-spring-2017/prologue-spring-17-play-on.aspx> (last accessed 18 November 2020).
17. Carla Della Gatta, 'Shakespeare, Race and "Other" Englishes: The Q Brothers' *Othello: The Remix*, *Shakespeare Survey*, 71 (2018): 75.
18. Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 'OSF Launches Three-Year Shakespeare Translation Commissioning Project', press release, 7 October 2015.
19. Green-Rogers and Vermillion, 'A New Noble Kinsmen', 234.
20. James Shapiro, 'Shakespeare in Modern English?', *New York Times*, 7 October 2015. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/07/opinion/shakespeare-in-modern-english.html> (last accessed 18 November 2020).
21. John H. McWhorter, 'A Facelift for Shakespeare', *Wall Street Journal*, 25 September 2015. Available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-facelift-for-shakespeare-1443194924> (last accessed 18 November 2020).
22. Lezlie C. Cross, 'Historicizing Shakesfear and Translating Shakespeare Anew', *Theatre History Studies*, 36 (2017): 212.
23. Green-Rogers and Vermillion, 'A New Noble Kinsmen', 233.
24. In an interview on the 50 Playwrights Project, Ricardo Bracho notes that he is dramaturging his 'enemy Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* for this cray experiment being run out of OSF'. So, if Bracho hates Shakespeare, then why dramaturg Grise's translation? Bracho adds, 'Vicki's is for a cast of black and brown actresses and keyed towards an audience of teenagers. As I hate Shakespeare but love black and brown women and teencentric tv like *Pretty Little Liars* and *Recovery Road*, I feel ideally suited for this dramaturgical task.' See Ricardo Bracho, interview by Trevor Boffone, 50 Playwrights Project, 2 May 2016. Available at <https://50playwrights.org/2016/05/02/ricardo-bracho/> (last accessed 18 November 2020).
25. In most cases, *Play on!* chose the playwright and the playwright chose the play.
26. Della Gatta, 'From *West Side Story* to *Hamlet*, *Prince of Cuba*', 155.
27. Qtd in Foster, 'Translating Shakespeare'.
28. *Ibid.*

29. The production team included Bill Rauch (director, adapter), Lydia G. Garcia (original Spanish translations), Christopher Acebo (scenic and costume designer), Grant Ruiz (composer), Catherine María Rodríguez (production dramaturg), Micha Espinosa (voice and text director), Antonio David Lyons (community producer), Alejandra Cisneros (community liaison), Derek Kolluri (associate director), U. Jonathan Toppo (fight director), Olsen Torres (production stage manager), Ray Gonzalez (production assistant) and Mark Anthony Vallejo (FAIR assistant director and choreographer). The cast included Armando Durán, Jeffrey King, Mark Murphey, Fidel Gomez, Tony Sancho, Amy Lizardo, Caro Zeller, Cedric Lamar, Catherine Castellanos, Meme García and Grant Ruiz.
30. Community dramaturgs included Martha Carrillo, Ana Cruz, Antonio Cruz, David Malfavon, Donna Malfavon, Michelle Malfavon, Nelly Malfavon, Nuvia Morales, Maria Mosqueda, Mercedes Ramirez, Reynaldo Ramirez and Marco Samano.
31. 'A Community Hosted Experience', Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Available at <https://www.osfashland.org/en/engage-and-learn/la-come-dia-community.aspx> (last accessed 18 November 2020).
32. Cross, 'Historicizing Shakesfear', 225.