

Simon Trussler Remembered

Simon Trussler, co-founder and co-editor of *New Theatre Quarterly* in 1985, the successor to *Theatre Quarterly* which he initiated in 1971, died in hospital in Kent on 30 December 2019 of a heart attack. He was seventy-seven. Not a sudden death, but one that the hospital staff thought might – just might – be averted, it came as a shock and a cause of deep grief, first to his family, and then to all who had worked with him or had otherwise been in contact with him. The tributes below to Simon's life and considerable achievements are by Nesta Jones, Nick de Somogyi, Dinah Wood, Steve King, and fellow editor of *NTQ* Maria Shevtsova, who has had the privilege of bringing them together in this issue of the journal. A life full of remarkable accomplishments – we raise a glass in Simon's honour.

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Nesta Jones

Simon Trussler: a Biography

I have known Simon since the late 1970s, when he was already firmly established as a key figure in theatre criticism, documentation, and taxonomy, and whom I regarded with a certain awe. At that time I was familiar with his books on John Arden, Edward Bond, Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker (co-authored with Glenda Leeming), and John Whiting; his contributions as a theatre critic in *Tribune* and the *Tulane Drama Review*, later *The Drama Review* (*TDR*, New York), and as radio critic to the *Listener* and *TV Today*; his editorship of *New English Dramatists* for Penguin; and as co-editor, with Charles Marowitz, of *Theatre at Work: Playwrights and Productions in the Modern British Theatre*, in which was recorded invaluable contemporary accounts of the work of major theatre practitioners such as Peter Brook, William Gaskill, and Joan Littlewood.

I learned later of Simon's early life in the 1940s and 1950s in the Weald of Kent, recollected by him several years ago in a vivid memoir, *The Hops and the Hopes*; his education first at Cranbrook School and then, having won a State Scholarship, at University College London, where he received a BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature, staying on to complete a Masters in English with a thesis on Henry Fielding. Unsurprisingly, he went on to edit *Burlesque Plays of the Eighteenth*

Century and Eighteenth Century Comedy, both for Oxford University Press (OUP), for which he also became Commissioning Editor of the Fourth Edition of *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, implementing his own scheme for extensive revision.

In 1971 Simon, with Roger Hudson and Catherine Itzin, founded *Theatre Quarterly* (*TQ*) as a co-ownership cooperative. In addition to publishing stimulating articles for ten years, the journal also provided a platform for a number of important initiatives. It spearheaded the campaign for improved provision of theatre information, including the publication of the first edition of the *Alternative Theatre Handbook*, a *Theatre-in-Education Dictionary*, and a range of other factual and bibliographical materials including the *World Guide to Performing Arts Periodicals*, *New Playwrights Directory*, *New Plays*, and two series – Theatre Facts and Theatre Checklist – to which Simon also contributed the single edition *David Edgar: Bibliography, Biography, Playography*. The catalogue of the exhibition *Bertolt Brecht in Britain*, held at the National Theatre in 1977, was jointly produced by its editors Nicholas Jacobs and Prudence Ohlsen, the Goethe Institute, London, and *TQ* Publications. It was a significant document that, with an introduction by John Willett, recorded and reflected on Brecht's growing influence on British theatre practice.

Moreover, as co-editor of *TQ*, Simon formed a Working Party for the foundation of a British Theatre Institute (BTI), following a symposium at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), and was a member of the Secretariat until the BTI was independently

constituted; this body secured an agreement from the then Minister of Arts for provision for space for theatre organizations, initially in Somerset House, subsequently leading to the housing of the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden. BTI publications included *A Classification for the Performing Arts* and the *Annual Bibliography of Theatre Studies*; and with *TQ* Simon published further works of documentation and taxonomy.

TQ also regenerated the British Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), hosting it from the journal's offices in Covent Garden; and it was here that I first encountered Simon during a meeting that was to lead to a joint project between the Centre and the Drama Department of Goldsmiths, University of London. I organized a small group of enthusiastic, resourceful, and intrepid students to undertake the fieldwork for a publication to improve access to and awareness of theatre in London, especially those venues on the Fringe. This was eventually published as *London Theatre* by London Transport, the British Centre of the ITI, and *TQ*. Apart from the romance of working with the Centre and *TQ* out of Covent Garden, I became acutely aware of Simon's forensic approach to research, of his diligence and capacity for sheer hard work, and the expertise with which he shaped and edited material; and I realized what an excellent addition he would be to the staff of the Drama Department at Goldsmiths. I discovered that he had secured academic employment early in his career at Enfield College of Technology and the Oxford Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies.

Simon later obtained a Visiting Lectureship in Dramatic Criticism for Tufts University undergraduate programme in London, and a position as Director of a course on British Theatre for the School of Continuing Education, New York University. These were followed by appointments in the Department of Arts Administration at City University, the Department of Dramatic Art, University of California, Santa Barbara, and the Drama Department of the University of Kent. At this time his teaching was complemented by his work on *TQ* and associated publications, his editorships of *Theatre International*, a bilingual

journal for the Paris ITI, and seven editions of the annual *Royal Shakespeare Company*, which provided critical and factual documentation of each season's productions from 1978 to 1985; and a critical 'Introduction' to Macmillan's *Twentieth-Century Drama*.

Before Simon entered academe more permanently, however, he co-founded in 1985 *New Theatre Quarterly* (*NTQ*) with his friend the actor, director, teacher, and facilitator Clive Barker, author of *Theatre Games*, whom he first met in 1962 over a pint in the bar of Unity Theatre. During the twenty years of their *NTQ* partnership the journal developed as an influential international forum for theatre scholars, practitioners, and researchers; and, in addition to co-editing, copy-editing, and typesetting each edition, Simon also contributed a considerable number of notable articles to the journal, ranging from observations on notions of Theatre Practice and Theatre Studies, commentaries on individual playwrights, considerations of popular theatre forms, and a personal reflection on his own work suitably titled 'Confessions of a Compulsive Editor'.

Fortunately, the opportunity arose a year after *NTQ* was launched to invite Simon to join the staff of Goldsmiths; and on this occasion I was to learn that his two distinguished academic referees were Professors Raymond Williams and Jan Kott, which said much about his own scholarly achievement to date as well as his regard for theirs. Simon swiftly established himself as one of the specialists in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama at the College and taught this area in the department with particular reference to Shakespeare. Concurrently, he provided also the commentaries for Methuen's student editions of *The Witch of Edmonton*, *The White Devil*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *The Malcontent*; authored *Shakespearean Concepts: a Dictionary of Terms and Conventions, Influences and Institutions, Themes, Ideas, and Genres in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, also for Methuen; and edited the Swan Theatre Plays for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) with full critical commentaries to each of the fourteen editions. Moreover, Simon's interest in twentieth-century drama was still evident as general editor of the

Methuen Writer-File series for which he provided an introduction to each of the thirty-five editions that featured a wide range of dramatists from Ibsen, Chekhov, and Strindberg through to Caryl Churchill, Athol Fugard, and David Hare.

In 1990 Simon was appointed Reader in Drama when Goldsmiths became a School of the University of London, and two more significant professional advancements followed in subsequent years related to skills acquired through earlier desktop publishing and his personal research and scholarship. In 1993 Simon founded Country Setting, specialists in theatrical editing and typography, initially to produce *NTQ* for Cambridge University Press but later undertaking production of all titles for the specialist publisher Nick Hern Books (NHB), all plays published by Faber and Faber, and selected editions for Methuen Drama, the Royal Court Theatre, and Birmingham Rep, involving close liaison with playwrights and oversight of theatrical titles; and he was also Associate Editor for NHB's Classic Drama series providing introductions and/or editing, for example, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Jonson's *The Alchemist* and *The Devil is an Ass*, and Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*.

During the previous years, Simon had been researching and writing *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Theatre*, which was finally published by CUP in 1994. This highly regarded seminal work was runner-up for the George Freedley Award of the Theatre Library Association, 1995, for 'an outstanding contribution to the literature of the theatre'. Moreover, ever the initiator, Simon was exploring the potential for electronic publication and became involved around this time with the *European Bibliography of Resources for English Studies*, of which he was the Advisory Editor for English Twentieth-Century Drama and Theatre, produced under the auspices of the European Society for the Study of English; and he wrote essays for the entries on 'Liturgical Drama', 'Melodrama', 'Oberammergau Passion Play', and 'Restoration Theatre' in *Encarta: World English Edition*, a Microsoft CD-ROM Encyclopedia.

It was at Goldsmiths that I got to know Simon well, first as a valued colleague and then a trusted friend. I became aware of his deep

affinity with the county of Kent and how he settled there to raise a young family in the village of Great Robhurst, near the village of Woodchurch, where, in addition to his scholarly pursuits, he developed exceptional skills at both brewing beer, a beverage of which he had a profound knowledge and enjoyment, and perhaps more surprisingly DIY. I remember phoning him at home one day to discover that he was not only setting questions on theatrical topics for BBC TV's *Mastermind* but also rewiring the house. He moved later to Kingsdown near the seaside town of Deal to a charming picturesque residence named 'Oldestairs', built in the early twentieth century by a theatrical impresario, situated on a road just off a shingled beach from which rose a cliff head offering, on a clear day, an excellent view of the French coastline. This was to become not only the new family home but also an ideal place for Simon to situate and develop Country Setting.

'Oldestairs', decorated mainly in the style of William Morris, was on three levels: parallel to the road was the middle one where the front garden was located and the main entrance, which led into a large hall with the sitting room, kitchen and dining balcony adjacent to it; above, on the upper level, were the bedrooms with balconies and views of the hills, cliffs, beach, and sea; but it was the lower level which held the most fascination. Here was Simon's office, replete with computers, printers, photocopier, filing cabinets, comfortable armchairs, small tables, and floor to ceiling bookshelves holding a remarkable archive – all of Country Setting's output, copies of Simon's authored and edited works, and his personal papers.

At the back an archway led into a library of books, scholarly journals, theatre magazines and ephemera that Simon had collected over the years. A large rear garden to the house with an extensive lawn, shrubs, trees, and a summer house could be seen through the windows of a small glass-panelled seating area furnished with well-used wingback chairs and side tables – a favourite spot where Simon would settle in the evening to read proofs and, no doubt, drink his favourite on-tap draught beer. I was aware, of course, that this whole basement area was an extremely busy

working environment where Simon spent long hours writing, editing, telephoning, and typesetting; but to me it was also a kind of idyll that represented intellectual curiosity and rigour, creativity and reflection in equal measure. I loved visiting this special place and on occasions when I was accompanied by a colleague, I delighted in showing them this cornucopia of theatrical treasures and a lifetime's literary achievement.

Simon left Goldsmiths in 1997, his departure heralding later in the year that of his close colleague Bill Naismith and mine – the three of us, although of different temperaments and backgrounds, were of the same age and outlook, and thus shared many historical, political, and cultural points of reference. Simon was greatly missed by his undergraduate and research degree students who were inspired by the breadth and depth of his knowledge, appreciative of his kind but firm approach, enjoyed his wry humour, and were thankful in various ways for his patience and compassion. Moreover, many young and more seasoned academics and researchers were indebted to him for his encouragement, mentorship, and the opportunities he provided in advising on and helping to place their work for publication. Simon, however, continued to co-edit *NTQ* with Clive Barker, producing at the end of the decade an edition containing an 'Annotated Contents and Author Index' of both *TQ* and *NTQ* from 1971 to 1999. In 2000 both of them were appointed Senior Research Fellows and later Professors of Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance (RBC), which associated their individual current and future work, and that of the journal, with the institution. Quite coincidentally I was appointed to the role of Head of Graduate Studies at RBC the following year, so our professional paths crossed again.

Simon's publications in 2001 were D. H. Lawrence's *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd and Other Plays*, which he edited, introduced, and annotated, for OUP; and the launch of a major initiative by NHB, The Shakespeare Folio series of parallel and modernized texts to which Simon was typographical consultant, with first offerings, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, and *Twelfth Night*, published during the year.

Clive Barker died in 2005 and Simon dedicated the subsequent edition of the journal to him, and has written movingly about their friendship and professional relationship in a forthcoming book about Barker's legacy. Simon had already invited Professor Maria Shevtsova to join *NTQ* in 2003 as co-editor, to which she fortunately had agreed; and, with her input, the journal continued to flourish, going from strength to strength. In 2006 Simon authored *The Faber Pocket Guide to Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*; and *Will's Will: the Last Wishes of William Shakespeare*, commissioned by the National Archive, was published in 2007.

Simon retired from RBC in 2011 and was awarded an Emeritus Professorship, after which he focused on *NTQ* and Country Setting. The last play-text he produced for Faber and Faber was Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt*. At the end of his Author's Note, Stoppard named Simon as the copy-editor of his most recent plays and revealed that 'We spent many gentle ruminative hours on the phone preparing texts for the printer' – a poignant and pertinent observation from one master of his craft acknowledging the importance and value of the other. Indeed the care and precision with which Simon meticulously laid out a text on the page was a masterclass in typography, demonstrating his deep understanding of the playwright's dramaturgy; providing an invaluable guide to actors, directors, and designers about the intention, shape, and rhythm of a scene; and underlining his concern to represent the work in its most perfect form in print.

This love of and respect for the English language is evident in his own writing, which seems to me to always flow with a particular style, eloquence, and clarity, whether he is conveying complex ideas, presenting an argument, defining character and action, describing an incident, or simply telling a joke. In his professional and social life Simon was always courteous and considerate, quiet of voice and with a lightness of touch that informed all his accomplishments. And yet his often self-effacing manner was combined with a powerful sense of purpose evidenced by the courage, drive, and tenacity required to deliver such ground-breaking projects as *TQ*, *NTQ*, and

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 'Oldstairs' 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.

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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

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’

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 'Vincenzio', 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,

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.

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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 viciousness of the Tory Party 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

ever-perceptive Alan Ayckbourn: 'He gave me the impression that my work was particularly important and exciting. An invaluable quality when dealing with vulnerable authors!'

He even inspired some writers in the taking up of their careers. American director and dramatist Neil LaBute shared:

It's quite possible that I've read the words of Simon Trussler more than those of Shakespeare. As a young man, I carried round a battered copy of his *Cambridge Illustrated History of British Theatre*, furiously re-reading his thoughts on people that I admired from afar; he made me not just want to be a part of the Theater but a part of the British theatrical tradition as well.

Bryony Lavery, Moira Buffini – so many – recall his swiftness, his canniness, his ability to 'turn a scrappy blueprint into something real'. And David Hare stressed how much he will miss him.

So it's not surprising that his passing was greeted with a kind of shock. Christopher Hampton wrote back immediately to say: 'I thought of Simon as indestructible, as a corollary of his extreme reliability and efficiency.'

Alongside the shock, there was a swell of gratitude too. As Frank McGuinness put it:

What pleasure to collaborate with a man who cared about the plays with an eye, and ear, to detail so acute and alert. Simon's wisdom shone through his work.

A first response on reading these messages – lamenting how close they felt to Simon, despite rarely having met – might be a sadness that these relationships were all conducted at a distance; an impulse that, in this separation, some opportunity was missed. Over the weeks since his death, though, I've come to appreciate how apt that distance was.

His relationship with me, and with these writers, was like his relationship with the hundreds of thousands of people who have read the plays he orchestrated for the page. He touched us from afar. And that relationship lives beyond him in those great works on which his fingerprint indelibly remains.

One writer, Timberlake Wertenbaker, captures what has rung through so clearly in all the messages we received:

Simon and I only met briefly, a long time ago, but I could say that I had an intimate relationship with him, and he with me. Or at least with my grammar. He was so respectful of writers, but not beyond reminding us that not everyone reads the way that actors do.

I felt he was a friend, someone to be trusted. A truly nice man, in the truest sense of that word. I also came to want his judgement. He was always very discreet, but I was delighted when I sensed he liked something.

There was something fine about him, about his feeling not just for the look of the page, but for the page itself.

For all this, thank you, Simon Trussler

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Maria Shevtsova

Simon in the Life of NTQ

I keep thinking that I first met Simon in the mid-1970s while I was living and studying in Paris, and I distinctly remember taking the train and the ferry to get to London. But then something in my memory fails to compute and I waver, wondering whether the event actually took place during the following decade. Memory plays tricks, we know, and, while the real date is in doubt, there is no doubt about the place and the spatial image it left in my mind. Our meeting, designed to include Clive Barker, whom I also had never met, was in a pub in central London. Simon, beer in hand, stood back at some distance as he observed Clive's and my animated conversation about laboratory theatre with the rather quizzical half-smile that I came to know well later, not so much from Simon's facial expression as through how he used language when we discussed articles submitted to *NTQ*.

The image that has stayed with me all these years began to look, as time went by, as if it had caught the 'feel' of what, in the future, would be our working relations: gregarious Clive and Maria, each gregarious differently, and reclusive Simon – complementary natures and

capabilities that, coming together harmoniously, offered the distinctive but interlaced dynamics of physical performance and the word – the theatre and the written play. I was to learn, with experience, that no one knew better than Simon how to chisel the word to its greatest advantage. His unique gift was evident in equal measure in his unparalleled editorial help to playwrights and his passion for typography. Underlying his particular strengths was our common belief that the theatre in all its variety had social, cultural, and political ramifications and resonances.

Shared viewpoints were ascertained, but shared work was yet to come. Little did I know in those very early days that Clive would weave threads between Simon, *NTQ* – which they had co-founded in 1985 – and me: *NTQ* succeeded *Theatre Quarterly* (1971–1981), Simon's venture with two other colleagues. Clive was curious about my interdisciplinary research, at whose heart, in terms of theatre practice, were European directors of many types, as well as a range of ensemble theatre groups and companies. Simon responded, and I principally owe to his bold spirit the publication of my three-part article on the sociology of the theatre in *NTQ* in 1989 – this at a time when theatre journals went along with accepted current trends, established or fashionable.

Regardless of our pub encounter (I still cannot recall what had prompted it), I saw neither Simon nor Clive until Clive came to stay with my daughter and myself in Paris in the early 1990s. He reappeared in the later 1990s, to my surprise first of all in a train, as an external examiner at Lancaster University, where I had been appointed to the Foundation Chair in Theatre Studies. It was Clive who must surely have been instrumental in my becoming an advisory editor of *NTQ* bang on 2000, the turn of the twenty-first century, and I was offered a wonderful opportunity to contribute to a journal I had admired since its first incarnation as *TQ*. Straightforward business in this period meant communication with Simon relatively frequently by telephone.

Then, in 2003, largely thanks, I suspected, to Clive, I became part of what Simon referred

to subsequently, in an amused way during one of our face-to-face editorial discussions, as 'the triumvirate of *NTQ*', while pointing out that this was how the 'original *Theatre Quarterly*' had begun. In a trice, not only did he give me a glimpse of his sense of history but also his sense of a history for *NTQ*. A similar flash recurred when Simon told me, through the editorial pages of *NTQ* 100 (2009), in which he insisted I write my 'wish list' for future issues of the journal, that 'thanks to his [Clive's] foresight, the continuity of editorship had been ensured'. Clive's passing in 2005 had indeed shifted our trio to a duo, in which Simon graciously accepted what he might have felt for a while to be a surrogacy for his old friend; and words of praise in that same editorial commentary showed Simon's usually elliptical style of conveying his regard – in this case, for me. Ellipsis, as I had intuited long ago, was a trait of his character. It was different for others, I have since been told, but niceties, let alone manifestations of ego, had no part in our extremely busy collaboration. Our foremost task – *the* task – was the interest, scope, diversity, and, above all, quality of the journal.

We were bound, then, by common purposes, and our relations took their cue accordingly, leaving next to no room for simply friendly calls and chats, or even for lengthy deliberations on our decisions for this or that issue of *NTQ*, except for the occasions on which I drove from London to Deal in Kent for our editorial meetings. The latter were my initiative, since, given my heavy load at Goldsmiths, University of London, I found virtual contact over editorial matters difficult to sustain; and, I must say, where I was an intrepid traveller, Simon was a content stay-at-home, even to the point of resisting my requests that we take a walk on the cliffs nearby. He enjoyed noticing the difference in our temperaments – they were cultural, too, after all – agreeing that part of our amicable work together depended on our contrasts. I learned only since his death of his remark years before about my rush from Heathrow Airport straight to the theatre so as not to be late for a Pina Bausch performance:

SIMON: (*to his interlocutor*) Now, why would she do such a thing?

MARIA: (*had she been there*) Dear Simon, but you know I love dance!

Anecdotes are few in my recollections of life with Simon in *NTQ*. Looking back, I see that the 2009 hundredth issue of the journal was an official turning point. Simon, in a show of trust, devolved many responsibilities to me, many of which I had already quietly assumed anyway, gathering that Simon needed extra support. He indirectly conveyed his understanding – in this I also saw trust – that I would not complicate the uninterrupted stream of work with too many questions but just get on with it and do it. Which is exactly what I did, without, however, ever losing sight of the respect due to the co-founder, before my time, of this journal.

Soon enough, as the sheer volume and pace of *NTQ* work noticeably increased, so too did the demands of our individual work: Simon's in other editing and typesetting within his

entrepreneurial Country Setting, and mine in the academic world and the artistic world of the theatre. Juggling it all was often gruelling for both of us, but we kept the journal in focus, nevertheless. My former postgraduate student Philippa Burt's addition to the strong flow of our partnership in late 2014 was wonderful; and it still is.

There is no closure possible to my tribute to Simon. I will always remember him and will always be grateful to him for inviting me to join him on a journal that has proved to be significant and was prepared with mutual affection. We hoped it would open new worlds as it opened out to the world with sincerity and integrity. It has become crystal-clear that these – among many others, like compassion and fortitude – are qualities on which the entire world must rely during its terrible, tragic more-than-crisis today, and then in an aftermath that none of us can predict. Simon, I think, would have agreed with me that *NTQ*, which includes all its contributors, has to take heart in such times and keep working.