

4 December 2021

A very warm greetings and a big welcome to schools, teachers, students, directors and parents to your Fifth Shakespeare Schools Festival experience! I am so proud of the SSF Malawi reaching its 5th year running the festival! Congratulations!!!

Hosting the festival during global pandemic is a major task. Looking back at our SSFSA festival programmes which took place in South Africa this year, we are very happy to share that all our schools were able to perform back in the physical theatre spaces, with limited amount of participants and audience attending the festival events. The health and safety of our participants was always our highest priority, taking very careful planning in following all necessary health regulations given by our theatre partners, government and our own health and safety policies. We are very grateful for the support we



received from all parties involved in the process of running the festivals in South Africa, from schools and teachers, students to parents, funders and friends of our Shakespeare Community at large.

I have no doubt that Mr Richard Hewitt and his team will receive same positive and uplifting support from SSF MW community, Kamuzu Academy, all the participating schools, teachers and parents. I have my outmost respect for Mr Hewitt and everyone who is making the SSF MW possible, as I know from my own experience, how much hard work and dedication goes into running such events, especially during these challenging times.

I am truly honoured and grateful to have the partnership with Kamuzu Academy and seeing the growth of SSF in Malawi! The importance of the Performing Arts in lives of young people is of a great value, as they learn to build on their self-confidence and self-worth, becoming stronger characters to deal with any challenge that live can present them with. It is vital to learn how to be creative, how to adapt in difficult situations, how to overcome fears and be the leader of your life. I believe theatre can teach these special skills at a great level! Works of Shakespeare is an amazing and magical vehicle to take us on this beautiful journey of self-discovery, the discovery of the world around us, human interactions and wisdom of life. His plays and stories have no boundaries, but rather connect people from all walks of life, backgrounds and cultures.

I have seen amazing video productions done by the schools in Malawi, and it has once again reminded me that Shakespeare's plays can be interpreted in so many ways, and every one of them is unique and special. I had great pleasure meeting the cast of Kamuzu Academy in 2020 on their visit to Cape Town and seeing their performance on stage at the Fugard Theatre as part of SSFSA 2020 10th anniversary festival run. I was blown away by the talent, the energy, the colorful take on the "Comedy of Errors", under masterful direction of Mr William Parker! It is proving to me that Malawi is rich with young talented students, dedicated teachers, who I hope will continue to thrive in the world of Theatre and Shakespeare, as well as in their personal lives.

May I take this opportunity to thank Kamuzu Academy for once again hosting the SSF Malawi, festival. Big thanks to all the principals of schools and teachers, who see the great value in Shakespeare's works and its impact on our youth; to students for being brave to take on the challenge to perform the complex texts and characters. Thank you to all the parents supporting your children in this process. And anyone else who is making SSF MW possible.

Enjoy every moment of your festival!

With love, Kseniya Filinova - Bruton (Founder SSFSA, CEO Educape Trust)