

# ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

Series Editor:  
Bruce King

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ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

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# BEN JONSON

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**Richard Allen Cave**

*Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts in the University of London  
at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College*

Macmillan Education

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**For  
Eleanor and Judith**

## Editor's Preface

Each generation needs to be introduced to the culture and great works of the past and to reinterpret them in its own ways. This series re-examines the important English dramatists of earlier centuries in the light of new information, new interests and new attitudes. The books are written for students, theatre-goers and general readers who want an up-to-date view of the plays and dramatists, with emphasis on drama as theatre and on stage, social and political history. Attention is given to what is known about performance, acting styles, changing interpretations, the stages and theatres of the time and theatre economics. The books will be relevant to those interested in or studying literature, theatre and cultural history.

BRUCE KING

## Acknowledgements

The research that has grown into the present volume began some years ago as a consequence of an invitation from Margaret Cottier of the Department of Extra Mural Studies in the University of London: she kindly asked me to take a group of actors and hold two workshops on Jonson, concentrating on a play of my choice, for a Tutors' Residential Specialist Course on Drama that she was running. I chose *Bartholomew Fair* and took four actors – Anne Watkins, John Kennett, Hilary Burr and Gerard Moran: two were professionals, two student-actors with some considerable experience of working under my direction. My aim was to explore some ideas about the relation between actor and audience in Jonson's theatre; we had a highly responsive audience ourselves and the actors accordingly were inspired and inspiring. I am deeply grateful to everyone involved that day and to several generations of final-year students in the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College with whom I have subsequently explored Jonson's plays in seminar and workshop: they have taught me much and helped strengthen the line of argument I had begun to pursue. Bruce King then offered me a choice of dramatist to write on for his new series and the opportunity was forthcoming to marshal the material into a cogent form.

It is not perhaps customary with academic publications to acknowledge a debt to theatre practitioners; but my subject is essentially Jonson's comedies in performance and I would like to



express my thanks to several directors who have contributed notably to my appreciation of Jonson's art: Trevor Nunn (*The Alchemist*); Bill Alexander (*Volpone*); Peter Barnes (*Bartholomew Fair* and *The Devil Is An Ass*); Richard Eyre (*Bartholomew Fair*); John Caird (*Every Man In His Humour* and *The New Inn*).

The staff of numerous institutions have helped my research at various stages to run smoothly: I would particularly wish to mention the Press/Publicity and Scripts Departments at the National Theatre; the Library of the Shakespeare Centre at Stratford-upon-Avon; the Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum; and the Study Room at the Theatre Museum. Enid Foster at the British Theatre Association and David Ward of the Library at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College have both given prompt and accurate advice; Brenda Townend and Jo Wootton typed large portions of the manuscript; Michael Leslie generously took time away from his own research to read and comment constructively on the book in typescript; and my wife has been a creative presence at all stages of the volume's progress. I am profoundly indebted to them all.

RAC