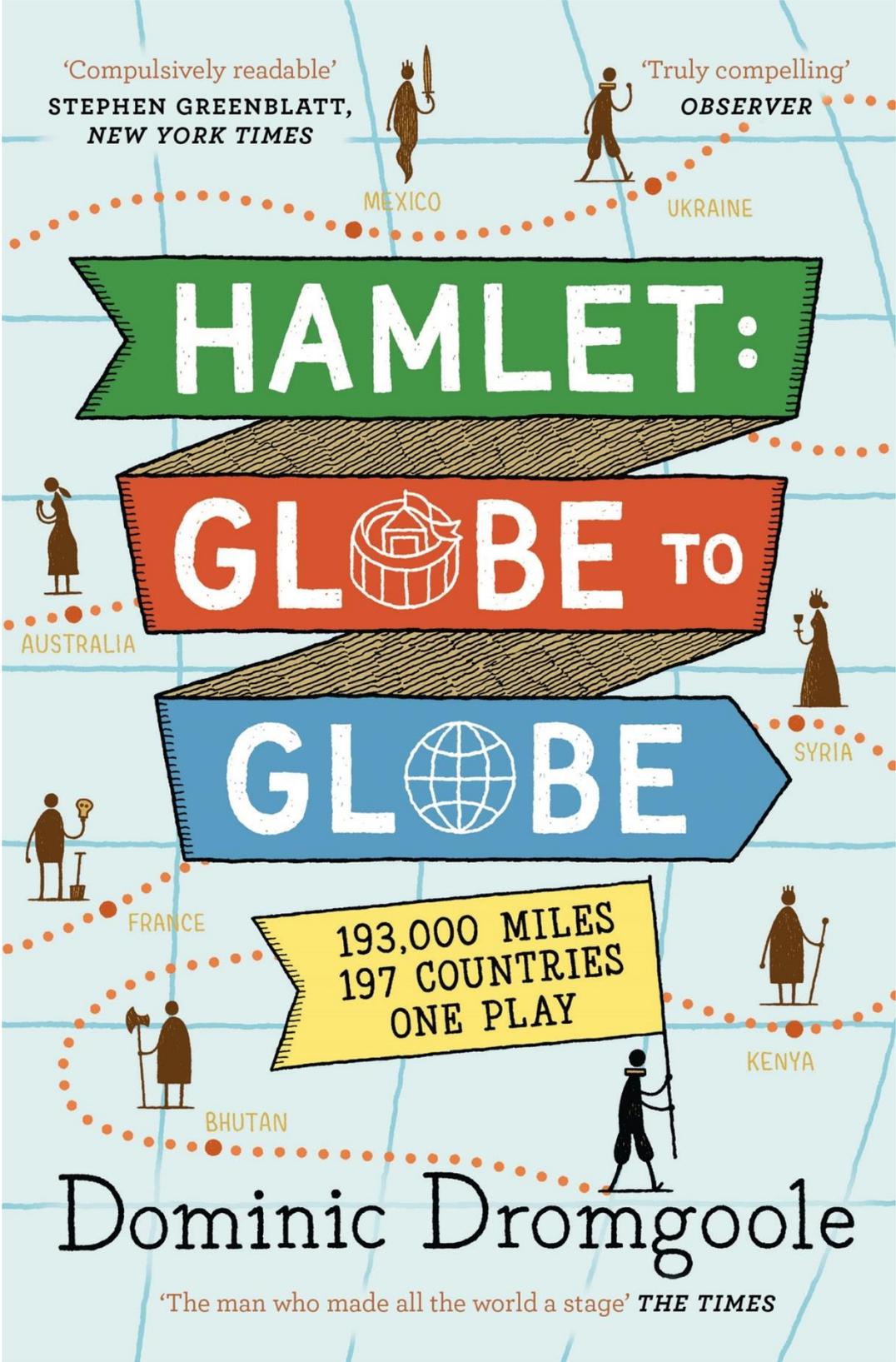


BOOK REVIEW



On 23 April 2014, 16 actors and technicians left the Globe theatre in London on a tall ship bound for Amsterdam. It was only the briefest of stopovers: they were on the first leg of a journey to take *Hamlet* to every country in the world. Ambassadors had been schmoozed, visas and flights booked, money raised (some money, at least). The plan was to visit nearly 200 nations in time for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death two years later. What could possibly go wrong?

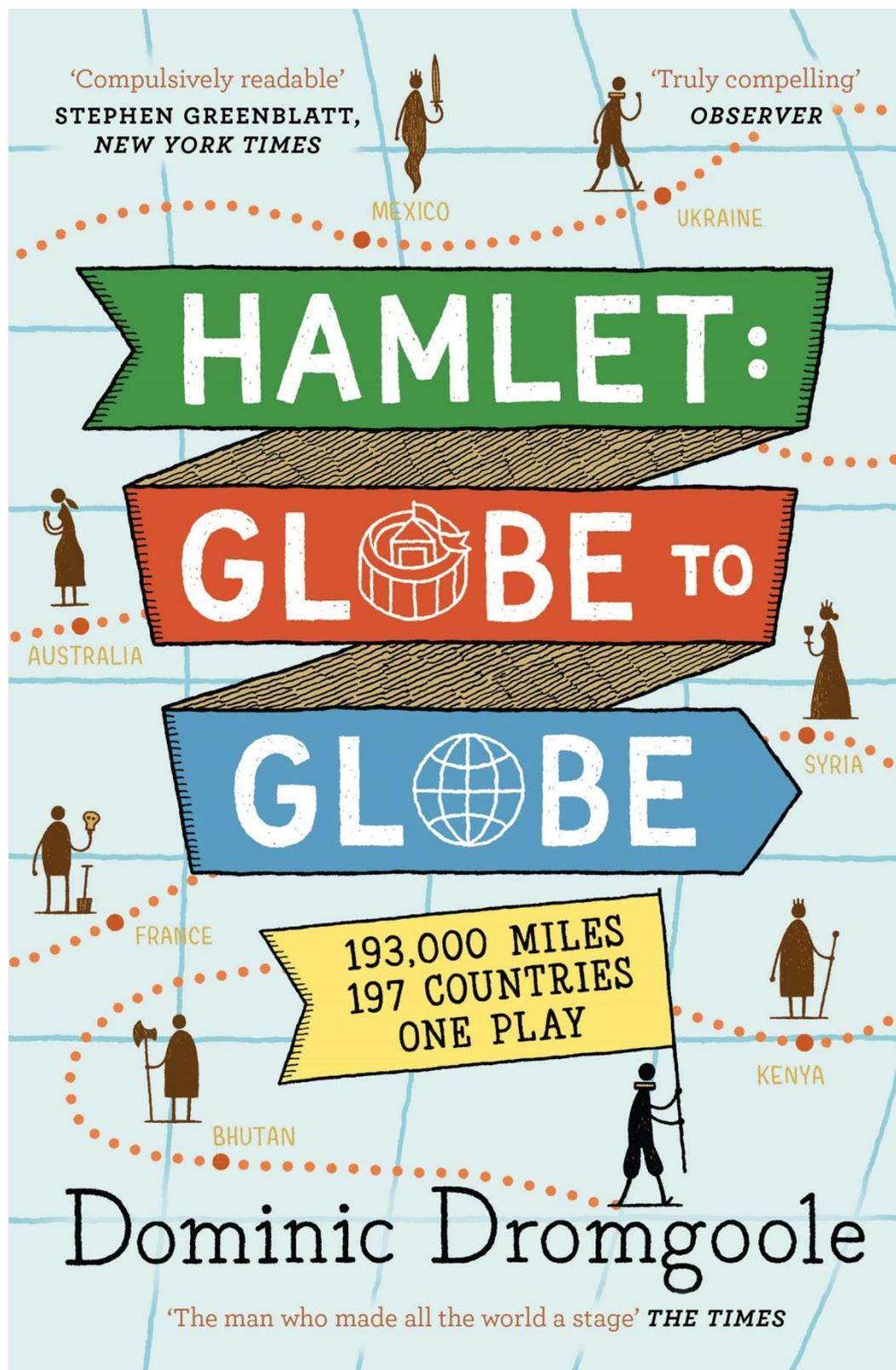
According to the man who came up with the idea, former Globe artistic director Dominic Dromgoole, rather a lot. Severe food poisoning came close to ending things in Mexico City, and Wahhabist prohibitions on men and women sharing a stage nearly did for them in Saudi Arabia. Due to the unfolding Ebola crisis, a chunk of west Africa proved too risky. There were challenges closer to home, too, when the Globe came under fire for announcing they would perform in North Korea. Shakespeare, that canniest of courtiers, might have enjoyed the diplomatic irony that followed: Kim Jong-un's regime then refused to allow them in.

Part diary, part travelogue, part meditation on the play, *Hamlet, Globe to Globe* is Dromgoole's account of what he cheerfully admits was a "daft" idea carried out with courageous, Fortinbras-like efficiency. Barbados, Suriname, Ukraine, Papua New Guinea, Kazakhstan: the company played them all and 185 more countries, often with barely enough time to rig their spartan set and pack it in their flight cases again.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/28957229-hamlet-globe-to-globe>

Additional comments from Malcolm Venter:

- I found this book fascinating.
- The book also provides superb insights into *Hamlet* and Hamlet.
- I recommend it to all English teachers, and especially to those teaching the play.



Some performances left geopolitical shockwaves, notably a trip to the UN's *Zaatari* refugee camp in Jordan in 2015 to play for Syrian refugees, which generated headlines around the world. Elsewhere, it seems to have been as much as the troupe could do to muster a crowd. Dromgoole ruefully notes that a show in Wittenberg, the town of Hamlet's education, was "rather

disappointing”. Another in Gdańsk in Poland – and I can testify to this, having been there that day – resulted in many spectators leaving at the interval. (Dromgoole blames teething troubles with the theatre.)

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/apr/14/hamlet-globe-to-globe-dominic-dromgoole-review-shakespeare>

Two years. 193,000 miles. 190 countries. One play. For the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth the Globe Theatre undertook an unparalleled journey, to take *Hamlet* to every country on the planet, to share this beloved play with the entire world. The tour was the brainchild of Dominic Dromgoole, artistic director of the Globe, and in *Hamlet Globe to Globe*, Dromgoole takes readers along with him.

From performing in sweltering deserts, ice-cold cathedrals, and heaving marketplaces, and despite food poisoning in Mexico, the threat of ambush in Somaliland, an Ebola epidemic in West Africa and political upheaval in Ukraine, the Globe’s players pushed on. Dromgoole shows us the world through the prism of Shakespeare—what the Danish prince means to the people of Sudan, the effect of Ophelia on the citizens of Costa Rica, and how a sixteenth-century play can touch the lives of Syrian refugees. And thanks to this incredible undertaking, Dromgoole uses the world to glean new insight into this masterpiece, exploring the play’s history, its meaning, and its pleasures. *Hamlet Globe to Globe* is a highly enjoyable book about an unprecedented theatrical adventure

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+ insight into Hamlet and *Hamlet*