

## The Tragedy of King Richard III

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**COLLEEN L EDWARDS**

King Richard III has an image problem – and this play is here to help.



*Scene from Tragedy of King Richard III. Image by Dylan Evans*

Based on one of the Bard's most famous plays (it is important to point out here that this might be Shakespeare – but not as you know it), this offering from Daniel Evans and Marcel Dorney urges you to rethink what you know about the child-killing, crook-backed, last king of the House of York.

The play opens with a prologue delivered by Naomi Price (perhaps better known as a singer) who discards any reference to “winter” or “discontent” – and instead talks about mobile phones and the discovery of a body (not just any body, but that of the man in the title) in 2012 under a car park in Leicester. The point of this of course, is to shake off any notion that this will be a traditional retelling and it instead sets up the direction and theme for what follows.

Despite the audience being told from the outset that no one knows history, a familiarity with Shakespeare's original play, or the history of the events concerned would not go astray, as there are a number of characters and motivations to contend with. Actors play multiples roles and some roles are

played by multiple actors. The play is also unafraid to break the fourth wall – although this device occasionally comes across as forced. For the most part though, it is more about the text being self-referential, rather than speaking to the audience directly.

While it may originally have been a play about male struggle for power, here in the Roundhouse Theatre, it is the women who steal the show. Much of it is to do with the performances – Helen Howard as Margaret of Anjou (the She Wolf of France) was outstanding in her monologue – but the writing too was clever in how it addressed the shunting to the side of women's roles in history and how their stories are told (or more often, not told). In one scene in particular, Amy Ingram as Richard's wife Lady Anne is discussed almost as if she is not even there, and when she speaks up to point out her motivations and desires – they are shouted down as 'irrelevant'.

This is a kinetic play and there are a lot of ideas thrown into the mix – touching on history, how it is told and who tells it, perception and how to manipulate it. It also references methods of storytelling and Shakespeare himself (Todd McDonald) turns up, workshoping how he is going to write his play.

There is much going on within a relatively short 90-minute timeframe – perhaps too much. The play is messy (and that's not just the fake blood and dye that's thrown across the stage and smeared over the players) and occasionally confusing and some aspects of it simply don't work. Some reviews have labelled it 'didactic' which is unfair, as it has been created to be an entertaining and thought-provoking piece that confronts the audience with a new way of looking at things.

That said, it is also surprisingly funny and probably more suited to an audience who are open to seeing the possibilities that are presented to them when reinterpreting well-known source material. Recommended for those who are comfortable with the melding of the different times, settings, characters, and a smattering of Kanye West songs.

#### **4 out of five stars**

#### ***The Tragedy of King Richard III***

**Presented by La Boite Theatre Company**

**By Marcel Dorney and Daniel Evans**

**Based On The Play By William Shakespeare**

**Director: Daniel Evans**

**Designer: Kieran Swann**

**Composer: Guy Webster**

**Dramaturg: Lucas Stibbard**

**Lighting Designer: Jason Glenwright**

**Movement and Fight Director: Nigel Poulton**

**Performers: Helen Howard, Amy Ingram, Todd MacDonald, Pacharo**

**Mzembe, Naomi Price, Atticus Robb & Peter Rowland**

**The Roundhouse Theatre, Kelvin Grove Village**

**Until 11 June 2016**



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#### What the stars mean?

- **Five stars:** Exceptional, unforgettable, a must see
- **Four and a half stars:** Excellent, definitely worth seeing
- **Four stars:** Accomplished and engrossing but not the best of its kind
- **Three and a half stars:** Good, clever, well made, but not brilliant
- **Three stars:** Solid, enjoyable, but unremarkable or flawed
- **Two and half stars:** Neither good nor bad, just adequate
- **Two stars:** Not without its moments, but ultimately unsuccessful
- **One star:** Awful, to be avoided
- **Zero stars:** Genuinely dreadful, bad on every level

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colleen Edwards is a Brisbane-based reviewer for ArtsHub.