

Richard III

de Shakespeare

crée en mars 2004 à l'ADC Theatre (Cambridge); repris à Paris et Lyon
mise en scène de Gérald Garutti



Richard III Rules

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Richard III, ADC Theatre, 2-6 March 2004, 7.45pm

Shakespeare does a pretty good line in villains; Iago (*Othello*), Shylock (*Merchant*), Aaron (*Titus*): he's done them all. And Richard III is supposed, by many, to be the best.

It is notable, therefore, that Sam Kitchener has not been type-cast as a villain. Fluffy haired and looking not unlike Will Young, he is sometimes hard to reconcile with Shakespeare's "bottled spider": this is the kind of Richard you wouldn't mind taking home to your mother.

However, Kitchener performs well: he quickly establishes a rapport with the audience, and is a thoroughly amusing, if not Machiavellian, Richard; indeed, his performance is only surpassed by the outstanding George Igler (Buckingham).

Yet there is no denying that 'cheeky chappy' Richard does pose problems, especially towards the end of the play: we simply don't see the other side of the coin; the pathos of the play's climax is eclipsed by the victory of Aryan super-king Richmond (an impressive Arthur House), throwing an insurmountable barrier between us and a forlorn Richard. In what is considered by many as Shakespeare's ultimate 'character play', Richard's character is ultimately eclipsed. This is no sign of ineptitude, however, but rather the result of a definite directorial decision.

The production is spectacularly symbolic: the eminently able Gérald Garutti creates a stark theatrical space full of grand statements and gestures weighted with an importance beyond the immediately apparent. The humble mask becomes a means of inflicting death, reflecting the facelessness of the puppets that Richard directs.

The aesthetics of the play – so vital to a production as symbolic as this – are particularly pleasing. The use of sound is impressive, although perhaps slightly heavy-handed on occasion. However, it is the lighting – and its combination with an abstract, and slightly cumbersome set – that makes the show: it is, at times, simply divine.

This is a production that has benefited from a strong directorial and conceptual vision. Although the emphasis on symbolism means that the finer details of the text are untouched, it remains nonetheless a success. Like the set of the play, it may occasionally wobble – or seem a little impractical – but ultimately it holds up to pleasing effect.