

RICHARD II

RICHARD II

By **William Shakespeare**
Adapted by **Brad Fraser**
Conceived by **Jillian Keiley**
Directed by **Jillian Keiley**
Choreographed by **Cameron Carver**

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

11+

CONTENT ADVISORY

Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

SYNOPSIS

Richard II is the first of Shakespeare's epic four-play history cycle chronicling the violent clashes between the Houses of Lancaster and York, which culminated in the Wars of the Roses. The play is a lesson in realpolitik, moral corruption and human fallibility as Richard unleashes chaos upon his sceptered isle.

Richard II, as imagined by Shakespeare, is a man caught between ages. England and Europe were in flux. The continent had been torn apart by wars of territorial rights and royal succession, while the Black Death, which wiped out at least a quarter of the population, caused a labour shortage that emboldened the artisan class. Peasant revolts challenged the centuries-old compact between the peasants and the nobility. Richard's absolute belief in the Divine Right of Kings grates against a new generation of nobles less beholden to the Medieval era's rigid political, religious and cultural norms. When he exiles his cousin Henry Bolingbroke—later Henry IV—then



Stephen Jackman-Torkoff. Photo by Ted Belton.

seizes Bolingbroke's inheritance, Richard's naked power grab and inept leadership divides the loyalties of the aristocracy. Henry soon gathers an army to launch an invasion of England and seize the throne, threatening Richard's dynasty.

Shakespeare wrote *Richard II* at a time of great political anxiety. Queen Elizabeth's health was failing, and with no direct heir to the throne, the largely stable Tudor reign was about to end. Looking back in history to an earlier era of unrest helped Shakespeare to clarify the tensions of his own times. In Canadian playwright and screenwriter Brad Fraser's bold adaptation, historical parallels are teased out between Richard's short reign and the glamour, grit and glitter of New York City in the late 1970s and early 80s. No matter what age we live in, Shakespeare reminds us, the personal and political consequences of resisting necessary change can be catastrophic.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Global Competencies:
 - Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
- Grade 11-12
 - The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
 - English
 - Canadian and World Studies
 - Social Sciences and Humanities

THEMES

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Appearances and Performance
- Authority, Power and Responsibility
- Abandonment, Banishment and Exile
- Change and Rebellion
- Consequences
- The Crown
- Desire and Sex
- Determination
- Family
- Fear
- Freedom
- Honour
- Patriotism, Duty and Loyalty
- Religion
- Time

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *Richard II* is a Shakespeare history play based on the life of Richard II. What do you already know about Richard II?
- In your opinion, what kind of qualities does a good leader possess? Why are these qualities important for someone who is in a position of power?
- How have you worked through conflict in the past? What is some advice that you would give to someone experiencing conflict or confrontation?
- Is ambition a positive or a negative quality in a person? Explain your position.
- Are there characters or people in the media who are considered power-hungry? What characteristics do they have in common?

STUDY GUIDES

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD>

BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS

STUDENT MATINÉES

Please note that this production contains sexually suggestive action and scenes of violence and is not appropriate for those younger than 16.

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Tuesday, May 23rd
- Thursday, May 25th
- Tuesday, June 13th
- Thursday, June 22nd
- Wednesday, September 6th
- Tuesday, September 12th
- Wednesday, September 20th
- Wednesday, September 27th

WORKSHOPS & CHATS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

SOCIAL MEDIA



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Corporate support for the 2023 season at the Tom Patterson Theatre is generously provided by BMO Financial Group.

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