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RICHARD II

T E X T E
SHAKESPEARE
MISE EN SCÈNE
CHRISTOPHE RAUCK

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RICHARD II

TEXT

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTION

CHRISTOPHE RAUCK

Show created on July 20, 2022 at the Avignon Festival, 76th edition.

Performances: July 20-26 at 6pm, Gymnase du lycée Aubanel

Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers : September 20 - October 15, 2022

L'Onde Théâtre - Centre d'art de Vélizy-Villacoublay : 20 - 21 Oct. 2022

Théâtre de Pau : 8 Nov. 2022

With

Louis Albertosi: Greene, Lord Willoughby, a lady, Surrey, Keeper

Thierry Bosc: John of Gaunt, York

Éric Challier: Bolingbroke

Murielle Colvez: Duchess of Gloucester, Lord Berkeley, Duchess of York, Abbot

Cécile Garcia Fogel: The Queen, Salisbury, Exton

Pierre-Thomas Jourdan: Bushy, Fitzwater, Servant

Micha Lescot: Richard II

Guillaume Lévêque: Mowbray, Northumberland

Emmanuel Noblet: Aumerle

Pierre Henri Puente: Carlisle, Gardener, Captain, Ross

Adrien Rouyard: Percy, Bagot, Scroope, a lady, a servant

Translation

Jean-Michel Déprats

Dramaturgy

Lucas Samain

Music

Sylvain Jacques

Staging

Alain Lagarde

Lighting

Olivier Oudiou

Video

Étienne Guiol

Costumes

Coralie Sanvoisin

Hair and Makeup

Cécile Kretschmar

Fencing master

Florence Leguy

Thanks to Atelier 69 for the mask and to Philippe Jamet for the choreographic advices.

Duration: 3h05 with intermission

The Tragedy of King Richard II by Shakespeare, translated by Jean-Michel Déprats is published by Editions Gallimard, collection Folio Théâtre.

Production

Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers,
centre dramatique national

Coproduction

Festival d'Avignon

With the integration program of
the École du Nord, supported by
the Région Hauts-de-France and
the Ministère de la Culture.

THE PLAY

History play and long epic poem, *Richard II* plunges us, from the outset, into a family saga with complex repercussions, and reveals, line after line, the true subject at stake.

Against the background of the cold war between Richard and his cousin Bolingbroke over the throne of England, Shakespeare ponders the exercise of power. In our changing world, this vast subject is just as relevant today as ever. He may be the legitimate king, but Richard keeps poor company and is divorced from his people; Bolingbroke, for his part, seeks to gain legitimacy through the people. From treason to compromise, corruption to renunciation, how far can we push the boundaries of a political ethic in order to strengthen our grip on power and bolster our legitimacy?

This is why we still need Shakespeare today: he forces us to react and reflect, to look beyond appearances and to avoid taking things for granted; he makes us seek out complexity and read between the murky lines of history. Richard's path is traced by history, by his awareness of his past mistakes and by the pivotal moment that heralds the rapidly approaching end of a historical cycle.

The staging by Christophe Rauck reveals all the subtlety of this tragedy. Everything is going to play out in the Commons, where each crosses swords and makes their case. The tension is palpable, from start to finish. Richard has a premonitory vision. He knows what his downfall will be.

He does not renounce the throne through weakness. He creates a work from his abdication: this is where the greatness and ambiguity of his character lies.

INTERVIEW

WITH CHRISTOPHE RAUCK

If this rarely performed play took you on a journey, where did it take you?

Christophe Rauck: "I had a gut feeling that my main theme would be the king's relationship with power. When you read a text, you get these gut feelings as you make your way through the play. Another central theme was time.

At the beginning, Richard is a man in a hurry.

He leaves too early and arrives too late.

He always gets the timing wrong.

And yet, time is essential to the play. And then I ended up thinking of Bolingbroke as the earth and Richard as the sky.

What do you mean by sky and earth?

C.R: The people love Bolingbroke. Not Richard. It's quite a strong symbol. One returns because he's been banished and stripped of his lands. He is no longer the legitimate Duke of Lancaster. Seeking his land is to seek his connection with his forebears. Richard is in another place. He's a man of conquest and power - in the sky. When he leaves England for Ireland, Richard leaves the land kingless. This is the moment Bolingbroke chooses to return. Richard is the holder of the line, not Bolingbroke. The line is Richard's relationship with the history of kings. Bolingbroke is aware of this. The turning point comes when Richard is deposed and, king by divine right, he observes the scene with the clear-sightedness of the jester. It often makes me think of Hamlet. To find the truth, Hamlet plays mad. His deposition is so sudden that Richard develops the clear-sightedness of the insane in order to survive.

Why did you describe Richard as a man in a hurry?

C.R: His position makes him hasty, and he loses his reason, or at least, he no longer

acts rationally. Richard needs money. He takes it from where he shouldn't. But there is a bone of contention between these two families. Historically, Richard doesn't trust the Gaunt family. In his desire to banish them, Richard acts in haste. Too anxious to keep the peace in his kingdom and too eager to assert his kingly authority, he makes a political error and becomes authoritarian.

So, you went with the idea of hastiness and political rivalry?

C.R: I began with a king determined to rid himself of a future adversary and to weaken a great family.

He sends Bolingbroke back to France, an enemy country but also a country with provinces ruled by the English. He doesn't banish his cousin to a remote corner of America. His other great political error is to confiscate the property of the Gaunt family. We can well imagine that if Richard had not done that, Bolingbroke would not have come back, and he would not have deposed his cousin, the king. He is faced with a dilemma, because he hesitates all the time and we can understand why. In her interpretation, Déborah Warner really works on the emotional relationship between the two cousins. By playing on the idea of Fiona Shaw as a woman, it comes close to telling a love story between the two lines. And it is really quite beautiful.

Power is central to the play. But it's also bound up with the personal. We navigate between an intra-family conflict and the highest political circles...

Between the personal interests of each protagonist and the general interest, which is most important?

C.R: The trail I followed, which helped me get into the play and unscramble the issues at stake, was the desire people

have at the moment to depose governments; the anger people feel towards the world of politics. The question of treason is never far away. It is something that is very much on our minds today, and it takes the form of violence - the desire to unseat power and see heads fall. Threats against elected representatives, mistrust, hatred of the president...

The fourth act, when the king is deposed, is pivotal to the play.

How do you see it?

C.R.: The deposition turns into a trial. How will they judge Richard and how will he defend himself from their accusations? How will he challenge power through the crown? What is his vision of power once he surrenders the crown? It raises a lot of questions. And then, in the fifth act, there's a falling out within the York family itself. We go from macro to micro. The question of power arises in exactly the same way within the family as it does in the underworld of politics: both in the past, in Shakespeare's time, and in the present, within our democracy. Society is so polarised that during the last elections, families tore themselves apart over this or that candidate or ideology. Shakespeare embraces all these contradictions.

Hatred doesn't dominate the play.

C.R.: No. A dialectic develops around power and the abandonment of power. So, right from the start we had to feel these machinations in the direction, and experience empathy towards Richard, even though it's not fair, because he's riding for a fall. The first act is important in understanding Bolingbroke's position and then Richard's clear-sightedness. What does it mean to be a king who has been deprived of his throne? The only thing you've still got are your experiences and the brief time you have left to live. How does he react? How - and this is what's interesting in the play - does this signal the end of a cycle and the beginning of something else.

It's a complex play, set in a far-off historical period, with a lot of characters... How do you convey these issues without losing sight of your audience?

C.R.: That's the challenge! What's beautiful and human about Shakespeare is his skilful ability to come close to and imply all of these contradictions. York is a wonderful character. Gaunt, Richard II's uncle, and once his protector, is extraordinary: he accompanies Richard without supporting him and when he's at death's door, he's on the verge of repenting. The situation is heightened by his magnificent speech on England and his perception of Richard II's power.

John of Gaunt's attitude still speaks to us today. Is loyalty stronger than truth?

C.R.: In the film *L'Adieu à Solférino* by Grégoire Biseau and Cyril Leuthy, ministers under French president François Hollande talk about his five-year term of office. They were faced with a terrible contradiction - torn between ideology and obedience. To what lengths would you go to be loyal? Would you go as far as betraying yourself? Richard II addresses the same dilemma: what limits do we place on our loyalty? How loyal are we prepared to be to a person - in this case, a king? He is so determined to govern and to exercise his power that, at a given point, Richard cuts himself off from his country, like many politicians today. This is how I read the play, and I'm obsessed with it. Over the past few years, we've witnessed attitudes, words and political acts that would have been unthinkable just a short while ago. *Richard II* is a history play and I hope I've read it in the light of the events I've witnessed in recent years.

Can you tell us something about your staging - your stagecraft?

C.R.: Play, acting, a lot of acting... It's going to be a moving set with tiers and a tulle separating the acting spaces. I want the audience to feel this story of deposition in their flesh. I want them to taste its brutality, and to experience the intimacy peculiar to the House of

Commons. I'd like Micha Lescot to engage in a dialogue with Richard II cheek by jowl with the audience, so everyone's a witness and actor in the deposition.

They say history never repeats itself, but it can rhyme...

C.R: I think we learn the lessons of history - we wouldn't be here otherwise, even though we're more conscious than ever before of the end of the world. Shakespeare wrote about treason, power, love, jealousy - all the big themes that still make for a great story. I don't know if history repeats itself, but having written and explored all that so well, we find it echoed in our own experience. I didn't want to bring the play up to date, but I can't stop myself from seeing it through my own personal dialogue with all these questions. I'm still cautious about ideas around historical accuracy or the updating of plays. You need to avoid the trap of being too bombastic. It's about striking the right balance. If you flatten everything, you won't reach the sky. And if you're too bombastic, you can't come down to earth again. You don't talk to people anymore.

It feels like you've got an irrepressible urge to stage plays from the repertoire. In terms of your current position, are you asserting an editorial line, an address to the audience?

C.R: No, I don't think so. I stage plays because of the place. I never would have staged *Le Dragon* or *Le Revizor* if it hadn't been at the Théâtre du Peuple in Bussang. The project at the Théâtre Gérard Philipe in Saint Denis was more contemporary to start with, and then, after I'd staged the operas, I realised we needed to work on the great stories from epic and classical texts. At the Théâtre du Nord, in Lille, it was different again. In short, I understood how great works can bring people together. At the Amandiers, I'm still not sure: as you work with the audience, the place and the performance spaces, you begin to understand what you can contribute. Chéreau, talking about *Quai Ouest* by Koltès in Nanterre says, in relation to what he saw as a flop, that a contemporary play needs to be staged for

longer, in a smaller venue. The work and the performance space form a relationship. I'm open to new ideas. I'm aware of the public's appetite for great stories, but I also wonder about my desire to explore contemporary works in greater depth. A big stage is wonderful, but it's also a limitation; you need a lot of people and that expands your world. It's like Brecht: he moves mountains but because, in his epic works, he talks to the world about the world with the world. What I really like are stories, performed or danced, in whatever form it is possible to tell them. What's important is to tell them well. In the end, they're like lands. In theatre, we cross lands...

Interview by Louise Sablon, April 2022



CHRISTOPHE RAUCK

DIRECTOR

Christophe Rauck created his company in 1995 with actors he had met through the theater Company Théâtre du Soleil. From 2003 to 2005, he managed the Théâtre du Peuple located in Bussang, where he directed *Le Dragon* by Evgueni Schwartz, *La Vie de Galilée (Life of Galileo)* by Bertolt Brecht and *Le Revizor* by Nicolas Gogol. He then directed

Martin Crimp's *Getting Attention* as well as *The Spider of the Eternal*, a play based on texts written by Claude Nougaro, and *Le Mariage de Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro)* by Beaumarchais at the Comédie Française.

Later on, as he was managing the TGP-centre dramatique national de Saint-Denis (2008 - 2013) he created *Ardent heart* by Alexander Ostrovsky, *Round heads and pointed heads* by Bertolt Brecht, *Cassé* by Rémi De Vos and *Les Serments indiscrets* by Marivaux (this play won the Grand Prix du Syndicat de la critique). During that same period, he also staged *Phèdre* by Racine and two operas by Monteverdi. In 2014, he was appointed director of the Théâtre du Nord and its theatre school, the École du Nord, located in Lille. He directed there three more texts by Rémi De Vos (*Toute ma vie j'ai fait des choses que je ne savais pas faire; Ben oui mais enfin bon* and *Départ volontaire*), as well as *Figaro gets a divorce* by Odön von Horvath (Prix Georges-Lerminier du Syndicat de la critique: best show created in provincial France), *As You Like It* by Shakespeare. He also directed two texts by Sara Stridsberg: *La Faculté des rêves* and *Dissection d'une chute de neige*. In 2017, he created in Moscow *Amphitryon* by Molière, with eight former followers of Piotr Fomenko.

As he was invited to the 2018 Festival d'Avignon, Christophe Rauck presented *Le Pays lointain (Un arrangement)* by Jean-Luc Lagarce, with young actors who had just graduated from the 5th Class of the École du Nord.

Christophe Rauck is the current director the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers - centre dramatique national, since January 2021.

Still in 2021, he directed Shakespeare's *Henry VI* with the students of the École du Nord. He also staged *Dissection d'une chute de neige* and *La Faculté des rêves*. He is currently creating *Richard II* by Shakespeare for the 76th edition of the Festival d'Avignon in July 2022.

CALENDAR

Creation

July 20, 2022 at the Avignon Festival

Performances

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AVAILABLE ON TOUR

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

MARCH 2024

TOUR

Team on tour

23 people: 11 actors, 10 technicians,
1 director, 1 producer

Assembly

at D- 2

Dismantling

The day after the last performance

Set transportation

2 trucks

Production and distribution contact

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Director of production

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