

ASC: Richard II 2008



The American Shakespeare Center's production of *Richard II* is gripping. The tension that binds King Richard, played brilliantly by John Harrell, and Henry Bullingbrook, played with dark intensity by John Pasha, also enthralls the audience. When the two of them were on stage together there was real electricity. Harrell, as Richard, delivers the amazing language of the play with sharpness, but in an understated way that reveals Richard as both self-absorbed and deeply wounded. The language is stunning, and the performance never gets in the way of the enjoyment thereof. Pasha--Henry--gives us a clear image of a stronger Henry, principled, confident, fair, determined. Although Henry is the victor, it is Richard's play; and yet Richard needs Henry for his philosophy to crystalize.

The rest of the cast is also excellent, especially James Keegan as the Duke of York, and Stephen Lorne Williams as John of Gaunt, Henry's father. This speech by Gaunt was a special moment.

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The company is now performing all four shows of the fall season: *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Richard II*. I've seen them all and plan to see them each a second time, starting next weekend with *Measure for Measure*

Perpetual Folly / Clifford Garstang 2008

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