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Alumna Brushes up on her Shakespeare

To play the role of Shakespeare's conniving Richard III, **Kate Norris** (theatre art, '94) knew she would have to look "bad." She cropped her long blond hair into a mannish coif and rejoiced when she looked in the mirror and saw circles under her eyes. Norris played the role last year as a cast member of Shenandoah Shakespeare Express (SSE), a Staunton, Va.-based acting troupe that brings lively productions of Shakespeare plays to theaters, universities, and high schools nationwide and in England. *The Washington Post* has called SSE's productions "shamelessly entertaining." Norris took the role to Edinburgh, Scotland, as well as to the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, S.C., and to 32 other U.S. states.

In addition to being the first woman ever to portray Richard III in a Shakespearean work, Norris also played Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Mistress Quickly in *Henry IV, Part I*. She is currently one of four people--one male and three females--playing Hamlet in an experimental production of that play at the Folger Theatre in Washington, D.C.

Shakespeareances.com

a Woman's Place 2013

Shakespeare Understood Women Better Than Modern Men Do

Kate Eastwood Norris made for a legendary *Richard III* in a 1998 touring production of what was then known as the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, including a three-week run at the Folger. That company became the American Shakespeare Center, now occupying the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Va., where the cross-dressing tradition still thrives. Allison Glenzer has built her career playing many a man there, and her portrayal of Speed in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was one of the highlights of the Blackfriars Playhouse 2012 season, as was her portrayal of Constance in *King John*. In the company's 2011 production of *Henry V*, she scored three memorable portrayals: Mistress Quickly, Alice, and—wait for it—Captain Gower (whom she played as a male English officer, not a lusty wench). I said it in my review of *Mistorical History* and I'll repeat it here: Why cast Sara Barker as an Edwardian-era prostitute playing Hotspur when you could have cast her directly as Hotspur in any era? She would have given us a truly great reading of that great role if she had been allowed to simply be that role.