

## The Book of Adam

Autobiography of the First Human Clone



A Novel by Robert M. Hopper

## Review

### King Lear

by [San Diego Repertory Theatre](#)

It's been exactly four hundred years since Shakespeare penned his masterpiece *King Lear*, and one year after the San Diego Repertory Theatre staged a remarkably successful and moving benefit reading of the play. Now, a year later, they have pulled out the stops for a flashy, full-fledged production that is often beautiful to behold, while a bit uneven at times in its delivery – sometimes tragic and powerful, and other times going for a little over-the-top silliness.

The play is set against the stark scenery of stone and steel by **Giulio Cesare Perrone**, a barren land brought to life by the sensational lighting effects of **Jennifer Setlow** who paints the scenes with the most vivid, gorgeous, and often haunting pictures. Perrone also designed the costumes – an odd array of creations from the drab to the ostentatious to the absurd, looking a bit jumbled but often capturing the character's character with unique flair.

Within those costumes is a mostly impressive ensemble of actors. San Diego Rep's artistic director, **Sam Woodhouse**, stars in the title role. He is extremely effective in the first act as the foolish, vain, and vindictive king who furiously exiles his daughter Cordelia (**Marielle Heller**) when she refuses to follow the lead of her two sisters in heaping over-hyped praise on Lear, letting her quiet love and loyalty speak for itself. But when his other two daughters show their true colors, compelled only by greed and a thirst for power, he recognizes his terrible mistakes and poor judgment too late. This leads him spiraling down into madness, which in this case means acting silly and girlishly. It's good for some laughs, but sacrifices an



emotionally compelling sense of tragedy that is only partially reclaimed during the final scene. His enormous wig of gray dreadlocks is perhaps the worst part of the costuming, the floppy hair being more of a distraction than an enhancement.

The versatile **Peter Van Norden**, last seen on the Rep stage as the hilarious Scrooge, offers one of the strongest performances as Lear's exiled but loyal servant Kent who risks his life to help his liege out of the quagmire of his own making. **Armin Shimerman**, also known as Quark from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, is both darkly amusing and daringly upfront as the Fool who is anything but – and who is more than clever enough to realize the dangers the king's foolishness has brought to the fore. Most dangerous of all is **Hassan El-Amin** who clearly delights in the evil Edmund, bastard son of the Earl of Gloucester (**Jonathan McMurtry** as the genuinely distraught and regretful Gloucester), who seeks to take by wit that which birth had denied him. **J. Todd Adams** is Edmund's legitimate half-brother whose hang-loose lifestyle comes to an abrupt end, but he rises to the occasion as he comforts his broken father and acts to confront the enemy. **Linda Libby** in the venomously wicked Goneril and **Karole Foreman** is the sensuously wicked Regan – the scheming, treacherous daughters who prove about as loyal to their husbands as they were to their father.

After much backstabbing, the battle lines eventually become clear, and those battles are one of the highlights of the show with a handful of creative and energetic fight scenes choreographed by **Colleen Kelly** – ranging from tense and dramatic struggles to the comic pinnacle of the evening as the bigger-than-his-bite servant Oswald (**Brennan Taylor**) finds himself embroiled in a hilarious duel with Kent, having only a horse's saddle as a shield, but making inspired use of it.

*Performs through April 17, 2005.*

[Rob Hopper](#)  
San Diego Playbill

~ Cast ~

**Edgar:** J. Todd Adams  
**Ensemble:** Elzie Billops  
**Edmund:** Hassan El-Amin  
**Regan:** Karole Foreman  
**Knight:** Thomas Haine  
**Cordelia:** Marielle Heller  
**Duke of Albany:** Matthew Henerson  
**Duke of Burgundy:** Trevor Hollingsworth  
**Old Man:** Antonio TJ Johnson  
**Goneril:** Linda Libby  
**Earl of Gloucester:** Jonathan McMurtry  
**Doctor:** Walter Murray  
**Fool:** Armin Shimerman  
**Oswald, Prince of France:** Brennan Taylor  
**Ensemble:** David Valdez  
**Kent:** Peter Van Norden  
**King Lear:** Sam Woodhouse  
**Duke of Cornwall:** Ruff Yeager

**Director:** Todd Salovey  
**Scenic/Costume Design:** Giulio Cesare Perrone  
**Lighting Design:** Jennifer Setlow  
**Composer/Sound Design:** Stephanie Robinson  
**Fight Director:** Colleen Kelly  
**Vocal Coach:** Deb Hale

