

RICHARD III

Live from Las Vegas



18 - 20 March | 7pm | PAC
WHITGIFT

Director's Note

Shakespeare is not an easy sell to a modern audience. It's politely accepted that his language is poetic, his dramaturgy profound, his folios impressive and his legacy important; but to tackle the challenge of his texts can feel more like a cultural chore to be completed rather than enjoyed. The plots are complex, Early Modern English is taxing, and the memories of sweaty-palmed GCSE exams quickly come flooding back.

For me, the joy of Shakespeare is his narrative creativity. He transcends genre, artfully inventing plots that still resonate today through the lens of tragedy, comedy, fantasy, horror and romance. For the modern audience with our endless appetite for media, we are able to see the origins of story in Shakespeare everywhere from direct inspirations - *The Lion King*, *Ten Things I Hate About You* - through to distant relatives - *Game of Thrones*, *The Godfather* and beyond.

My personal struggle with his work has been in the realm of the Histories. As a writer myself, I spend my life lost in fiction - the imagined and the invented. Texts that hug too closely to the truth lose their appeal, and when my own History education pre adulthood seemed exclusively to be about World Wars and Henry VIII's wives on repeat, the past didn't hold much curiosity. (Oh, my youthful naivety!)

Cue my first year of teaching and my discovery of Richard III whilst working with a disaffected Year 9 class who were less than thrilled to discover that it was once again Shakespeare season. Cue loud sighs, raised eyebrows and mutters of "What's this got to do with our lives, sir?"

But once we let go of the who's who of dusty British monarchs and long-forgotten politicians, what we discovered was a thriller. A power-hungry master manipulator who will do and say anything in order to rule a kingdom? Middle men who will do anything - arrange marriages, sow conspiracy theories and even murder children to get their slice of the pie? Now you're talking.

Next came the challenge of stripping away the family tree and transporting the text to modernity. We explored every option, from feuding media moguls (alas, *Succession* stole our idea!) to private school students battling for house captaincy (a

little too close to home). A fleeting memory of Las Vegas and suddenly, we had found our home for the play.

In a former life, I was a long-haul flight attendant, and Vegas was our regular playground. It's the strangest place on Earth: an artificial simulacrum painted in garish show business and tacky glamour. A walk down the strip is a walk around the world - past the Eiffel Tower, down the Venetian canals, around Moroccan markets and above New York streets. Simultaneously, one cannot ignore the artificiality of it all: the plasterboard sets and hollow walls that give the feeling of place but ultimately are simple illusions. This felt the perfect setting for a play of smoke and mirrors and furthermore, the Las Vegas setting offers all of the glitz and pizzazz that any Drama teacher loves. Magicians? Check. Showgirls? Check. Even better, a seedy mafia underworld? There we found our central conflicts: gang wars! The surrealistic nature and the strange passing of time (Vegas famously has no clocks or windows in its casinos - the twenty-four hour city only further warped by terrible jet lag) led us to our fever dream tone.

Tackling Richard himself in the modern world proved a thought-provoking challenge. Traditionally 'deformed, unfinished', Richard's villainy was conveyed through his disability. Indeed, in the Jacobean era, disability was a symbol of your inner evil, thus Shakespeare exaggerated the real-life Richard's scoliosis. Of course, in 2026 we know better than to cast able-bodied characters in such a manner. How could Richard's 'disability' therefore be played as metaphor?

To retain Shakespeare's intention of a distinct exterior that reflects the warped interior, we took inspiration from the character of the iconic MC in from the brilliant musical, *Cabaret*, made famous by Liza Minelli. Richard is transformed into a twisted ringmaster who can literally 'play the villain' onstage through performance, manipulation and showmanship.

We hope you enjoy the show: viva Richard, and viva Las Vegas!

James Hodge
Director





THE VILLAIN WE LOVE TO WATCH:

Understanding Richard Through a Modern Lens

Shakespeare's Richard is a unique antagonist. He is magnetic and theatrical while others are cowardly and unlikeable, while having a dark sense of humour that makes him trustworthy and warm but horrifying at the same time. Richard doesn't just save his cunning manipulation for his victims, but also the audience, who become his confidants, being forced to watch silently, without a choice as he takes us along with him on a journey of murder and tyranny. But why do we love to watch him, and what significance does a modern lens bring?

Richard's secret weapon is his charisma, and he uses his charm and confidence to win over those around him. Through a modern lens, the rise of paparazzi and the media play a vital part in the image Richard creates of himself. In Las Vegas, Richard establishes himself as a powerful showman, creating a spectacle for the audience to enjoy as he ruthlessly thrives on the bounties his spectacle brings him. Without

his spectators, Richard's show has no purpose. His ability to pull anyone into his show despite their knowledge of his evil intentions is exactly why we love to watch him. His skill is simple yet terrifying. He makes people prioritise entertainment over morality.

Marcos Byrne, our Richard, describes his character as a villain who masks his deep insecurities behind his performance, and his twisted mannerisms and dramatic nature enhance his role as the centre of chaos in the play. As mentioned in the Director's Note, elements of our Richard were inspired by the MC from Cabaret, and this alongside his lack of hesitation to commit evil, are what makes his betrayals and murder so terrifyingly enjoyable in the show. As long as it's part of the spectacle, Richard stops at nothing to satisfy his everlasting thirst for power and control.

Raf Cianfarani
Upper Sixth Form



CAST

Richard	Marcos Byrne
Richmond, Narrator	Ethan Carmalt
Liza	Elana Punjani
Annie	Amber Nodder
Buck	Seb Wade
George	Milo Lamond
Maggie	Princess Angel Aiguobasiwin
Lady York	Erin Angeline
Eddie York Jr.	Monty Moffitt
Duke (Dance Captain)	James Sylvester
Lord Hastings	Raf Cianfarani
Eddie York	Sam Warren
Rivers	Harry Mortimer
Grey	Oscar Tall
Tyrrel	Patrick Carswell
Henderson	Muhammad Tariq
Brennan	Ayaan Chaudhry
Casey	Andrew Salisbury
Cardinal	Samuel McIntyre
Judge Ely	Ishaan Machani
Dorset	Krish Patel
Norfolk	Ameer Lunga

All other parts are played by members of the company.

CREATIVE TEAM

Directors	James Hodge & Anna Weddell
Producer & Stage Manager	Christiana Aluko
Assistant Director & Assistant Stage Manager	Amanda Glenin
Technical Director	David Jenkinson
Production Technicians	Alex Hill & Matthew Arakcheev
Sound	Nayel Jameel Perry
Lighting	Queston Chan
Costume	Charlie Hollingworth
Props Designer	Christiana Aluko
Hair and Make Up	Hannah Macgregor
Backstage	Julien Gande

FROM CROWN TO CABARET:

The Influence of Bob Fosse on Our Richard III

Reimagining Richard III through the lens of Bob Fosse may seem unexpected at first, but Fosse's world of sharp angles, hidden intentions and glittering façades sits remarkably close to Shakespeare's story of charm, cruelty and ambition. Fosse himself was an unconventional figure: born pigeon-toed and far from a "natural dancer," he transformed limitation into style. His career took off in the 1950s and 60s - the same era as our Las Vegas setting - shaping Broadway with a jazz vocabulary defined by isolations, turned-in knees, hunched shoulders and an unmistakable theatrical swagger. For a young cast where many performers are not trained dancers, Fosse's emphasis on clarity, intention and character over classical perfection became a liberating starting point. His movement asks for commitment, precision and storytelling rather than technical virtuosity, making him the ideal inspiration for staging a story about performance, manipulation and power.

We drew on Fosse not to recreate his choreography exactly, but to borrow the qualities that make his work so distinctive. Our movement is deliberately stripped back: no bowler hats, few chairs, minimal elaborate set pieces. Instead, we use Fosse's principles - isolated gestures, fragmented rhythms, stylised stillness and razor-sharp silhouettes - to shape the atmosphere of tension, suspicion and theatricality that defines our Las Vegas. The show is built around a cyclical structure: it opens with highly stylised ensemble choreography and returns to that heightened vocabulary in the final battle, echoing the way Fosse's choreography often loops back to earlier motifs in darker, more distorted forms. Underscored by jazz-influenced music, the movement helps us build a world where everything feels choreographed - where every smile, every step and every handshake is part

of a performance, just as Richard's rise to power is itself a meticulously staged act.

Specific Fosse works helped us refine details. From *Sweet Charity*, we borrowed the emphasis on direct eye contact and the intimate, knowing relationship between performers and audience. *Chicago* - particularly the percussive tension of "Cell Block Tango" - informed our use of rhythmic accents, ensemble unison and the sense that violence and glamour can sit uncomfortably close together. And *Cabaret*, with its charismatic yet unsettling Master of Ceremonies, inspired elements of Richard's costume, presence and showmanship: a ruler who performs his own mythology even as it corrodes around him.

But perhaps Fosse's greatest influence on our production lies not in individual steps, but in the ideas beneath them. His characters often cling to tight, deliberate choreography while their worlds fall apart - a tension between precision and collapse that mirrors Richard's own unravelling. Fosse's dark glamour, too, is essential: his work dazzles even as it exposes corruption, seduction, and self-deception. This balance of allure and unease became a way of framing Richard as a performer whose charm masks something far more dangerous. Finally, Fosse's use of the ensemble as a kind of chorus guided our staging: their movement shifts from crisp symmetry to fractured chaos as Richard loses control, mirroring his psychological disintegration. In this way, Fosse became more than a stylistic influence; he became a conceptual lens, helping us explore Shakespeare's themes of power, performance and downfall in a world where every gesture is both a dance and a gamble.

Anna Weddell
Director





Thank You...

Mounting a theatrical production in such a busy school requires the help and goodwill of a great number of people. We want to thank: the Headmaster and the Governors for their support; subject teachers for their patience and good faith in helping the performers to balance their studies with rehearsals; Christine Pennicott for sending all communications and organising the Box Office; Catherine Bamber for designing the poster and programme; the Marketing team for advertising the show; the Catering team for providing dinners during show week and for organising pre-show refreshments; the cleaning staff for cleaning up after long rehearsals and finally, the parents of the cast and crew for supporting their children to attend rehearsals, learn lines and manage their co-curricular and academic work.



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