

now is the winter

alarum theatre company



Now is the winter

Preview: August 7-8 at 18:45 (1hr) | £5

August 9-15, 17-22, 24-30 at 18:45 (1hr) | £8 (£6)

The Vault (Venue 29)

11 Merchant Street, Edinburgh, EH1 2QD

Box Office: 0131 510 0022

www.paradise-green.co.uk | www.edfringe.com



Introduction

Shakespeare wrote the only play he could – at the time he was writing Richard III the contemporary accounts of Richard all reviled him. And, of course, the reigning monarch was Elizabeth I, whose grand father Henry VII (as Duke of Richmond) had killed Richard at Bosworth in 1485, so there was a certain political expediency in portraying Richard as a murderous villain.

Over the years there have been numerous challenges to this and he almost certainly wasn't as wicked as the play portrays him. However, Shakespeare's play (whether accurate or not) is a powerful example of propaganda through the arts. 'Richard killed the princes' passed into the nation's collective conscience and has been firmly stuck there ever since.

In reality, contemporaneous evidence is thin and the question 'did he, didn't he?' will probably never be answered conclusively and provide fertile ground for exploration, speculation and... writers.

The origin of this play lies in a moment at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2007 when I thought: 'That soliloquy is such a wonderful speech, it's a shame only men ever get to do it' ... and it set me wondering how it would sound if delivered by a woman. And who that woman might be, and what she might be doing ...

And I began to see different possibilities and shades of meaning in the text, and thus was *Bess*, and *Now is the Winter* conceived. Gestation took a lot longer and became a collaborative effort with another actress and performer, Helen McGregor.

The play does not aim to be a potted retelling of Shakespeare's play but to tell the story of one loyal servant and in doing so recognises that each telling of history is through the eyes of one person - whether they be witness, historian or playwright.

Kate Saffin 2010

Written and directed by **Kate Saffin**

Performed by **Helen McGregor**

"Many of the lines of Shakespeare, intended for the mouths of men, delivered through the mouth of a woman, take on different slants and import. They are often deepened. New meaning, new flavours, new levels can be found..."

FringeReview 15-8-10

Crew

Stage Manager	Leila Battison
Stage management team	Susi Dalton, Christina King
Costume	Julia Bremble
Sound design	Bill Moulford
Publicity design	Tim Howse
Miss McGregor's kneading coach	Susi Dalton

Who's who

Everyone who has helped us in the development of *Now is the winter* has said 'There are an awful lot of names!'. And to make it even harder, quite a lot of the characters are referred to by more than one. Here is a quick run down...

<i>Richard</i>	Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III (1483-85) . And, during the brief period that his nephew Edward was to be King he was the Lord Protector (because Edward was a minor).
<i>Edward IV</i>	Richard's eldest brother and Yorkist King from 1461-70. He lost the throne to the Lancastrian Henry VI. At the start of the play he has just defeated Henry at Tewkesbury and reclaimed the crown (1471).
<i>George, Duke of Clarence</i>	Richard's older brother.
<i>The Princes: Edward and York</i>	Edward IV sons. Edward was briefly Edward V but never crowned, his younger brother (another Richard) was Duke of York. Commonly referred to as 'The princes in the Tower'.
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	Wife of Edward IV. Born Elizabeth Woodville, married (Lady Grey), widowed and then married Edward in secret.
<i>The Woodville's</i>	Lord Grey and Lord Dorset were Elizabeth's sons. Lord Rivers and Anthony Woodville were her brothers.
<i>Lord Hastings</i>	The Lord Chamberlain and close friend of Edward IV with whom he seems to have shared at least one mistress...
<i>Jane Shore Buckingham</i>	Mistress and favourite of King Edward IV Referred to as Richard's cousin, in fact related to the royal family by numerous links. Initially supported Richard but then defected.
<i>Anne Neville</i>	'The Lady Anne' – married first to Edward, Prince of Wales and son of Henry VI (and who died at the battle of Tewkesbury) and then to Richard.
<i>Morton</i>	The Bishop of Ely and later Canterbury.
<i>Richmond</i>	The Duke of Richmond, Henry Tudor, King Henry VII – the first Tudor King of England

Synopsis

Celebrations as the Yorkist Edward IV returns to the throne having defeated the Lancastrian Henry VI at Tewkesbury.

Bess watches, and shares with us, the goings on around the palace as Clarence is escorted to the Tower, Hastings finds a means of leaving it and her beloved master, Richard (Duke of Gloucester) encounters the Lady Anne as she follows the corpse of her late father-in-law, Henry VI, to his burial.

We follow the final days of Edward IV including his attempts to broker peace amongst his warring relatives. Within moments of this supposed peace we learn of the death of Clarence, a death that Bess is convinced is the doing of the Queen (who married Edward in secret and has used her position at court to favour her family).

Soon after Edward's death, as she prepares for the new King – the young prince Edward - to arrive in London, Bess gossips with the neighbours and is puzzled that they see her beloved Richard as 'full of danger'. She pushes the thought from her mind to catch us up with the latest gossip – that Rivers and Dorset (the Queen's brother and son) have been arrested by Gloucester and Buckingham and that the Queen and the younger prince, York, have sought sanctuary.

As the prince arrives in London she excitedly joins the throng in the street to welcome him but is shattered to find that a day that began with such celebration ends with both young Edward and his brother York in the Tower. In telling us what happened she tries to make sense of it for herself. Reassuring herself that it will only be for a few days she gets on with preparing for the meeting at which the date and details of the coronation will be set. She is a little puzzled by Richard's cousin, Buckingham; the way he asks if the others know the Lord Protector's intentions – he is Richard's cousin, why is he asking Lord Hastings? As she takes the tray of refreshments she encounters Richard and Buckingham and hastily hides, relaying to us all that she overhears. It seems Hastings, via his liaison with Mistress Shore is a traitor and is to be executed immediately. She is sure that Richard must have made the right choice and that Hastings was indeed a threat.

Going to visit the princes, she finds that the Lord Protector (Richard) has forbidden anyone to visit them. She cannot believe he would do such a thing preferring to blame the Lieutenant at the Tower instead.

She is aghast to find that Buckingham has revealed at a public meeting that the princes are illegitimate, that their father, Edward, is not legally married to their mother because he had made a prior contract. That he, himself, might not have been legitimate, and that the Mayor and citizens have prevailed upon Richard to be King – not as protector but as the rightful heir.

But... as soon as Richard is crowned the rumours and insurgence begin; Buckingham, disappointed not to be given the lands he feels are his due, leaves Richard and raises an army in Wales. Support begins to increase for the Duke of Richmond (Henry Tudor) currently in exile in France. Bess is gradually drawn into the preparations for the encounter between Richard and Richmond, the battle of Bosworth. She dreams of those who heaped vengeance on Richard's head but dismisses with scorn the opposing army as 'base lackey peasants' only to hear that, despite his bravery, Richard is slain. She ends the play once again hoping that, at last, peace has come...