

## THEATER

## King 'Henry' reigns in three plays at Stratford

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This is a great year for lovers of Shakespeare's history plays. Earlier this year the Royal Shakespeare Company brought an unprecedented production of "Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3" and "Richard III" to Ann Arbor. This summer, Stratford takes us back to the earlier reigns of Henry IV and Henry V in three plays.

This cycle of plays is really about the maturing of irresponsible Prince Hal into King Henry V, who leads his troops to "glorious" victory over the French at Agincourt. While these are plays based on history, they are as much a portrayal of what happens to many young men who spend their youths in trifling and dangerous behavior before growing up.

Measuring with the Bard is a Stratford tradition and that's the case with this cycle. These are generally solid productions,

marred primarily by the cuteness of the directors.

## Henry IV

"Henry IV, Part 1" and "Falstaff" (Henry IV, Part 2) are staged on the tiny Tom Patterson thrust stage. The sets are simple wooden platforms, desks and benches. The costumes are a mélange of styles from different periods for no discernible reason. Director Scott Wentworth draws competent performances from his fine cast but fails to make a strong contrast between the two worlds that tug for the soul of the young prince.

Henry IV finds himself under siege by his former allies. While he is trying to maintain his kingdom against insurgents, his son Hal is spending all his time with thieves, prostitutes and rogues at the Boar's Head Tavern. Leader of this revelry is the aging, totally disreputable Sir John Falstaff.

In contrast to Hal, the tempe-

On stage  
■ At the Avon Shakespeare's "Henry V," through Nov. 4  
■ At the Tom Patterson Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part 1," through Sept. 29  
Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part 2 (Falstaff)" through Sept. 29  
Tickets: Call 1(800)567-1600 or access the Web site at [www.stratfordfestival.ca](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca)  
Getting there: To reach Stratford from Detroit, take the Ambassador Bridge to Hwy. 401. Leave 401 at Exit 222, just past Ingersoll, then follow County Road 6 north to Stratford.

tuous Hotspur is making his way in the world, first as ally to the king and then as his most formidable opponent. To Henry, Hotspur is everything Hal should be.

Graham Abbey makes Hal an amiable young man, slumming before he takes on his role of leadership. Unfortunately, the Boar's Head scenes are never rowdy enough and Hal never wasted enough to make his change dramatic.

Douglas Campbell is a funny, doddering Falstaff rather than a roisterous Falstaff. Campbell certainly has a lot of fun with Falstaff's witty retorts, but there is less roar and more weariness in his portrayal.

A notable performance comes from Benedict Campbell as Henry IV, a father at loose ends about his wastrel son. Jonathan Goad plays Hotspur with the fervor of a rock star.

## Henry V

Jeannette Lambermont's direction of "Henry V" on the larger, more versatile Avon stage is busy, intrusive, overdone but sometimes quite effective.

The actors wear the same multi-period costumes as in "Henry IV." One young man goes around with a video camera taking pictures of the cast that are projected on a screen, along with film of World War I. The set is meant to suggest tanks, girders, battleships. Hmm.

Still, the acting is strong and effective and shapes a particular point of view.

Seanna McKenna is a fine, clear-voiced, ironic Chorus, who sets the stage for telling a story too big for a mere theater.

Graham Abbey is now the king, but a somewhat troubled king who wants to justify what he does. He projects a young man deluding himself into heroism.

This is the telling quality of "Henry V," as Shakespeare mulls over the role of a king and the role of a nation in support of a king's ventures. Henry gives a stirring speech to his soldiers, leading them to fight for a cause of dubious legal or ethical merit.

At night Henry disguises himself and goes among his troops where he gets the foot soldier's trenchant view (Evan Bulfinch in a fine, brief performance).

This play's low comedy, involving the old Boar's Head group, led by the bumbling Pistol (Keith Dinicol), is a bit hard to follow. The high comedy between Henry and the French prince (Sara Topham) is, on the other hand, charming.

The directorial touches that work are some pertinent and poignant scenes of World War I, because that war, too, was more about the ego of rulers than the good of the people.

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niques?

As I try to have a sense of what the interview is about. Is it about explaining the history of something or the economics of something. ... If I'm interviewing an artist, do I want them to talk about their craft or their life. ... And I try to determine what the person is best at. Are they very analytical? Are they good with anecdotes. I try to feel them out and stick with what they're best at.

Q: Today, interviews are done in entertainment and journalistic contexts making the line between the two somewhat blurry. What do you think about that?

A: In the work that we do on Fresh Air, I think it's possible to be a good journalist and do something entertaining at the same time.

Q: Are journalists or interviewers becoming celebrities in

■ 'In the work that we do on Fresh Air, I think it's possible to be a good journalist and do something entertaining at the same time.'

Terry Gross  
journalist

their own right and do you feel like a celebrity?

A: I think that I've become better known in what is a comparably small world. ... I feel well known when listeners come to hear me speak, but it's really not representative of what happens when I walk into a supermarket. I am really grateful and appreciative of the listeners that we have. ... Where it can be a problem is if you go out to cover a story and everybody is interested

in seeing you and it gets in the way of the story. That's in the little bit of notoriety that I do have.

Q: Which working journalists do you like?

A: Ira Glass, Scott Simon, Ted Koppel. ... There are an awful lot of good journalists at NPR.

Q: How do you select your subjects?

A: The producers and I basically read magazines and newspapers as if they are a menu ... kind of looking to see what would be of interest.

Q: Why is public radio important?

A: I think public radio is virtually the only place where you can be sure you will hear substantive news and in-depth news—news that's not there just to piss people off. I'm more interested in substance, which is what you get on public radio.

—staff writer Nicole Stafford

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values; a rookie cop (Patrick Jackson of Canton) with a police uniform two sizes too small; a dead girl; an untrusting girlfriend; and a dilemma of dire proportion.

The result is a comedy that makes the audience consider what is right and wrong, and

what they would do in the same situation.

## Show times

The Players Guild of Dearborn Ways and Means Committee will present five performances of *Evening at the Neapolitan*. Show dates are 8 p.m. Friday-Satur-

day, June 22-23, 2:30 p.m. Sunday, June 24 and 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, June 29-30. Tickets are \$10, general seating, call (313) 561-TKTS.

The Players Guild of Dearborn is at 21730 Madison, southeast of Monroe and Outer Drive.

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