

King Lear

Glendon puts spirit into Shakespeare play

By B.J.R. SILBERMAN

There is a conspiracy brewing against the Stratford Theatre. The plot is *King Lear* and the location is Theatre Glendon.

For the last two weeks, *King Lear* has been presented by staff and students at Glendon. Although the show did "get up on the wrong side of the bed" (and had to climb back in again for four days because of the flu) it proved to be an exciting production, well worth the extra wait.

The play, based on old English folklore, is more than just a story about an impetuous old king, who learns too late, the meaning of love. It is a tale combining pride, deception and many of the less attractive aspects of family relations. To try and summarize the many themes of *King Lear*, however, may be entirely futile. There are more themes than characters.

Michael Gregory, the only professor in the cast of more than fifteen, portrayed the king. His

performance was marked by a fine delivery of the often tongue-tangling Shakespearian lines. As well, Gregory's make-up was immediately persuasive. With stringy white hair and shadowed eye pits, he was very much the tragic king.

There were almost as many "older" students in the cast as "younger" ones. Of the seniors, the most promising appeared to be Frank Spezzano, who played the Earl of Kent. There may have been the "slightest" hint of an Italian accent under the very English dialogue, this did not however, mar his performance in any manner.

Christopher Blake, one of the younger cast members, gave a fine portrayal of Gloucester's bastard son, Edmund. He not only spoke and gestured well, but he was clearly three dimensional, while many of

his colleagues did not even pass the superficial stage.

In the category of unique performances, David Sullivan reigned. His portrayal of Lear's fool was well thought out, although, Sullivan may end up with a bad back condition after having jumped about the stage crouched down and bent over for ten performances.

The spirit of *King Lear* was captured by the Glendon company. The suffering and tragedy were all there, and viewers were truly moved by the cruel deaths and inflicted tortures. No one laughed when a character dripped with blood, or when the eyeballs of Gloucester (Jerrey O'Carroll) were pruned out by the Duke of Cornwall (David Macotte).

Adding to the tragic occurrences in the play was a very appropriate set.

It was lit gloomily at all times, even during the final bow. Both the set and lights were designed by a former Glendon student, Ted Paget.

The audio effects were extremely realistic. A rainstorm that raged in the background through several scenes (including an intermission) caused various members of the audience to shiver and put their coats on.

The audience was made to feel ill at ease in other ways as well. Some, not quite as intentional as the disquieting sound effects.

There was a note in the program which apologized for the "inconvenience of the seating arrangements". In all due honesty, the apology had no effect on most viewers. Those who were overweight, had to sit sideways in order to fit into the narrow space allowed by the benches. Several people even found it preferable to stand up for part of the performance.

Another problem was created by the closeness of the front row to the stage. Ronn Sarosiak, who played Edgar, passed so close to an elderly gentleman during an emotional point, that the man timidly pressed back into his seat.

From a theatrical aspect, there was only one dead give-away that *King Lear* was a student production. All the small role parts were filled by the less talented class members. One fellow was so "explicit", that the audience could mentally visualize where each line in the manuscript ended and where the new one started.

Aside from these grievances, the Glendon production, as a whole, caught the tragic substance of *King Lear*.

Glendon does not end up like many fine professional theatres who have excelled in all aspects of production, but have ultimately been disastrous, lacking compassion to perform the work in the spirit as it was intended.



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