

Quill Power

Newsletter of the York Shakespeare Project

Issue 1, 2001

Welcome to this, our first issue of *Quill Power*, the membership newsletter of the York Shakespeare Project.

The York Shakespeare Project is rolling! Our aim is to join with the people of York in staging a series of theatrical and community events that we hope will further enrich the City's cultural and educational wealth whilst providing fun and engagement for citizens and visitors alike!

Utilising both indoor and outdoor venues, our plan is to perform two plays per year in roughly the order in which they first appeared. Pooling the resources of our community, we would like to join with schools, colleges and community groups to share our learning and experience.

This is a project *for you* and *by you*. The York Shakespeare Project has arrived and intends to be around for some time to come – twenty years at least!

Our First Production – *Richard III*

So why *Richard III*, you may ask. On the other hand, you may be an avid supporter of *Richard III* and already be aware of the link between this historical figure and our beautiful city. Maybe I should explain.

King *Richard III* was born in 1452, the youngest son of *Richard, Duke of York*. He reigned for a relatively short period between 1483 and 1485, his name inextricably linked with the mysterious disappearance of his nephews, 'the Princes in the Tower'.

For more information on King *Richard III*, visit the *Richard III Society's* website:

www.r3.org

Shakespeare's play, *Richard III* is an ambitious undertaking with its forty plus cast but for The York Shakespeare Project it is an excellent starting point, linking this canonical writer to our own local history.

Director Appointed for *Richard III*

First play, first venue, first cast and first director!

So who is this person who has had the temerity, the enthusiasm, the skill, the ambition and the sheer nerve – which we all need – to undertake to direct the first of our 37 productions? Who is to direct *Richard III*?

Benjamin Ross Naylor (or just Ben, as he likes to be known), that's who, subject of course to successful contract negotiations.

But who *is* Ben? Well, Ben is an impressive young director, twenty-four years old and just starting to climb to the top of his profession. What better way to start than to lay the foundation for that excellence in performance to which The York Shakespeare Project aspires?

With a background in directing the drama of the period – Middleton, Webster, Marlowe as well as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* – and with a commitment to the language of the Bard and authenticity of style, Ben was the unanimous choice for this first production.

So as Ben said when accepting our offer,

"Let us to it pell-mell
If not to heaven, then hand to hand to hell."

Patrons for the YSP

It has now been finally confirmed that we have our trio of professional patrons, completed most recently by an actress who originated in York, Dame Judi Dench.

Our other patrons are the well-known actor Sir Antony Sher and Royal Shakespeare Company director Adrian Noble.

All three have given their personal blessing to the project. Dame Judi Dench said she would be delighted to support the project. Sir Antony, whose sinister interpretation of *Richard III* on crutches is one of the most widely acclaimed modern versions of the play, and Adrian Noble, artistic director of the RSC, said they were delighted to lend their name to the idea.

In response to this news, Frank Brogan, project chair said: 'They have shown their generosity and imagination by expressing delight to become patrons, and that reflects the imagination of a project which will affect everyone in York.'

'These people are the best patrons we could have. It shows we are being taken seriously by the top names in Shakespeare and that they believe in what we are doing.'

Auditions for *Richard III*

We are looking for Richard (and Buckingham, two murderers, Lady Anne, an assistant director, a design guru, someone who can sew, etc., etc.).

Yes, The York Shakespeare Project is ready to start work on its first production – *Richard III*

Under a dynamic young professional director, in a fresh new venue, the studio theatre at the York Theatre Royal and with confirmed production dates of 20th to 23rd March 2001, we are now looking for the best cast and supporting team that York and its surrounding area has to offer.

Auditions will take place at St Martin's Church, Micklegate, York on two Saturdays, 8 and

15th September 2001 starting at 10.00 am and finishing at 4.00 pm.

If you are interested in either acting or taking part in any other way in the production, then please complete and return the form that has been sent out to you in the recent mail shot. Additional form: can be obtained by contacting the project secretary, Ali Borthwick on (01904) 421466. Auditions times will be forwarded to you once arranged.

We're on the web too!

As if you hadn't already seen enough of us in the local press, our website is now up and running too.

Provided by our sponsor The Software People and designed by Spotty Dog Design, we hope that the website will prove to be popular. You can find it at:

www.york-shakespeare-project.org.uk

Visit our sponsor too at:

www.the-software-people.co.uk

Visit our website today and let us know what you think.

Junior Members

To reflect the response that we have received from individuals under 18 years old who wish to become members of the YSP, we have created a new level of membership – Associate.

For £2.50 per annum, our junior, sorry associate members will be able to receive this newsletter and all mailshots but will not have voting rights.

YSP Social Events

We plan to raise extra funds for the project – and have a good time too – through events such as pub quizzes and murder mystery evenings. Any suggestions or assistance towards these events are welcomed from members.