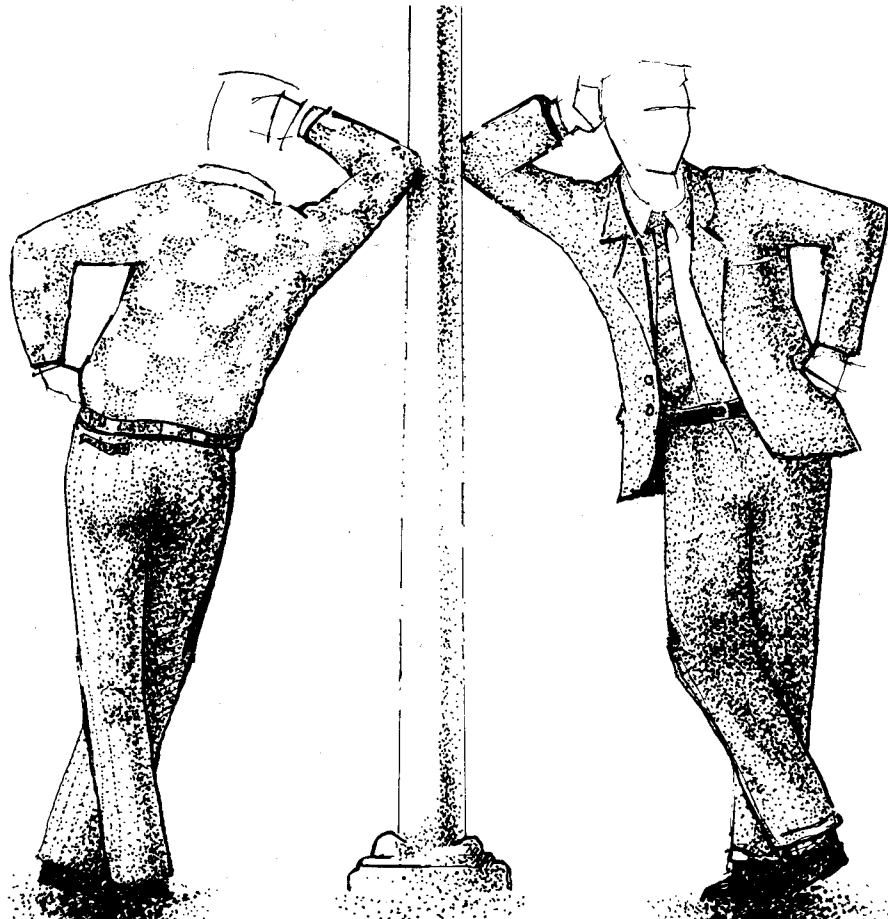


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Henry IV Part I

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presents

Henry IV Part I

By
William Shakespeare

Directed By
Roderick Menzies

March 15-25
1989

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Director's Notes

In this post-modern era on the brink of the 1990's I found myself approaching Shakespeare's renaissance remake of medieval history with ambivalence. The obvious power of the warrior hero myth, evoked through Shakespeares's intoxicating language, struggled with my aversion to militarism in this nuclear age.

Faced with the spectre of nuclear holocaust we seem to have fallen into a psychic numbness that allows us to deny the depth of the crisis and to live within the illusion of security indeed from the cocoon of this numbness we appear to be growing to a tacit acceptance of our own mass suicide.

Global nuclear destruction even acquires a certain imaginative appeal as we live under its shadow, its allure lies in its potential to make our age more significant than any other in history. In one great tragic-heroic tumult we obliterate all good and all evil, a mythic transformation that is truly larger than life. And particularly appropriate now that we have designated the planet as a non-renewable resource which is about to expire.

Poised as we are between the rubble of crumbling pre-modern values, forged when human life was threatened by the environment, and the imagined horizon of the immolation of the planet, where human life threatens the environment and itself with extinction, how can we lift the veil of illusion from our fearful post-modern eyes and see a hopeful future and not a despairing one? Can we acknowledge the depth of the crisis and yet continue as if what we think and do matters? Possibly, but not if we perpetuate the militaristic world of King Henry in the age of nuclear arms.

Perhaps Falstaff offers a useful alternative to the politics of confrontation and dominance. For, if we are to live as people of hope in today's world and not slip into numbness or despair, then our sense of concern for our continuance must be matched by a sense of humor and a spirit of play.

Please enjoy!

Rod Menzies

Director's Notations

Enter *the* Lady.

How now Kate, I must leave you within these two hours.

La. O my good Lord, why are you thus alone? *WHY DID YOU MAKE THIS DECISION IN SECRET?*

For what offence haue I this fortnight bin banish'd woman from my Harries bed? *DO YOU STILL LOVE ME?*

Tell me (sweet Lord) what is't that takes from thee Thy stomacke, pleasure, and thy golden sleepe? *SEVEN UNANSWERED QUESTIONS*

Why dost thou bend thine eyes vpon the earth? *SEXUAL PASSION*

And start so often when thou sitt'st alone?

Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheekes?

And giuen my Treasures and my rights of thee, To thicke-ey'd musing, and curst melancholly?

In my faint-slumbers, I by thee haue watcht, And heard thee murmore tales of Iron Warres; *CAPITALS*

Speake tearmes of manage to thy bounding Steed, Cry courage to the field. And thou hast talk'd Of Sallies, and Retires; Trenches, Tents, *LONG SPELLING*

Of Palizadoes, Frontiers, Parapets, *LIST OF WAR IMAGES (FEMALE VIEWPOINT?)*

Of Bafiliskes, of Canon, Culuerin, Of Prisoners of sarme, and of Souldiers slaine, And all the current of a headdy fight. *CAPITAL LETTER, LONG SPELLING*

Thy spirit within thee hath beene so at Warre, And thus hath so bestirr'd thee in thy sleepe, That beds of sweate hath stood vpon thy Brow, *CAPITAL*

Like bubbles in a late-disturbed Streame; *CAPITAL, LONG SPELLING*

And in thy face strange motions haue appear'd, Such as we see when men restraints their breath

On some great sodaine hast. O what portents are these? Some heauie businesse hath my Lord in hand, And I must know it: else he loues me not. *THE REAL QUESTION IN THE SCENE*

Hot. What ho; Is Gilliams with the Packet gone?

Ser. He is my Lord, an houre agoe.

Hot. Hath Butler brought those horses fro the Sheriffe? *"DO YOU LOVE ME?"*

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Art, Life and Politics

Henry IV Part I begins in the middle of a long political struggle: the reign of King Henry is threatened by the reverberations of a crisis for which he himself is responsible. The play is the second of four in which Shakespeare explores the events leading up to and following from Henry's wresting of the crown from the previous, and legitimate, king, Richard II. Henry's former supporters, men like the Earl of Northumberland and the latter's son Hotspur, are now his enemies, and his pious plans to lead a crusade to the Holy Land must now be deflected to meet the increasing political disorder in his own kingdom. Hotspur and the rest of the rebels, disaffected with Henry and feeling disempowered themselves, have taken up the claim to the throne of Hotspur's brother-in-law, the young Edmund Mortimer, who is himself a scion of the royal house.

The political interest and relevance of these events during the last years of Elizabeth I's reign (the play was written six years before her death in 1603) can hardly be exaggerated. Though Shakespeare was writing "history", the issues were far from dead. Questions of the succession were again burning ones - Elizabeth had no heir and refused to name one. In 1601, followers of the Earl of Essex sponsored a performance of Shakespeare's *Richard II* (which dramatises Henry IV's usurpation and Richard's murder) on the eve of an abortive rebellion designed to put the Earl on the throne. They clearly regarded their hero as a second Henry ready to remove an incompetent monarch from power, and just as clearly they viewed Shakespeare's play as an appropriate weapon to wield in their struggle.

But in *Henry IV Part I*, Shakespeare is not content to tell only a political story. Audiences today, in fact, are likely to regard the political disorders as secondary to the disorderly events in the tavern, where the unruly Falstaff holds his mock court. His "prince" is indeed a prince, the "heir apparent," Prince Hal, and therein lies the problem. Henry IV doesn't like his son hanging around in the brothels and ale-houses. He has enough on hands trying to deal with Hotspur's rebellion, let alone that of his eldest son. So...we can see that the play presents an elaborate set of parallels: Hotspur, the "king of honour," contesting at court and in the field the authority of the crowned, but less than perfectly legitimate, Henry; Falstaff, in the tavern and eventually also in the field, contesting not only kingly

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authority but the very principles on which it seeks to base itself; Hal, covert, ambiguous, manipulative, moving deftly from one terrain to the other.

In all three domains (court, country, tavern), power is at issue: getting it, maintaining it, losing it. But it is Prince Hal's pursuit of power that appears most problematic. The play presents the familiar story of the prodigal son who reforms in time to defeat his enemy and regain the favor of his father. But Hal is a slippery character - good humoured and generous on the one hand, detached, canny, and manipulative on the other. He is not a real prodigal at all, but a shrewd and charming politician who uses those around him as foils to set off the glitter of his eventual reformation. Thus when he seems at his most subversive, he is actually practicing and consolidating his royal power.

The interpretation of Hal is pivotal; he can be portrayed more or less positively, but how he is seen will likely affect the overall conception of the play and the other major characters. A harsh reading of the character will darken the play, while an air of boyish naivete will lighten it. The former kind of reading has been favored in most recent productions - perhaps because of our contemporary tendency to distrust political power. Often too, such productions have generated cynical interpretation of Hotspur's honour, and a conception of Falstaff that emphasizes the venal rather than the witty and expansive side of the fat knight.

In the end, Shakespeare's plays always offer multiple choices about how they are to be interpreted - which is one of the reasons they keep being revived. Different generations, different decades, different localities will read and represent Shakespeare in their own ways, often telling us as much about themselves as they do about the texts. In that sense, the plays are a kind of cultural cipher, a sign of our concerns. How we read Shakespeare mirrors, to use a favorite Renaissance image for the relation between art and life, how we read our own political and social world.

Anthony Dawson

Professor Dawson teaches in the Department of English at U.B.C.

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A Note on A Shakespeare Music Catalogue

The result of a six-year effort by a research team, led by Dr. Bryan N.S. Gooch and Dr. David Thatcher and based at the University of Victoria, *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue* is now in the hands of Oxford University Press. When published, the *Catalogue* will consist of five volumes. The first three are devoted, in the main, to annotated listings of music, in print and in manuscript, connected in any way with Shakespeare. Details of close to 20,000 works are provided, and compositions include incidental music, operas, ballets, and other stage works, non-theatrical vocal and instrumental pieces, obliquely related music, settings of combined texts, etc. The pieces in the first three volumes are arranged according to play, sonnet, and other works. The fourth volume consists of a number of cross reference indices, allowing access to the material by virtue of composers' and librettists' names, first lines, and titles. The fifth volume is a selected, annotated bibliography of books, articles, dissertations, and reviews - some 3000 items - on the subject of Shakespeare music.

The Catalogue constitutes a significant contribution to the world of Shakespeare scholarship. It will prove useful not only to musicians and musicologists but also to literary specialists, theatre historians, and producers - indeed, to all those interested in the relationship of music and literature. It will facilitate, for instance, comparative study of various treatments of Shakespeare texts - in or between particular countries and periods - and will allow those involved in production to consider, for example, the effect of the vast number of incidental compositions which have been written for the plays, especially from the mid-seventeenth Century to the present. All the plays, except for *The Comedy of Errors*, specifically require music, and that which is used can have a profound impact on the nature of a production and, obviously, on the interpretation of single roles. Beyond this, of course, it is hoped that the *Catalogue*, in making better known the wealth of music which Shakespeare and his writings have inspired all over the world, will prompt a fresh look at -and performances of- a great deal of splendid material which has been, in many cases, undeservedly neglected.

The preparation of the *Catalogue* has been made possible through the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and of the University of Victoria, the dedication of members of the research team (including Odean Long, who has been Associate Editor, and Dr. Peter Loeffler, of the Department of Theatre at U.B.C., who served as Research Fellow), and the assistance of institutions and individuals in many countries. The extent of the documentation in the volumes is a testimony to the range of inspiration in the musical world which the works of Shakespeare continue to stimulate.

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