

PROSCENIUM

King Charles III

By Mike Bartlett

King Charles III

Wednesday 31st October to Saturday 3rd November 2018
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

King Charles III

The Cast

King Charles III	Mark Sutherland
Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall	Janet Harrison
William, Duke of Cambridge.....	Ben Morris
Kate, Duchess of Cambridge.....	Izzie Cartwright
Prince Harry	James Stephen
James Reiss	Mike Williams
Mr Evans (Prime Minister).....	Duncan Sykes
Spencer / Nick / Paul	Charles Anthony
Sir Gordon / Archbishop	Alan Glover
Cootsy / TV Producer / Terry	Stephen Koranteng
Jess / Ghost.....	Clare Wooster
Mrs Stevens (Opposition Leader).....	Meera Sarin
Sarah / Newspaper Vendor	Crystal Anthony
Clive / Butler / Servant.....	Arnold Glickman
Speaker of the House.....	Anne Gerrard
Sir Michael.....	Alan Bobroff
Monarchist Protestor	Caroline Shanbury
MPs / Protestors / Press.....	Members of the Cast
Designed and Directed by.....	Anton Jungreuthmayer
Stage Manager.....	Angie Sutherland
Costume Supervisor.....	Angela Evans
Lighting & Sound Operation.....	Anton Jungreuthmayer
Rehearsal Prompt	Debbie Keating-Jungreuthmayer

The action takes place in and around Westminster and the Royal Palaces during the weeks and months after the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

Our thanks to Pirton Players, and Shirley Wootten

Director's note

Queen Elizabeth II is dead. After a lifetime of waiting, her son ascends the throne. A future of power but how to rule? Drawing on the style and structure of Shakespeare, Mike Bartlett's controversial "future history play" explores the people beneath the crowns, the unwritten rules of our democracy and the conscience of Britain's most famous family.

I was fascinated to see how one of our most celebrated modern playwrights would use Shakespeare's style and form to tell a story of modern times. The play is in five acts, is written largely in verse, has a comic sub plot and deals with some of the largest questions of the day. Although written before the Brexit vote, and thus not addressing the issue directly, it has much to say on the question of power - who controls it, who exercises it and who in the end has the ultimate say, the monarchy, parliament, the press or the people - questions which continue to dominate the national discourse.

As the play was written in 2013 events have to some extent overtaken us - Prince Harry for instance is depicted as a lost prince, a somewhat feckless young man who finds no purpose in his role as second fiddle to his elder brother. We know in reality his position has recently changed but this of course is not a documentary. It is not a pastiche, nor is it a send-up of the royals or politicians. I have been keen when casting the play not to try to find physical lookalikes, nor have the actors tried to do impressions of these characters - after all, when we present Henry V or Julius Caesar we don't worry about what the real historical figures looked like. We are attempting to uncover some other truth about the themes behind the play, rather than trying to fool the audience into thinking they are watching the real thing.

Proscenium has been producing contemporary and classic plays including Shakespeare since 1924, so I was keen to see how much of our experience in the genre would transfer across. I was also lucky enough to be involved in the RSC Open Stages project a couple of years ago, and wanted to make sure many of the approaches and practices developed through that experience could be followed through to this production.

It has been a fascinating process and I hope you get as much enjoyment from watching it as we have had putting it together.

Anton Jungreuthmayer

Mike Bartlett

Mike Bartlett was born on 7 October 1980 in Oxford, England. He attended Abingdon School, then studied English and Theatre Studies at the University of Leeds.

Bartlett's debut, *My Child* (Royal Court, May 2007) saw him hailed by The Stage as 'one of the most exciting new talents to emerge in recent times'. He is a multi-award winning playwright and screenwriter. Series 2 of *Doctor Foster* aired on BBC in 2017, as did his adaptation of his stage play *King Charles III*. He was Associate Playwright at Paines Plough, Writer-In-Residence at the National Theatre, and Pearson Playwright in Residence at The Royal Court Theatre.

His play *King Charles III* won the Critic's Circle Award for Best New Play, Olivier Award for Best New Play and was nominated for a Tony Award for Best New Play. *Love Love Love* won Best New Play in the 2011 Theatre Awards UK, *Cock* won an Olivier Award in 2010 for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre, he won the Writer's Guild Tinniswood and Imison prizes for *Not Talking*, and the Old Vic New Voices Award for *Artefacts*.

His television series *The Town* was nominated for a BAFTA for Breakthrough Talent. *Doctor Foster* also earned BAFTA nominations (Radio Times Audience Award, Best Mini Series, Best Leading Actress – Suranne Jones (win)). Bartlett won Outstanding Newcomer for British Television Writing at the British Screenwriters' Awards 2016 for *Doctor Foster*.

Mike Bartlett on Harvey Weinstein

...He [Mike Bartlett] still feels most at home in the theatre. "If TV went horribly wrong, I'd shuffle off and say 'I'm going to write a play please.' I love being in a rehearsal room, that's where I naturally live." He had a brief brush with Hollywood when *King Charles III* transferred from the Almeida to Broadway and Harvey Weinstein called him in for a meeting. "He was just a horrific man. We talked about Charles – which he hadn't read – and he said, 'We could get Pacino to play Charles!' Then someone brought up the fact it was in verse and he said, 'Well we won't do that.' Immediately I thought this is a world I never want to be part of. There wasn't any sense of the sexual stuff, but even that sense of one person being that powerful and what I would have to be in service to him... I was out."

Alice Jones, iNews, September 5th 2018

Monarchy and Statesmanship

“A constitutional statesman is in general a man of common opinions and uncommon abilities.”

Walter Bagehot, 1826-1877

“The best reason why Monarchy is a strong government is that it is an intelligible government. The mass of mankind understand it, and they hardly anywhere in the world understand any other.”

Walter Bagehot, 1826-1877

Prince Charles – by one who knows him

...He is a complex individual, many-faceted, not always at ease with himself or the world...he can be selfish and inconsistent, he is prone to be tetchy from time to time and he is even known to lose his rag. He has known intense personal sorrow and his first marriage failed. He is apt to think that he is misunderstood, and he occasionally succumbs to gloom and even moments of despair.

On the other hand, he is not vainglorious or arrogant. He is thoughtful and intelligent; he has an enviable memory and powerful emotions of the better kind. He is courteous, kind, compassionate and sensitive. He is moved easily to tears by individual suffering or sublime music. He relishes and recites Shakespeare. He is reduced to helpless laughter by Spike Milligan and Rowan Atkinson. He is an entertaining mimic, especially of pompous foreign dignitaries and he spins anecdotes in a way that would have impressed Peter Ustinov. None of this makes him unique but it does make him a human being...

Jonathan Dimbleby, The Guardian, November 13th 2013

Mike Bartlett on *King Charles III*

The idea for *King Charles III* arrived in my imagination with the form and content very clear, and inextricably linked. It would be a play about the moment Charles takes the throne, and how his conscience would lead him to refuse to sign a bill into law. An epic royal family drama, dealing with power and national constitution, was the content, and therefore the form had surely to be Shakespearean. It would need five acts, quite possibly a comic subplot, but most worryingly, the majority of it would have to be in verse.

This was terrifying. Verse is one thing (and a thing I knew very little about), but verse drama? And a form of verse drama that would lay this play alongside the greatest literature in the English language? All of this was enough to stop me writing a word, so for two years the play remained merely a good idea – unspoiled by any attempt to write it into reality. Eventually I mentioned it to the director Rupert Goold, who commissioned it straight away, and then pestered me into confronting it. ... [but] I needed to practise. I wrote lines and lines of iambic pentameter, speaking it round the house to myself, trying to get to the point where I might be able to improvise the verse fluidly, hoping that if I could, the writing would be driven by the desires and thoughts of the characters, rather than aesthetics or metric requirements...

It also took me a while to find the right tone for the play, and to understand how important dramatic context is. ... The vocabulary the characters used, and their verse, even though heightened, couldn't stray too far from the language we would believe them to speak day to day. These are not fairy tale characters: we want to believe in them as the real people we know exist. I found the same words cropping up often – just to fill the demands of the metre...I also had to avoid lines with monosyllabic words, because, spoken out loud, they expose the rhythm too much.

Having done my tests, and feeling a little more confident, I planned the play, again and again. There was indeed a subplot, of Harry falling in love with a commoner art student. Diana's ghost would make an appearance. But the planning was mainly to make sure the plot significantly moved forward in every scene, and did so through knotty problems that posed deep familial and constitutional problems. This meant that when I came to write the scenes there would be a lot for the characters to achieve through verse – they would use the language as rhetoric to get what they want.

Finally then, having settled on a plan, I began to write, and ended up pretty much going from beginning to end. With other plays I've written very fast: I'm

keen for the energy of the moment to translate on to the page, so characters say things that surprise me. But with *Charles III*, the verse slowed me down. And I found I loved it. The writing became more considered, rather than impulsive. To paraphrase Charles in the play, it felt "slow cooked" rather than "microwaved", and so as the play emerged I felt it was something very different from anything I'd written before.

...In performance, audiences seemed to enjoy it. Some of them didn't realise it was in verse until they saw the text on the page. At first I thought this was a shame, but I quickly understood that it meant they were enjoying it for all the right reasons – meaning, imagery, character – rather than worrying about the technical aspects. Surely this is true in every element of theatre. The audience wants the lighting to enhance the mood and atmosphere of the scene – not to wonder how the lanterns are attached or wired...

And now, despite saying how this form was uniquely connected to the content, and I can't imagine ever writing another play in verse, I'm not so sure. I hugely enjoyed the process of writing this play, more than any play I'd written before. I loved what heightened language could do in a scene, and being able to have a character explore inner decision-making and psychology with an audience. I'd be sad never to have access to all these modes again. So I reserve the right to return to verse drama one day. Even iambic pentameter. *King William V?*

Mike Bartlett, The Guardian, September 20th 2014

Mike Bartlett on Prince Harry

“When we did the play, I wrote him sort of late 20s, still going to clubs, still living that sort of life. Now we're three, four years later, and he's grown a beard. He's a bit more in his 30s and being much more open about his dissatisfactions and his frustrations. For the film, that's our starting point with Harry as a man [for whom] it used to be fine for him to go to a club, but he's at that age now where if he goes clubbing now, it might look a bit sad. He's aware of that, so what does he do now? I think that's been really interesting, because it's actually made him more poignant.”

Mike Bartlett Interview, IndieWire, May 2017

Our Next Production

A View From The Bridge

By Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller's intense play weaves a darkening journey of hidden truths, passion and betrayal. Eddie Carbone, a Brooklyn longshoreman, confronts his emotions as his wife Beatrice's niece Catherine falls in love with Rodolfo, a family cousin recently arrived from Sicily with his brother Marco, and welcomed into the household.

Miller draws on traditional cultural themes, and also his own experiences in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee to create a classic drama that explores the ideals of conviction and loyalty, and the depths of despair that emotions can take us to, seemingly without control.

Throughout the piece, he bridges the gap between the individual and the bigger picture through the narrative of Alfieri, his Italian-American lawyer.

This is the great Arthur Miller, and at his poignant best.....

Directed by Duncan Sykes
30th January to 2nd February 2019

7:45 pm, Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Ben Morris
Chair : David Pearson

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk