

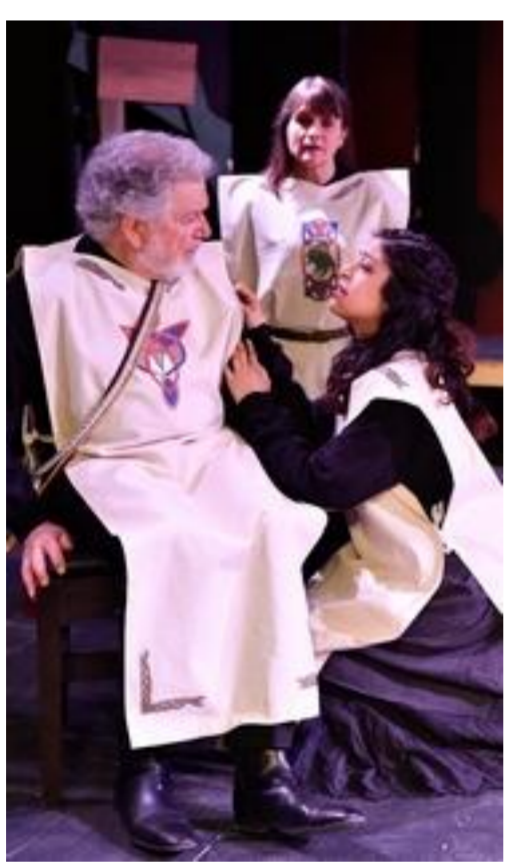
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THEATER REVIEW: The challenges of 'King Lear'

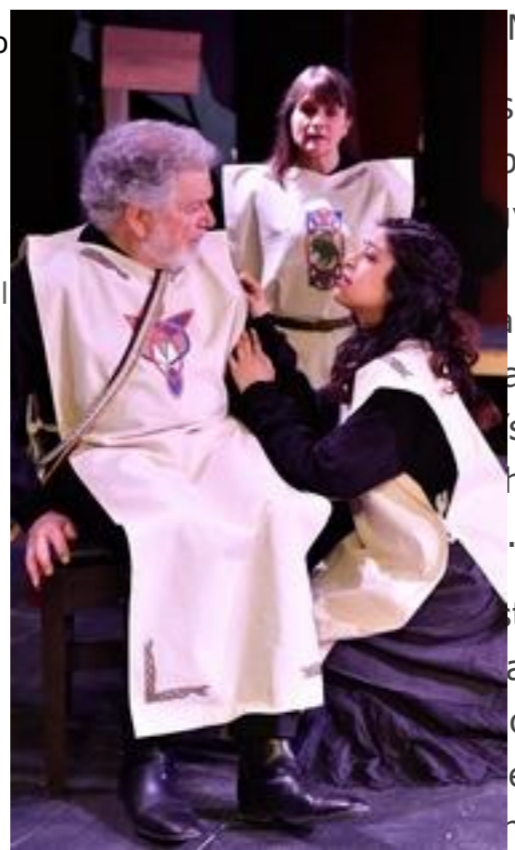
"King Lear" demands much, even from the most ardent Shakespearean. For audiences, the dire condition of Lear's mind, the unrelenting descent of the plot, and the bitter conclusion, leave little room for comfort. For players, the strangeness of the action, the abrupt transformations of the characters ...

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Joseph Stiliano as King Lear, Ariel Sargent as Cordelia, and Beth Bevins as Messenger Attendant, center, in a scene from Cape Ann Shakespeare Troupe's 'King Lear.' Wicked Local Staff Photo / David Sokol



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By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted May. 4, 2016 at 5:28 PM

GLOUCESTER
By Keith Powers / Correspondent

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GLOUCESTER

If you go...

WHAT: Cape Ann Shakespeare Troupe's "King Lear"

WHERE: Gorton Theatre, 267 East Main St., Gloucester

May 8
\$10 student, \$5 under 19. At the
by emailing
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Now in its eighth season, the Cape Ann Shakespeare Troupe has successfully negotiated

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Joseph Stiliano as King Lear, Ariel Sargent as Cordelia, and Beth Bayins as Messenger Attendant, center, in a scene from Cape Ann Shakespeare Troupe's 'King Lear.' Wicked Local Staff Photo. / David Sokol



the greater portion of Shakespeare's works. CAST has brought its first "King Lear" to the Gorton Theatre stage now through May 8, and many of the challenges of this noble and intriguing drama were evident in the ensemble's production.

Artist director Joseph Stiliano took the title role, with Ray Jenness as his doomed confident Gloucester. The set seemed promising: a wide open stage, with a single riser along the back, some ramps and platforms. It proved unobtrusive, and versatile enough to encompass action that moves from royal chambers to battlefield to storm-lashed forests.

Simple costuming also worked. White tunics easily identified all the characters as being from a different era (different even in Shakespeare's time), with insignias marking the hierarchies of nobility.

The density of the text, and basic problems of volume, overwhelmed the performance. The deep stage, with occasional sound effects (like the

famous storm scene) layered over the speaking parts, required full-voice actors projecting at their loudest volume. That did not happen, and much of the dialogue was inaudible.

It was not the strongest night for many of the players. Far too many lines were dropped or clipped, leaving some stage-mates stuck trying to improvise their way uncomfortably out of incomplete exchanges.

Unfortunately Luke Miller, cast in the seminal (to the play's complex subplot, at least) role of Edmund, was ill, and assistant director Nick Neyeloff was forced to step in and read the role. He gave it his determined best, but holding a script and acting out fight scenes and other physical interactions just does not work.

Several characters stood out with vigorous interpretations of their roles. Stephen Turner's Kent was confidently played. Each of Lear's trio of daughters — Katharine Jordan (Regan), Hannah Pentico (Goneril) and Ariel Sargent (Cordelia) — wrapped themselves thoroughly in their parts. Matthew Recine's Fool, a prominent role, was well-conceived and acted, although casual blocking sometimes moved his vocal projection out of the audience's range.

Annegret Reimer directed the production. The demands on the players are unforgiving in many ways, with changing settings, multiple physical confrontations, and characters assuming hidden identities. Much of that was worked out suitably, and much was not. Minor mishaps with dropped properties distracted from the forward momentum as well.

"King Lear" is a great work that has kept the stage (in many versions) over the centuries, and been read and interpreted by the incisive thinkers as diverse as Freud and Adler, critics from Johnson to Hazlitt to Bloom to Vendler, and actors of the highest caliber.

Its themes remain lively, some surprisingly so: gender politics, loyalty and its demands, the nature of human relationships, jealousy and the risks in requiring proof of affection. Although this is an unhelpful anachronism, in many ways "King Lear" is the first Alzheimer's play — a sophisticated look at the bewildering decay of human reason.

Subsequent nights during CAST's run of "King Lear" should prove more crisp, and more satisfactory engagement for both audiences and players.

Cape Ann Shakespeare Troupe's "King Lear" runs through May 8 at the Gorton Theatre (home of the Gloucester Stage Company). Shows are May 5, 6, and 7 at 7:30 p.m. and May 8 at 3 p.m. For tickets and information visit www.capeannshakespearertroupe.blogspot.com.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR's ARTery. Follow @PowersKeith; email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com

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All Day

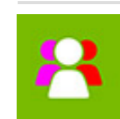
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Rabies Vaccination Clinic

4:00 pm

Essex Memorial Fire Station



Fitness Class

6:30 pm

Rockport Elementary School



Fitness Class at Rockport Elementary School

6:30 pm

Rockport Elementary School

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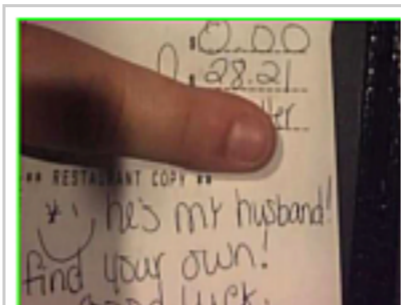
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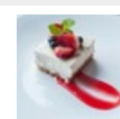
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Wednesday, May 4, 2016



Boston Bakes for Breast Cancer

All Day

Cala's



Rabies Vaccination Clinic

4:00 pm

Essex Memorial Fire Station



Fitness Class

6:30 pm

Rockport Elementary School



Fitness Class at Rockport Elementary School

6:30 pm

Rockport Elementary School

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