

KING LEAR

BY **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**
DIRECTED BY **MARION POTTS**
STARRING **JOHN BELL**



Tips for coping with old age, retirement and ungrateful children.

To celebrate Bell Shakespeare's 20th anniversary, its founder and Artistic Director John Bell plays one of the greatest roles in the Shakespearean canon in *King Lear*, directed by award-winning Bell Shakespeare Associate Artistic Director, Marion Potts.

When the ageing King Lear prepares to divide his kingdom, he asks his three daughters how much they love him. Two tell him what he wants to hear and the third is disinherited and banished to France. From there, it's just a short trip to total chaos.

Written during his prolific "golden" period, Shakespeare revisits the ancient legend of Leir of Britain and applies his uncompromising insight into humankind. He replaces the story's happy ending with a tragic conclusion. He transforms a fairy-tale of Good versus Evil into an epic journey of moral ambiguity. He takes a story of wrongs being righted, and turns it into a story of painful discovery.

Set in a post-Christian world, the notion of a Godless or ethically rudderless society is at the centre of Marion Potts' production. From the prosperity of the play's beginning, the audience is taken on a journey into the moral vacuum that is left when a society breaks down. On stage are the apocalyptic consequences of betraying our own dignity and human worth.

Joining John Bell is a superb cast including Peter Carroll as the Fool, Victoria Longley as Goneril, Leah Purcell as Regan and Susan Prior as Cordelia. Together they will interrogate our society's own cultural and familial sensitivities. The notion of a Lear who until now has managed to keep his people's rivalries and blood feuds at bay makes all-too-tragic sense. The blindness of his actions, his confused attempt to be king of his family and father to his country, his desire to quantify love and set parameters, are all recognisable factors in his plight.

Marion Potts' production sees Bell take on the role of Lear for the third time – the first was in the 1984 Nimrod production, directed by Aubrey Mellor, the second for Bell Shakespeare in 1998, directed by Barrie Kosky.

Marion Potts says: "*King Lear* is a work of startling breadth, as personal as it is epic: its focus shifts from family to community, to country and beyond. It examines the kingdom of the heart and questions the very centre of our moral being."

John Bell says: "I've played Lear twice before but I still approach it with some trepidation – and huge excitement. What a privilege to explore that play again. It's a blistering deconstruction of monarchy, of patriarchy of family, of our assumptions about human nature. Lear is not so much 'mad' as liberated – free to discover his filiation with the rest of humankind."

DIRECTOR
MARION POTTS

DESIGNER
DALE FERGUSON

LIGHTING DESIGNER
NICK SCHLIEPER

SOUND DESIGNER
STEFAN GREGORY

COMPOSER & PERFORMER
BREE VAN REYK

WITH
JOHN BELL
PETER CARROLL
VICTORIA LONGLEY
YALIN OZUCELIK
SUSAN PRIOR
LEAH PURCELL

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