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Dramatic Publishing

The Final Trial of Richard III

A One-Act

Courtroom Drama

by

MARY W. SCHALLER



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE FINAL TRIAL OF RICHARD III)

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THE FINAL TRIAL OF RICHARD III

A One-Act Courtroom Drama
for Sixteen Men, Eight Women, with doubling*

CAST LIST

BAILIFF

TIME the judge
HISTORY the prosecutor
RUMOR assistant prosecutor
RICHARD III the defendant
CHARITY defense counsel
SIR THOMAS MORE historian
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE playwright
COUNTESS OF DESMOND a child in the court of
Edward IV & an old lady in the court of Elizabeth I
QUEEN ELIZABETH WOODVILLE .. wife of Edward IV
QUEEN ANNE NEVILLE wife of Richard III
CLERK OF THE COURT

THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN: PLAYERS-WITHIN-THE-PLAY

PLAYER RICHARD the Player
BRACKENBURY lieutenant of the Tower
GEORGE, DUKE OF CLARENCE ... brother of Edward
IV & Richard III
PRINCE EDWARD Little Prince in the Tower
RICHARD, DUKE OF YORK . Little Prince in the Tower
DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM supporter of Richard III
who turned traitor
JAMES TYRREL henchman of Richard III
DIGHTON murderer one
FORREST murderer two
CATESBY supporter of Richard III
HENRY TUDOR later King Henry VII
ANNE NEVILLE, the Player Edward IV's Queen
GHOST OF EDWARD OF LANCASTER Anne's first
husband

GHOST OF HENRY VI father of Edward of
Lancaster
MESSENGER

*NOTE: The PLAYERS, with the exceptions of RICHARD, ANNE, ELIZABETH, GEORGE, and THE LITTLE PRINCES can take double parts.

TIME: The Eve of the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth Field

PLACE: A Courtroom in Eternity

THE FINAL TRIAL OF RICHARD III was first performed on November 16, 1985 at Washington Irving School, Springfield, Virginia by the Shakespeare Class of the Fairfax County Recreation Department.

ORIGINAL CAST

Richard III, the defendant Jerry Reece
Time Kurt Bose
Bailiff Keene Parker
Clerk Terri Anderson
History Kala Leggett
Rumor Kathleen Robinson
Charity Libby Goodwin
Sir Thomas More Meaghan Parker
William Shakespeare Shannon Sheehan
Queen Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV Julie Harman
Queen Anne, wife of Richard III Stephanie Penny
Countess of Desmond Julie Zielaskiewicz

ORIGINAL CAST

THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN

Richard III, the Player	Pat Sheehan
Murderer One	Lance Murchison
Murderer Two	Patrika Mani
Murderer Three	Sabrina Sandusky
Brackenbury	Bridget Casucci
Duke of Clarence	Bill Wright
Prince Edward	Cami St. Germain
Duke of York	Carol Blosser
Duke of Buckingham	Anne Turner
Queen Elizabeth, the Player	Donnis McMullin
Queen Anne, the Player	Suzen Mason
Tyrrel	Kathleen Burns
Dighton	Kim Christie-Mill
Ghost of Edward of Lancaster	Michelle Saari
Ghost of Henry VI	Mark Lane
Henry Tudor	Brian Cabe
Assistant Director	Brian Cabe
Stage Managers	Mark Lane and Michelle Saari

To the original cast and crew,
for whom it was written,
and most especially,
to Jerry,
with my deep appreciation.

M. W. S.

THE FINAL TRIAL OF RICHARD III

PROLOGUE: *The curtain is closed. The BAILIFF steps before the curtain and speaks directly to the audience.*

BAILIFF. Welcome to the final trial of Richard III. Richard III was a complex man: a scholar who was forced to become a soldier; a relentless general who built churches and founded colleges. He learned the art of warfare and executions without trial from the most ruthless man of the age, the Earl of Warwick, known to history as "The Kingmaker." Richard learned to kill before he was old enough to learn to love. He was born at the height of the gangster brawls known afterward as the Wars of the Roses: York against Lancaster. The prize was the crown of England itself. The times were violent and Richard was thrust into the forefront of events by Destiny. Richard was born in the Middle Ages. At his death on Bosworth Field thirty-two years later, the Renaissance had already dawned. He was a man caught in the transition of the times. Was he as evil and as cold-blooded as his reputation would have us believe? Or was Richard III a reflection of his period? By the magic of Theatre, you, our audience, will cease to be mere spectators of what is to follow. Instead, you have stepped into the framework of our drama and have now become the jury at our trial. You, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, will listen to the testimony. You will weigh the evidence. You will render the verdict. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, "your humble patience we pray: gently to hear and kindly to judge our play."

SCENE: *The curtain opens to reveal a Courtroom in Eternity. The BAILIFF walks into the scene and takes his place at the rear of the Gallery section. The JUDGE's bench, which is currently vacant, and the witness box*

are downstage right. At the UC stage position is the prosecution table where HISTORY and RUMOR are going over their notes. The defense table is downstage of them. RICHARD III is seated alone at this table. His wife, ANNE NEVILLE, is seated just behind him in the first row of the Gallery. The Gallery is filled with the remaining members of the cast, including the players.

BAILIFF. Hear ye, hear ye, this court is now in session. Draw near and give attention all who have business in this court. The Right Honorable Judge, Venerable Time, presiding. All rise.

(All stand as TIME, in judge's robes and wig enters and seats himself at the bench.)

BAILIFF. Be seated. *(All sit.)*

TIME. Master Bailiff, please read the indictment.

BAILIFF. Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the indictment reads as follows: that Richard, Duke of Gloucester and afterward King of England, known as Richard III, being ill-formed both of body and of mind, did willfully murder or caused to be murdered the following persons: Henry VI; Edward, Prince of Lancaster; George, Duke of Clarence; Edward V; his brother, Richard, Duke of York and Queen Anne, his own wife, thus branding Richard III as the most evil king in English history. *(RICHARD visibly controls his anger at these charges.)* This court has been convened to settle once and for all these accusations.

TIME. Thank you, Master Bailiff. The indictment against Richard III has been read. Is the prosecution present?

HISTORY *(rising)*. We are, Your Honor.

TIME. Master History, is it? So *you* are the Prosecutor?

HISTORY. So please the court, Your Honor. I am well-acquainted with this case, having pursued it for the last 500 years.

TIME. I see. Very well, then. I note that you have an

assistant counselor. Introduce her to the court for the record.

HISTORY. Your Honor, the Lady Rumor is my associate. She, too, is well-versed in this matter.

RUMOR (*standing*). So please Your Honor.

TIME. It does not please me much to see History and Rumor together in this case.

HISTORY. We have often worked together before, Your Honor.

TIME. I am well aware of that, Master History, and many times it has been an ill-matched union. Nevertheless, since Rumor had a great hand in this matter in the past, I will allow her to remain, however she is *your* responsibility.

HISTORY. Yes, Your Honor. (*HISTORY and RUMOR sit down.*)

TIME. Is the defense here present?

RICHARD. I am, Your Honor. (*Rises.*)

TIME. Richard III! Where is your defense counselor?

RICHARD. Your Honor, my name and reputation have been so blackened over the centuries that no lawyer will take my case. But it is no matter. I will represent myself, as I always have, in my own defense.

TIME. To be fair, you must have some legal counsel in these proceedings. Is there no one here who would undertake to represent the defendant, Richard III? (*Silence.*) No one at all?

CHARITY (*rising from her place in the back of the Gallery*). Your Honor, though I am not prepared for this case, I cannot stand by and see this man be defenseless and alone against the world. I'll defend him to the best of my ability, so please the court.

TIME. Approach the bench and be recognized.

CHARITY (*coming forward*). I am Charity, Your Honor. I am seldom seen in court.

RUMOR (*snickering*). Charity! Then our case is as good as won right now if Richard's only defense is Charity!

TIME. Silence! Silence in this court!

HISTORY (*rising*). We welcome Mistress Charity to the bar, Your Honor.

TIME. And so you should. Richard III, do you accept Charity as your court-appointed defense counsel?

RICHARD. Your Honor, I wish to remain as my own counselor as I know more of the facts at hand. If you and Charity will agree, she can be my assistant in legal matters.

TIME. Charity?

CHARITY. I accept, Your Honor.

TIME. Very well, I will allow it. Take your place and proceed.

RUMOR (*as CHARITY seats herself next to RICHARD*).

Charity! Is that all he can come up with?

HISTORY (*aside*). Quiet! Do you want to get us thrown out of court? Time can be a stern judge.

RUMOR. It's of no matter to me. The case is won already.

TIME. The prosecution, if they are ready, may present their opening statement to the jury.

HISTORY (*rising and coming center*). We are, Your Honor.

TIME. Proceed.

HISTORY (*addressing the audience*). Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, we have come together this day to see that justice, true justice, may be served once and for all. We intend to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Richard III richly deserves the names of Murderer Villain and Devil Incarnate and that he should be forevermore considered unworthy of any place in Eternity save the blackest hole of Hell. In his lifetime, this man, this so-called king, cut a swathe of blood through the length and breadth of England, killing two kings, a brother, nephews, friends and even his own wife to achieve his evil ends. He loved no one, trusted no one and was loyal to none but himself. He deserves eternal condemnation and damnation. (*He returns to his seat as the gallery reacts.*)

TIME. Has the defense an opening statement?

CHARITY (*rises and comes to the center*). Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, in the interest of justice and future generations, my client, Richard III,

wishes to clear his name of the slanders and the lies under which, for five centuries now, he has lived. We ask the court to take into consideration that, thanks to the many writers employed by the Tudor rulers, the good name of Richard III has been given "bad press" - blotted and smeared with the mud thrown by hate and fear. The defense feels that the jury may be prejudiced against the defendant before this trial even starts and we request that the jury keep an open mind to what we shall present for their consideration. Ladies and gentlemen, do not judge yet but, in the true spirit of justice for all upon which our laws are based, open your minds and hearts and let *them* be your guides. (*CHARITY returns to her seat.*)

TIME. Thank you, Counselor. The jury is so instructed. Is the prosecution ready to call its first witness?

HISTORY (*rising*). We are, Your Honor. We call Sir Thomas More to the stand.

BAILIFF. Sir Thomas More come into court! (*MORE rises from the Gallery and is escorted by the BAILIFF to the witness box.*) Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MORE. I do.

BAILIFF. Be seated and state your name and occupation for the record. (*MORE sits as BAILIFF returns to his place.*)

MORE. Sir Thomas More, scholar and writer. I was Lord Chancellor under Henry VIII.

HISTORY (*coming center*). You are considered to be one of the most brilliant men of your age, are you not?

MORE. You are kind to say so, sir.

HISTORY. And among your writings you authored the book, *Utopia* a perennial best seller?

MORE. College professors seem to enjoy it.

HISTORY. And you were canonized a Saint of the Catholic Church after your death?

MORE. It is an honor I neither looked for nor feel worthy of.

HISTORY. Therefore we may assume that whatever you

write would surely have a great deal of thought and truth behind it?

MORE. Yes, as much as it is possible to do so.

HISTORY (*taking some papers from his table*). Your Honor, I have here excerpts from a book by Sir Thomas More entitled *History of Richard III* which I would like to introduce at this time.

TIME. Does the defense have any objection?

CHARITY. No, Your Honor.

TIME. Very well. Clerk, mark the pages as Exhibit A. (*CLERK does so.*) Proceed, Counselor.

HISTORY (*handing the pages to MORE*). Sir Thomas, do you recognize these pages?

MORE. I do.

HISTORY. And did you, in fact, write them?

MORE. I did.

HISTORY. Would you please read aloud to the court the passages I have marked?

MORE (*reading*). "Richard III was little of stature, ill featured of limb, crook back, his left shoulder much higher than his right; hard-favored visage. He was malicious, wrathful, envious..."

RICHARD (*jumping to his feet*). Objection!

CHARITY (*also rising*). Your Honor, we would like to register an objection to this slanderous testimony but we will allow the prosecution to continue...

RICHARD (*looking at CHARITY unbelievably*). Continue!?!

CHARITY. ...to continue his line of questioning. We will refute this statement at a later time. (*CHARITY and RICHARD sit, RICHARD very much disturbed.*)

TIME. I will take note of your objection. Proceed, Master History.

HISTORY. Sir Thomas, why would you write such a description?

MORE. My intention was to show that Richard III's evil character was reflected in his physical appearance.

CHARITY (*rising*). Objection! It has not been proven that Richard possesses an evil character.

TIME. Sustained.