

# Loft

theatre company

## The Hollow Crown



devised by John Barton

Leamington Courier

## Extraordinary tale of British monarchy told with much wit

**The Hollow Crown**  
**Dir: Richard Moore**  
**Loft Theatre, Leamington**  
**Until Saturday**  
**Tickets: 0844 493 4938**

The Hollow Crown first hit the stage in 1961 as a whimsy devised by John Barton and Peter Hall, and has been one of the RSC's most successful productions ever since.

The subject is a good one – the long, bloody and sometimes ridiculous lineage that is the British monarchy.

The format is simple – a small troupe of actors reading aloud from a suite of diaries, speeches, songs, letters, and poems written by monarchs and their minions.

The charm is in the range of voices demanded by the script, the opportunity for

great talents to ham it up a bit, and the warm, funny, sometimes savage tales of power claimed, maintained and exchanged from the time of William the Conqueror through to Queen Victoria.

And what a story it is. Told from many vantage points, this is royalty glimpsed through a half open door.

The key to its power is in the deft choice of texts and their clever juxtaposition.

There is the exchange in letters between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, the first from him when he was full of ardour, the second from her when she was a prisoner in the Tower.

There is the account of the pompous George I's breakdown at the death of his beloved Queen Charlotte.



The cast of *The Hollow Crown*

There are tyrants, and there are victims, treachery and valour. Here myths are made real.

There is so much to commend this rude assemblage

of flawed humanity, deftly played by a great cast.

They clearly had fun presenting it, as did the audience in receiving it.

*Nick Le Mesurier*



### Production team

Director – Richard Moore

### Cast

Company – Michael Barker

Company – Angie Collins

Company – John Fenner

Company – Sue Moore

Company – Julie-Ann Randell

Company – Matthew Salisbury

Company – Ken Thomas

### theboar

Student Publication of the Year 2013

Originally devised by the RSC as a bit of a programme filler for an ageing company, over the last 50 years 'The Hollow Crown' has become, rather like George VI, an unexpectedly successful little brother.

Despite Georgy himself not appearing in this kingly chronicle, the piece completes an impressive feat in chartering British monarchy from our Norman invaders to our old Queen Vicky.

This feat is even more impressive when you consider that this is done amongst sparse set and script-bearing actors in just over two hours, a distinctly un-regal affair. Yet with a giant golden crown, draped throne and lingering incense, the Loft's production adds a touch of the stately to their revival.

Each monarch's story is told by extracts from their own diaries, songs and poetry, as well as those of their chroniclers and contemporaries, offering a private, if swift glimpse into the heavy heads of British monarchy.

Along with a fantastic company that each provide notable performances and a solid staging, this production demands that you take it as it is, and reminds us that the royals are only mere mortals after all.

Indeed the cast should be commended on their performances as with only a script to protect them they still inspire laughter and engagement from what threatens to be dense subject matter. Admittedly I am both a keen history and monarchy fan, however, in my opinion, this solid production deserves greater audiences than the format may attract. There are no stuffy teachers or smelly workbooks here, but the most musical and engaging history lesson that I have ever enjoyed.

This production makes the most of history's best bits (sex, madness and death) as well as exhibiting the talent of the Loft's acting prowess, an engaging and relaxed theatre treat. *Catherine Lyon.*



