

REVIEW: Three Queens

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Perfectly balanced dynamic contrasts across the performance to portray this complicated tale.

Whilst the conversations that happened the night before Lady Jane Grey's death will always be lost to history, Rosamund Gravelle manages to capture a totally realistic retelling of what occurred that night. Striking the balance between the struggles of having power, the influence of men, both past and present, and the all-important religious control of the time, Gravelle has written a script that puts the audience right in the centre of the conflict. As a history nerd myself, I knew I would likely enjoy the content of the play, but the performance was what really drew me in.

The performance felt factual in nature and not over dramatised as so many modern retellings can be. The tempered nature of the acting and natural emotion that went with the script was artfully portrayed. Huge credit should be given to the thoughtful casting, with each member of the cast capturing their character perfectly.

The performance started with a harrowing scene of what was to come, the beheading of Lady Jane Grey. This clever piece of scene setting meant that the sense of foreboding hung over the rest of the play as the characters debated Lady Jane Grey's fate.

Whilst every actor felt a natural fit for their character, Becky Black's performance of Mary must be called out as truly outstanding. It was so easy to see and feel the turbulent emotions she was going through that night. Black portrayed well the weight of a huge decision, as well as capturing Mary's known strength and vulnerabilities.

I was grateful for the scenes with the male characters as well, played excellently by Les Kenny-Green and Sushant Shekhar. It would have been easy to write this play about historically strong female characters without men, but the addition of these male characters added another layer of the battles that these women had to face with the men of the time trying to influence their decisions. Kenny-Green and Shekhar both sensitively embodied the different styles of influence and manipulation that these women could have been grappling with on that fateful night.

Personally, my favourite scenes were those with the three queens. Martha Crow's stern

portrayal of Lady Jane offset by the outbursts of grief at battling over her religion or her life gave depth to this intense subject. Eliza Shea's fun but stoic Elizabeth was also brilliant, she really portrayed the many layers of this complex character. All of the women seemed to naturally slot into the complex dynamics of this family which was really engaging to watch. Again, Black as Mary showed the variety of her mood swings and turbulent emotions, and Crow and Shea complemented this perfectly. The dynamic contrasts of the characters and the different scenes across the performance were perfectly balanced to portray this complicated tale, absolutely brilliant!

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