

RICHARD II

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDUCATION PACK 3: THE DESIGNER'S VISION

ABOUT THIS PACK

This is the last of **THREE** teachers' packs supporting the RSC's 2013 production of *Richard II*, directed by Artistic Director Gregory Doran, which opened on 10 October at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The packs are specifically designed to support KS3-4 students participating in the broadcast of *Richard II* to UK schools on **Friday 15 November at 9.30am**, although activities can be adapted for different age groups. Each pack explores the process of one of the artists at the heart of the production.

This pack focusses on the production's design through exploring the working process of Stephen Brimson Lewis, senior designer and Associate Artist at the RSC. The activities contained within this pack invite you and your students to reflect on the production's design and to develop your own theatre designs by responding to the themes and ideas in the text.

The words of Stephen Brimson Lewis, the Designer, are used throughout this pack and are indicated in red *italics*.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



ACTIVITY

A classroom or open space activity



WRITE

A writing activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses

ABOUT YOUNG SHAKESPEARE NATION



Over the next six years, the RSC will stage the 36 plays that make up the First Folio of Shakespeare's work. RSC Education invites you to join us on this inspirational journey in a new initiative called Young Shakespeare Nation starting with *Richard II*.

Whether you want to teach a new play or teach in a new way, Young Shakespeare Nation can give you the tools and resources you need.

- Find inspiration online with images, video's, more teachers' packs and resources at www.rsc.org.uk/education
- Participate in our schools broadcast series, starting with *Richard II* on 15 November
- Explore a new text or a new way of teaching through our CPD programme
- Try one of our range of courses for teachers and students in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Find out more at www.rsc.org.uk/education

THE DESIGNER'S VISION

"Design is different on every single play. Generating ideas is an insinct"

Before the play has been cast and many of the production choices been made, Gregory Doran, the Director, and Stephen Brimson Lewis, the Designer, create a vision for the *Richard II* production. Bringing that vision to life is a lengthy process; the set is created in Stratford upon Avon at the same time that the acting company is rehearsing in London, the costumes are developed in collaboration with the Director and actors and the technical elements are then trialed at the end of the rehearsal period.

This pack has been designed to help students respond to the production creatively, by developing their own set designs for a production of *Richard II*. There are four stages to the creative process:

- Developing the design Concept
- Designing the Set
- Crafting the Costumes
- Staging the Production

Throughout this pack you will find quotes and insights from Stephen, who offers insights into his and Greg's vision, as well as references to some of the production diaries which can be found at: <http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary.aspx>

PART 1: DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

"The best thing a Director can do for you, certainly at the early stages of design, is not tell you how to design it. What's helpful is just talking about the environment, the mood, the atmosphere, the feeling of the space. Then, from that, you can solve it technically"

Discussion about the production design between Greg and Stephen happens very early on in the process. Stephen works with the Director in looking at the text and discussing ways in which they can bring it to life through the design concept and this is where they need to agree on the "bigger choices". One of the central ideas in *Richard II* is the reference to height and depth which reflects the journey Richard takes in the play.

"The overall kind of concept if you like for the production really grew out of a response to the space as much as anything else, the theatre itself. Greg wanted to exploit the height we had in the RST, and indeed the depth"

The following two activities are intended to help students design their own production of *Richard II* and invite them to explore the text in a creative way.



THE CENTRAL THEMES

Gregory Doran has chosen to set his 2013 production of *Richard II* in the medieval era, rather than in Shakespeare's time or in a more modern context but the themes and ideas are extremely relevant today. You can read the Q&A where Greg discusses this at: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/richard-ii/director-q-and-a.aspx>

"We are placing it clearly in a time that isn't today. It seemed to us that we should try and find a look for the play that takes you back in history to a world where you believe these characters would exist"

This play is very politically significant, and the belief in 'Divine Right' is what makes rebellion against Richard II so unexpected and severe. In searching for an appropriate context in which to set the play, it is important to remember this.



ACTIVITY 1: SETTING YOUR PRODUCTION

Richard II is a play which explores a number of contemporary themes and it could be set in many different time periods and environments. The following activity will help students to choose a concept for their own production, considering how they can best explore the political significance of the play.

- Using the synopsis in the Resource Materials and their existing understanding of the play, ask pairs to agree on two possible contexts in which to set the play. If they are struggling you could suggest:
 - Medieval England

- Elizabethan England
 - A Fictional Modern Dictatorship
 - A Futuristic World
- Allow students the opportunity to research the historical contexts to discover whether they are suitable or not, but encourage them to think as creatively as possible about which they choose.
 - As they research, encourage students to consider the situation Richard was in to make sure they can apply it to their chosen contexts. In order to understand the significance of what happens in the play, and the seriousness of what Bolingbroke does, students need to remember that:
 - Richard had absolute power over the country
 - Richard believed God had chosen him to rule
 - Richard's people believed God had chosen him to rule
 - Richard was not respected by some people in his court who thought he was weak
 - Ask students to explain their two choices and why they think they could work. How could they show Richard's importance in these contexts?
 - Invite students to pick one of their two options as their best production idea.
 - Providing students with a large sheet of paper ask them to create an 'image board' for their design idea. An image board should contain pictures of the context they will be using. These images could relate to clothing, furniture, food or important buildings of the time, but they need to give a sense of the world that they want to create in their production. They should also start to consider colours and textures and fill their board with references they can use.



ACTIVITY 2: USING THE SPACE

Stephen Brimson Lewis created the set design for *Richard II* to show the journey that Richard himself goes on throughout the play as he moves from complete confidence in himself to the despair at his imprisonment which means that the space has to be adaptable.

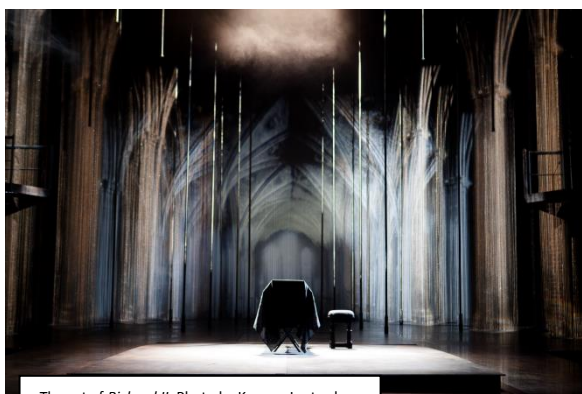
In order to develop his design Stephen Brimson Lewis spends a lot of time in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, looking at the thrust stage and the dynamics of the space and consulting stage plans. For *Richard II* Stephen and Greg choose to remove whole sections of seating in the auditorium in order to provide more space for musicians and actors as well as creating an automated bridge that can rise and descend throughout the play. During this time, Stephen also enters into early consultations with the teams involved to make sure that his design ideas are practical and possible.

The Royal Shakespeare Theatre is a unique space. You can read more about the Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, and take a virtual tour of the building, at:

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/visit-us/rst/>

In Act 1 Scene 1, Richard is at the beginning of his journey, and surrounded by his court. As you can see from the production recreated below, Stephen uses the setting of Westminster Hall to create a sense of the King's grand court. As the scene is also set at Gloucester's funeral, all of the characters in Richard's family are on stage once the scene starts. The following activity will ask students to consider how these characters might interact in the space and how they can start to make their roles clear on the stage.

- Invite students to look at the list of key characters in Act 1 Scene 1.
- Thinking about their chosen setting, students should then:
 - Note the role and rank of each character in their chosen context.
 - Note the event that has brought all these characters together in their chosen context.
- Provide students with the stage plan of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's thrust stage in the Resource Materials.
- Either on paper, or using an open space marked out with similar dimensions, ask students to consider how they would position each of the characters on the stage to show the audience their roles and ranks and the situation.
- Explain that a designer does not make these choices, but they do need to respond to the needs of the scene. Do their choices require any props, for example? Would some characters be seated?



The set of *Richard II*. Photo by Kwame Lestrade

PART 2: DESIGNING THE SET

"I tend not to sketch that much. I spend a lot of time working on the ground plan, making sure everything will work, and then from that I usually work three dimensionally quite quickly in models"

Before the full cast of the play has even been announced Stephen presents a model box design, and accompanying graphics, to the rest of the company. A model box is an accurately scaled down version of the set design for that play. Sharing this with the rest of the company means the creative and technical departments can get a sense of what their work needs to look like. Stephen also produces a lot of materials alongside this to animate the set and provides computerised images that all departments can work from to bring it to life. The same model is also used in the first week of rehearsal when Stephen presents his design to the cast with Greg. You can watch Simon Ash, the Production Manager, bringing that vision to life in the seventh Production diary: <http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary-7.asp>

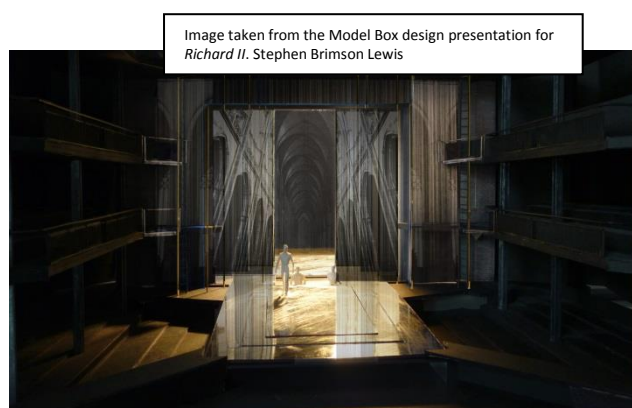
The following activity will encourage students to look specifically at the design for Act 1 Scene 1, which is traditionally set in Richard's court. It will also help students to use their understanding of the thrust stage and develop a design concept for their own production of *Richard II*.



MODEL BOX DESIGN

Stephen's design for *Richard II* relies on lighting and projection to create the setting for each scene. Students might choose to use a similar method in their design, but ask them to think carefully about what images they would choose and how they would project this.

- Organise students into small groups.
- Using their ground plans and image boards, encourage students to sketch out their set designs, thinking about:
 - The backdrop for their scene
 - Props that may be required on stage
- Ask students to collate their sketched ideas for background features and props and create a small model box of their agreed design.
- Many designers start by creating a basic model box in which items do not have to be to scale, to start giving them a sense of the dimensions. This can be done using any box with the stage shape clearly marked out so that the view of the audience around the stage can be considered.
- Encourage students to think about the colours, textures and details of the set that they put together. They might want to use computerised images to provide this detail alongside their model box, creating an accompanying presentation.



"There used to be a time when the model would be completely finished and looking exactly like a small version of what would be on stage. Now, with computers and Photoshop, I can now light the model and give a much closer sense of what the space will actually look like"

Once the rehearsal process is underway, trials of the lighting and automation are needed for the set. The Lighting Designer for *Richard II*, Tim Mitchell, is responsible for the projection which creates the set in this production. As the lighting is such an integral part of this design, Stephen liaises with Tim throughout the rehearsal period. A trial projection wall is set up in Stratford upon Avon where the team can experiment with various images.

"I'm always very passionate about working very closely with everybody, but particularly the lighting designer, because I think he can transform. Often you'll see a set in what we call 'working light' and it has no magic of any kind at all and looks awful. The

lighting designer is the person who paints the set; he can transform objects in front of you and transform the space"

PART 3: CRAFTING THE COSTUMES

"The costumes are so important in terms of story-telling, and more important in terms of character, allowing the audience to make sense of who's who in the story and where they are in the hierarchy"

A vital part of the overall look and feel of the production is the costume design. Stephen Brimson Lewis liaises with the Director and actors, as they become used to their characters in rehearsal, and develops these during the six week rehearsal period. The costume supervisor is also involved in the process as these evolve and take shape through a number of fittings. The costume a character appears in, and the ways their costume changes during the play, give the audience a very clear message about their personality, attitude and position in the world Stephen has created. You can see some of the *Richard II* costumes being created in the sixth production diary at: <http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary-6.aspx>



ACTIVITY 3: DESIGNING THE RIVALS' COSTUMES

"We call them (Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke) the cricket team and the rugby team. Richard's team have a certain finesse to how they wear clothes and a certain fine line and it's all about height and extended Gothic architecture of clothes whereas Henry's are much squarer, much stockier, much earthier"

The Contrast between Bolingbroke and Richard is clear in their language, their actions and their journeys. The following activity will help students to explore how, within their context, they could start to show these differences.

- Provide students with a copy of Act 1 Scene 1. An edited version is available in the second RSC Teacher pack for this production:
<http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/richardii-2013-teacherpack2.pdf>
- Ask students to work in pairs to decide on 5 or 6 adjectives they would use to describe Richard in this scene and then 5 or 6 adjectives for Henry Bolingbroke.
- Using their adjectives, ask students to design/draw a costume concept for these two characters. Make sure they consider:
 - How they can show status, in their chosen context.
 - How they can show personality.
 - How they can show the difference in the two men.
- Encourage students to label their designs with quotations from the text where they have included practical items, like Bolingbroke's gage, and their original adjectives where they have tried to show these visually.
 - Ask students to include as much detail as possible; colour and textures can be as important as the style and additional props.

"There's a line in the play where Richard talks of his gay apparel and clearly enjoys fashion and enjoys clothes and enjoys textures. Henry clearly isn't a man where that's so important at all"

Alongside costume and lighting, the Music department also helps to create the atmosphere on stage that will show the contrast between Richard and Bolingbroke. You can hear Paul Englishby, the composer, and Bruce O'Neil, RSC Head of Music, discussing the ways in which they have helped to develop this sense of contrast in the eighth production diary at: <http://onscreen.rsc.org.uk/richard-ii/production-diary-8.aspx>



RICHARD'S JOURNEY

The character of Richard changes so much throughout the play and his costumes have to be designed to reflect this. The following activity will help students to explore the ways in which Richard changes from a self-righteous and vain monarch in the opening scenes to a more humble and philosophical man at the close.

- Share the images of Richard in the Resource Materials. Look at how different RSC productions have used costume to show the change in Richard's state of mind and his power.
- Encourage students to think about how, in their context, they could show this change.
- Ask students to look back at their costume design for Richard at the outset of the play, in Act 1 Scene 1 when he is at court, and create a second one for him in his final moments, when he is held in prison.

PART 4: STAGING THE PRODUCTION

After six weeks of rehearsal the cast moves to Stratford upon Avon to begin the process of 'Technical Rehearsal' so they can start to work in the actual set Stephen has created in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. For the Designer, the Technical Rehearsal is also an opportunity to see the props and costumes that have been created under the lights and to make minor alterations to them.



SHOWING YOUR DESIGNS

- Invite students to present their designs in groups, explaining:
 - Their concept, using an image board.

- Their design for Act 1 Scene 1, using their model box, ground plan and presentation.
- Their costumes for Richard and Bolingbroke, using illustrations.

■ Presentations could be developed by explaining how their context might apply throughout the rest of the play.

- The above could be done by presenting a short storyboard that would track through the plot.

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RESOURCES

SYNOPSIS

The king's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, has been murdered. His cousin Bolingbroke accuses Thomas Mowbray of causing his death, and challenges him to trial by combat. When Gloucester's widow demands that his brother, John of Gaunt, avenge her husband's death, Gaunt tells her he cannot do so as the king himself is implicated in the murder. Before the Mowbray and Bolingbroke can fight the king intervenes and banishes both men from the kingdom.

A sickly John of Gaunt accuses Richard of improper government, of burdening the country through taxation and giving away the land to his favourites. When Gaunt dies Richard orders the seizure of all his property, thus denying Bolingbroke any inheritance. Richard then departs for the wars in Ireland, leaving his uncle York to govern in his absence.

Northumberland reveals that Bolingbroke has returned to England with an army. Bolingbroke insists to his uncle York that he has returned for his rightful inheritance, not to start a rebellion against the Crown. Nevertheless, taking the law into their own hands, they capture Richard's favourites, Bushy and Greene, and execute them. Richard returns from Ireland to discover that his Welsh troops have deserted him, that York has allied himself with Bolingbroke, and that the country is rising against him.

Bolingbroke and his supporters meet with Richard at Flint Castle. Bolingbroke promises to surrender his arms if his banishment is repealed and his inheritance restored. Richard agrees to his demands.

Richard is finally persuaded to abdicate and Bolingbroke announces his coronation as King Henry IV.

York discovers that his son Aumerle is involved in a plot to kill the new king and restore Richard to the throne. Aumerle confesses to King Henry and is pardoned. In prison, in Pomfret Castle, Richard is murdered.

As Henry receives the news of the defeat of the rebels, Richard's body is dragged before him. King Henry promises to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to expiate his sins.

KEY CHARACTERS

Speaking Parts in the Scene:

KING RICHARD

JOHN OF GAUNT

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

THOMAS MOWBRAY

Other characters you might include:

THE BODY OF GLOUCESTER

THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

THE DUKE OF YORK

THE DUCHESS OF YORK

AUMERLE

THE QUEEN

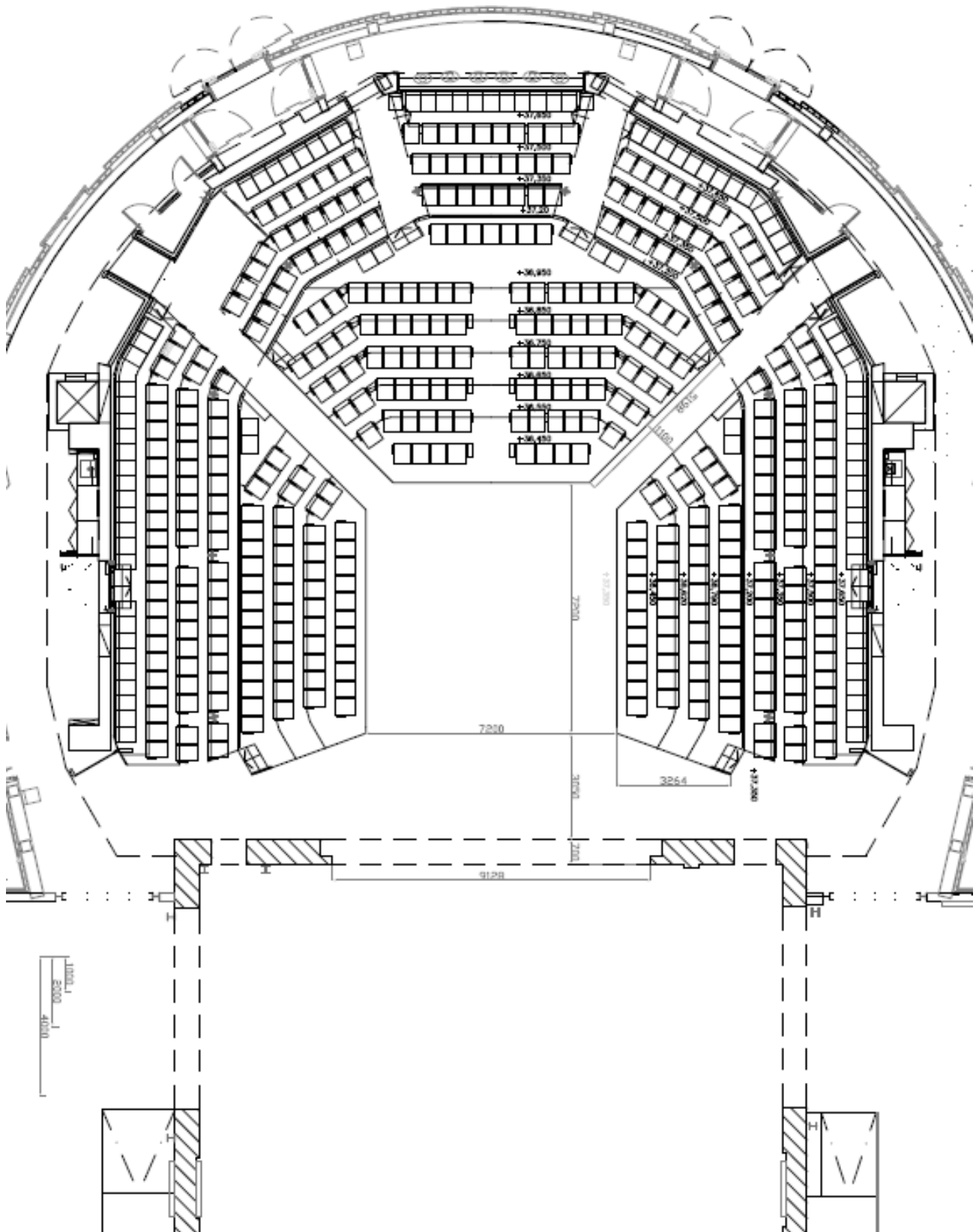
BUSHY

BAGOT

GREEN

NORTHUMBERLAND

THE STAGE: GROUND PLAN



RICHARD'S JOURNEY



David Tennant as Richard II in Gregory Doran's 2013 RSC Production. Photo by Kwame Lestrade



Myles Eason as Mowbray, Robert Harris as Richard II, Michael Golden as Bolingbroke in Walter Hudd's 1947 RSC Production. Photo by Angus McBean



David Warner as Richard II in Peter Hall, John Barton and Clifford Williams' 1964 Production. Photo by Reg Wilson

David Tennant as Richard II in Gregory Doran's 2013 RSC Production. Photo by Kwame Lestrade



Michael Redgrave as Richard II in Anthony Quayle's 1951 RSC Production. Photo by Angus McBean



Richard Pasco as Richard II in John Barton's 1973 RSC Production. Photo from Joe Cocks studio collection. Reproduced with the permission of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust



Jonathan Slinger as Richard II in Michael Boyd's 2007 RSC Production. Photo by Ellie Kurtz