

A CurtainUp Los Angeles Review
King Lear

By [Laura Hitchcock](#)

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. — Edgar

Lear is here with two casts, and, in this sizzling production by the Antaeus Company directed by Bart DeLorenzo, it's a winner. I saw Dakin Matthews' Lear (the other cast is headed by Harry Groener) and Matthews and DeLorenzo brought out some new qualities in Lear.

This Lear, though as turbulent and tempestuous as he is written, has a roistering sense of fun. He and the Fool (Stephen Caffrey) romp mischievously. He even lets the Fool precede him on the stage with garish make-up and crown. It's a shock to the audience.

Though not above a towering rage on the perceived defection of his dearest daughter Cordelia (Tessa Thomipson), he's warm and funny. Even when all is lost in the mad scenes, he's a presence to be reckoned with. "Ay, every inch a king!" he roars. And so he enters the stormy night, raging at the elements, heedless of what he wears, ranging from manic to gallows humor.

The sub-plot follows half-brothers Edgar (Ramon De Ocampo) and his bastard brother Edmund (Seamus Dever), sons of the Earl of Gloucester. Edmund is one of Shakespeare's died in the wool villains and has some thrilling monologues. Edgar, a straightforward youth, disguises himself as Poor Tom by swathing his near naked form with mud and fences with Lear, metaphorically. When his father, whom Edmund has tricked into disowning him, is blinded by sadistic Regan (Francia DiMase) and her husband, the equally sadistic Duke of Cornwall (Adrian La Tourelle), he leads Gloucester through the storm in an enigmatic and dramatic father-and-son denouement.

Shakespeare's characters are rarely as developed as they are in Lear. The women are a disappointment. The elder sisters are viciously one-dimensional and Cordelia, in her brief scene, makes a statement but disappears until the last scene. Norman Snow is a powerful Gloucester and Stephen Caffrey as the Fool cavorts and clowns non-stop.

DeLorenzo is a creative director and Lear lends itself to many touches. The Fool, who was hanged in Ian McKellen's version at UCLA, is strangled by the Duke of Cornwall here.

The sound design by John Zalewski is impeccable, especially in the storm scenes. The thunder is a counterpoint to Lear's speeches and the lightening comes in on beat.

Antaeus is performing at the Deaf West Theatre and it's amazing what they can do in a small space. Think back to the original Globe Theater in London which hadn't much more room and you'll see what Shakespeare had to work with, and what Antaeus sustains —passion and imagination!

King Lear

Playwright: William Shakespeare

Director: Bart DeLorenzo

Cast: Dakin Matthews (Lear), Kirsten Potter (Goneril), John DeMita (Duke of Albany), Francia DiMase (Regan), Adrian LaTourelle (Duke of Cornwall), Tessa Thompson (Cordelia), Brett Colbeth (King of France), Jason Henning (Duke of Burgundy), Morlan Higgins (Earl of Kent), Norman Snow (Earl of Gloucester), Ramon De Ocampo (Edgar), Seamus Dever (Edmund), Stephen Caffrey (Fool), Drew Doyle (Oswald), Adam Meyer (Knight), Paige Wilson (Gloucester's Servant), Jeff Doba (Doctor).

Scenic Design: Tom Buderwitz

Lighting Design: Lap Chi Chu

Fight Choreographer: TJ Marchbank

Props Designer: Jan Prince

Costume Design: A. Jeffrey Schoenberg

Sound Design: John Zalewski

Production Stage Manager: Deirdre Murphy

Producer: Young J

Running Time: Three hours, one intermission

Running Dates: June 26-August 15, 2010

Where: The Antaeus Company, Deaf West Theater, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood.

Reservations: 818-506-1983.

Reviewed by Laura Hitchcock on July 29.