



S U P E R H A L
S H A K E S P E A R E
1 & 2 HENRY IV + HENRY V + SUPERPOWERS
NIDA PARADE THEATRE • MARCH 2017
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SUPERHAL

Shakespeare's Henriad reimagined as a superhero origin story.

What if Shakespeare's Henry V was a literal superhero, inhabiting an England that echoed the universe of Marvel or DC comic books?

In an alternative England ruled by beings with superhuman powers, the young Prince Hal rebels against the King his father by associating with thieves, pimps and drunkards. As the country is plunged into civil war he finds the strength to become a soldier, and then a king. But at what cost? Can he be a king and still remain human?

www.thepuzzle.com.au/superhal

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WHEN

MARCH 2017 WEEKDAY MATINEE PERFORMANCES

8 March 2017 11:00am

10 March 2017 11:00am

Student Price \$30

Groups of 8 students or more

Teaching staff complimentary

Run time: Approx 2.5 hours including interval.

BOOK AT TICKETEK:

To make a booking contact Ticketek on

1300 364 001 or

for further information email

groupbookings@ticketek.com.au

WHAT

A coming of age story

The story of Hal is that of a rebellious youth, jaded by the cynical pragmatism of his father Henry IV, who has usurped the throne from Richard II. Hal finds an unlikely substitute father figure in Falstaff, the rotund lazy knight-turned thief and boozier who befriends the young prince and encourages his petty crime and idleness. But when rebellion threatens the kingdom and Henry IV passes away, Hal must decide what kind of man he wants to be. As King Henry V he invades France and wins the admiration of the people and the court – but at what personal cost? Has he become his father?

Shakespearean language, pop culture context

Superhal! will present the arc of the character, told over three plays by Shakespeare (Henry IV Part 1, Henry IV Part 2 and Henry V), into a single condensed story that concentrates on Hal's journey. Without changing Shakespeare's language or adding any text, the plays have been edited together to form a text that can be performed in one sitting. Using imagery and archetypes that audiences are familiar with from the superhero universe, Superhal! 'hooks' these classical characters onto contemporary tropes and contextualises the story for a student audience. Thus Hotspur the firebrand prince, becomes a literal 'Human Torch'. The Plantagenets express their 'lion's blood' via an animal-headaddress crown and an 'Iron Man' style suit. The French princess Katherine has power over nature a la 'Poison Ivy', while Falstaff is an ex-superhero, a washed up 'Hulk'-like has-been.

Critical approach to the text - problematising warfare and sexism

Shakespeare's Henriad is, amongst many other things, a scathing critique of patriarchal power and the stereotypes of traditional masculinity. The superhero genre is at a point where, being the dominant pop-culture phenomenon of our time, it is also subject to scrutiny over gender equality, promotion of machismo and hyper-sexualization. The surface jingoism of Henry V's choruses belie a self-aware text which is a nuanced treatment of the themes of honour and warfare; comic books and the films based on them can also surprise us with their subtlety and self-awareness (cf Watchmen, Deadpool). We aim to engage in a dialogue between the most popular form of entertainment of the Tudor era and that of the 20th Century; a dialogue which has the potential to enrich both forms of expression.

Links to Australian Curriculum and 2015 NSW HSC Syllabus

King Henry IV, Part 1 is prescribed for 'Module C:Representation and Text, Elective 1: Representing People and Politics' in the Advanced strand of the current NSW HSC English Syllabus, based on the Australian Curriculum. 1 Henry IV is one of the toughest texts prescribed for the HSC, and a live rendering of the text (which forms the bulk of *Superhal's* Act 1) is invaluable for giving students a context to refer to when reading and discussing the complex language and structure of this complicated play. Our cast & crew will be available after the show for a Q & A session where students and teachers can ask direct questions of performers and creatives. School groups can also request a 'Shakespeare, Superheroes and Politics' educational resource via education@thepuzzle.com.au

WHO

The Puzzle is a new collective of artists, writers, actors and engineers dedicated to creating the highest quality live experiences.

Our first production, The Tempest – Steampunked! (www.thetempest.com.au) which formed part of the Sydney Fringe Festival in 2012, received very positive reviews and was featured in both the Sydney Morning Herald and on ABC News.

2013-2014, The Puzzle developed the Alternating Realities Project, a multidisciplinary arts project based around the life and legacy of Nikola Tesla.

In 2015 we began developing our first full season of theatre projects, ready to present to audiences in 2017. Our flagship production, SuperHal! – Shakespeare’s Henriad reimagined as a superhero origin story – will be performed in March 2017.

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