



## WELL-FORMED AND FUN "RICHARD III" UNDER THE STARS

By Mark Share

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The Theatricum's production of Shakespeare's *Richard III* is the theatrical equivalent of the Marvel movies filling the multiplex this summer, with an over-the-top evil villain, much violence, revenge, and retribution. The stakes are high, who will be King of England, and Richard, the brother of a king who took title by killing Henry VI, will plot against and kill anyone (men, women, and children) who stands in his way of the throne after his brother dies. He is freely insulted and cursed to his face throughout the play for his moral and physical deformities, in ways that are serious "Villain, thou know'st no law of God" and humorous "hedgehog." The evil schemer gets pretty far by will and violence before his comeuppance at the sword of the future Henry VII. It's at least as much fun as seeing the charismatic villains vanquished in *Thor*, *Green Lantern*, or *X-Men: First Class*.



*Richard III* by William Shakespeare  
Chad Jason Scheppner and Melora Marshall alternate in the title role

Photo by Ian Flanders

In the title role on opening night, Chad Jason Scheppner hit all the right notes of an evil genius, with the maniacal laugh, the eloquent language, and the schizoid flights between obsequy and menace. Alternating in that title role is the fine actress Melora Marshall, who otherwise plays the Duchess of York, matriarch to one of history's most-murderous and murdered families, and who herself curses Richard. Willow Geer plays Lady Anne with fire in her initial insults and resignation in her yielding to Richard. In the large cast -- so large that the editor of the play finally concludes the list of dramatis personae with "citizens, murderers, messengers, ghosts, soldiers, etc." -- there are the inconsistencies that one must accept at Theatricum shows, varied quality and styles of performances, and distractingly inconsistent garb. Fortunately, Richard has one of the best costumes, a black creation, rightly stylish for the self-loving tyrant and a visual contrast to his knee brace and hump.

Ellen Geer is a director that moves things along with excitement and clarity. My only request is that she cut the play and some of the less admirable performances a bit given the discomfort of the wooden bench seating, and that after all these years the company would achieve more competence at sword fighting. But all in all, this is one of the company's strong efforts, impressively effective and entertaining.

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