

STAGE REVIEW

A king and his lover are targeted for death in 'Edward II'

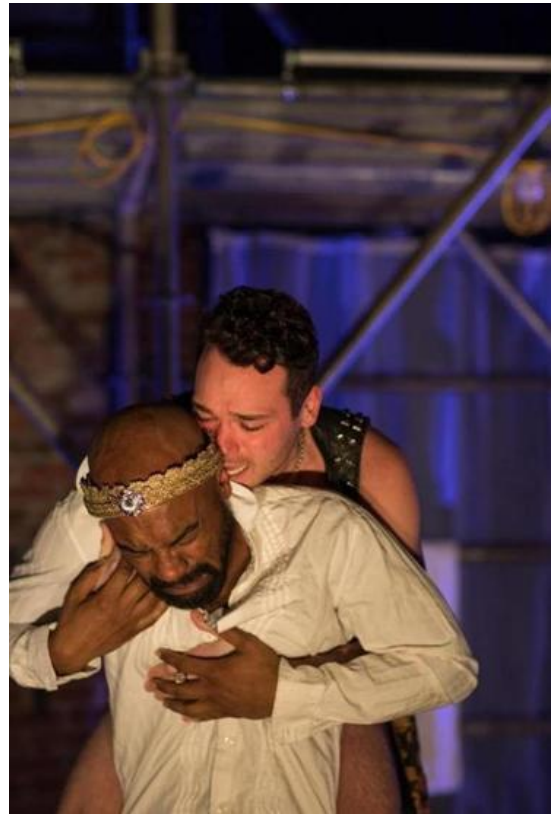
By [Don Aucoin](#) | GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 28, 2017

When it comes to sheer brio of presentation, few directors in Boston can rival David R. Gammons.

And when you combine his conceptual brilliance and visual ingenuity with a dynamic performer like Maurice Emmanuel Parent, the result can be spellbinding, as is frequently the case in Gammons's brooding, sensual, and suspenseful production of Christopher Marlowe's "Edward II."

For this Actors' Shakespeare Project staging of Marlowe's 16th-century drama in Charlestown Working Theater, Gammons has streamlined the play to focus on the mortal stakes surrounding the gay relationship at its center.

At first, the story feels both thin and repetitive, but the tension steadily builds as forbidden sexuality collides with power politics. When the consequences start to unfold for everyone onstage, Parent's portrayal of the titular monarch reaches a level of transfixing intensity. Among other things, the performance by this



MAGGIE HALL

Maurice Emmanuel Parent and Eddie Shields in "Edward II."

consistently charismatic actor puts an emphatic exclamation point on the beginning of Parent's tenure as co-acting artistic director (with Paula Plum) of Actors' Shakespeare Project.

Get **The Weekender** in your inbox:

The Globe's top picks for what to see and do each weekend, in Boston and beyond.

Enter email address

Sign Up

Edward is ultimately undone by his passion for his lover Piers Gaveston, portrayed with seductive insinuation by Eddie Shields (SpeakEasy Stage Company's "Casa Valentina"). Their unstoppable attraction to each other, made palpable in a sinuous carnal ballet near the start of the play, betokens a consolidation of power that is given literal form when Edward invites Gaveston to take a seat on the royal throne.

Their union poses a threat to two cruel and scheming noblemen, Mortimer (Alex Pollock) and Lancaster (Nigel Gore). The lengths this pair will go to are suggested not just by their vicious words and baleful looks but by the sheathed knives each wears on his hip. Both are attired in black leather (costumes are by Rachel Padula-Shufelt), while Edward wears a combination of contemporary garb and Elizabethan-era kingly raiment.

Mortimer denounces Gaveston as "that sly inveigling Frenchman," while Edward sides with his lover, declaring: "They love me not that hate my Gaveston." Thus is

Read all the Globe articles you want.

Try unlimited digital access today →

Under pressure from Lancaster and Mortimer, Edward agrees to exile Gaveston, but shortly calls him back to the palace. Edward's rivals are not done scheming, however. In addition, Edward's queen, Isabella (Jennie Israel), wounded by his unfaithfulness, eventually turns against the king.

The atmosphere in Act 2 increasingly edges into claustrophobic, all-enveloping menace. Jeff Adelberg's shadowy lighting grows even more so, and director Gammons again illustrates his gift for immersing you in the worlds he creates onstage — a gift evident in his buoyantly joyful “The Comedy of Errors” at Actors’ Shakespeare Project and the spooky shock-fest of his “Hand to God” at SpeakEasy Stage Company, just to name two. His “Edward II” manages to seem both of its time and of our time.

Pollock brings an eerie stillness to his portrayal of Mortimer. The actor's gift for playing alienated, off-kilter characters (“The Aliens,” “The Flick,” “This Is Our Youth”) has seldom been put to such darkly compelling use. Pollock's Mortimer is pure sociopath all the way, devoid of conscience or feeling; even under torture or at the point of death, Mortimer projects an air of creepy imperturbability.

As Lancaster, Gore projects the bravura command that is one of his trademarks. As Isabella, Israel captures the nuanced evolution of a conflicted queen who (in this production, anyway) makes an initial claim on the audience's sympathy. Solid support is delivered also by Nile Hawver as Kent, brother to the king, caught in the crossfire; Stewart Evan Smith as Spencer, who becomes Edward's favorite and ally after the murder of Gaveston; and David J. Castillo as Prince Edward III, who faces the challenge of doling out justice when all is said and lethally done.

Read all the Globe articles you want.
Try unlimited digital access today →

Presented by ^{Commitment} Actors' Shakespeare Project at Charlestown Working Theater, Charlestown. Through March 19. Tickets \$30-\$50, www.actorsshakespeareproject.org, 866-811-4111.

Don Aucoin can be reached at aucoin@globe.com.

SHOW 1 COMMENT

Stay updated, right in your news feed.

Most Popular In Arts



'Hamilton' comes to Boston in September 2018 for two-month run

"Hamilton" will come to Boston in September 2018 and run for a full two months — much longer than customary for touring shows. [MORE...](#)



Michael Che of 'Saturday Night Live' stands by Boston comment

Che earlier this year said Boston is "the most racist city" he's ever been to. [MORE...](#)



What's in the basement of 'Get Out'? A metaphor.

Viewers of this horror movie aren't just having a good scream, they're also confronted with a subversive message about race. [MORE...](#)

Read all the Globe articles you want.
Try unlimited digital access today →



Most of us recognize the name Clarence Birdseye but few know the story of his ^{Comment} adventurous life. The book vividly traces his time as an inventor, businessman, and “father of frozen food.” [MORE...](#)



‘Desus and Mero’ give a nightly serving of real talk

Viceland’s ‘Desus and Mero’ is a refreshing entry among the stiffer competition of the late-night landscape [MORE...](#)



Carrie Fisher talked very candidly about her mother, Debbie Reynolds

“My mother I could never truly get. She’s too spirited and eccentric and colorful and likable,” Fisher said in an interview with Matthew Gilbert in 1990. [MORE...](#)



New Novartis building is a work of art on Mass. Ave.

Novartis’ Cambridge facility is the most interesting new building in town. [MORE...](#)



Obama ‘Hope’ artist returns with ‘We the people’ posters

Shepard Fairey chose images of three women to represent America for his latest political art. [MORE...](#)



In swallowing Bulger’s lies, ‘Whitey’ documentary suffers

Joe Berlinger’s documentary treats far too seriously Bulger’s claim that he was never an informant for the FBI. [MORE...](#)

Read all the Globe articles you want.
Try unlimited digital access today →

He has long had a cult following but this, it would seem, is George Saunders' moment. The ^{Comment} "Lincoln in the Bardo" author is a literary rock star. [MORE...](#)



Are you living in a social-media bubble?

When it comes to our cultural and political conversations, the stakes are high. [MORE...](#)



Richard North Patterson aims for something else

"Loss of Innocence," a family drama set on Martha's Vineyard, is a departure for an author known for page-turners with plots that grapple with topics like presidential politics. [MORE...](#)



Avery made color carry secret meanings, too

Milton Avery, whose "Husband and Wife" is on display in Hartford, found a way to make viewers feel a kind of spiritual shiver. [MORE...](#)



At the ICA, two shows that embrace the body in many forms

The Institute for Contemporary Art is featuring "Steve McQueen: Ashes" and this year's Foster prize winners. [MORE...](#)

This 'mommy' has a childish problem

Will her kindness be occasionally reciprocated? [MORE...](#)

Read all the Globe articles you want.
Try unlimited digital access today →



Saul Wisnia's latest book is a fresh take on the merry band that many will always hold as curse-breakers. [MORE...](#)



Boston Ballet flies high, spreads wings in smart program

Balanchine's "Donizetti Variations" was the highlight of the evening, but the two works that came after, Jirí Kylián's "Wings of Wax" and Alexander Ekman's "Cacti," more than held their own. [MORE...](#)

Real journalists. Real journalism. [Subscribe to The Boston Globe today.](#)

My Account

- Logout
- Manage my Account
- Mobile Customer Service
- Sign Up For Newsletters

Social

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google+

Contact

- Help
- FAQs
- Globe newsroom
- Advertise

More

- ePaper
 - News in Education
 - Archives
 - Privacy policy
 - Terms of service
-

**Read all the Globe articles you want.
Try unlimited digital access today →**