

The Argus

Review by Joanne Davis, Wednesday 3rd December 2008

A FATHER'S ghost, a mother quick to remarry and a servant slain - Edward de Vere's story has many parallels with that of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Actor George Dillon inhabited the role of the 17th Earl of Oxford, a courtier, swordsman, adventurer, playwright and poet, whose ghost arose to tell his story.

If we are to believe Shakespeare based Hamlet on de Vere, or even that de Vere was Hamlet's author, then this was de Vere's revenge.

Fragments of the play were interspersed seamlessly with original writing - for example, de Vere's silent grief for his father and the Polonius-like William Cecil's advice to his ward to "neither a borrower nor a lender be".

Even the young William made an appearance, with de Vere admonishing the boy for not learning to read or write. He later, rather foolishly, offered him one of his sonnets to use to win back his wife.

The play had its lighter moments - not least when de Vere, commencing, "To be or not to be...", was cut off by William exclaiming: "What kind of question is that?"

What kind of question, indeed, for de Vere's story was not a revenge tragedy but one more familiar to its 21st century audience - one of advancement, and the legacy we leave behind.

With an impressive performance by Dillon, simple but effective lighting, and a score performed by Charlotte Glasson on multiple instruments, including a saw, this was a big production in a small theatre and a cut above your average one-man show.

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<http://www.theargus.co.uk/>*