

STAGE THE Edinburgh

The Man Who Was Hamlet

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MUST SEE ★

Using a cut-and-paste montage of Shakespeare's lines – both as direct quote and in paraphrase – George Dillon reveals the scandalous life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Or should that be lines attributed to Shakespeare, as de Vere is the leading alternative candidate for authorship of Shakespeare's works.

It is a clever script, which finds a line through de Vere's life that echoes that of Hamlet, while using every aspect of Shakespeare's work, from the sonnets to the plays.

It even brings a young glove-maker's son into the frame, who de Vere advises to get a schooling and who reappears, rejecting de Vere's advice on writing a sonnet, and finding employment holding de Vere's horses.

Dillon puts in a masterful performance, drawing in all manner of Shakespearian acting styles to portray his philandering, foppish, arrogant toff, an adventuring swordsman who was a favourite in the court of Elizabeth.

Denise Evans' direction is strong, but could allow Dillon to expand a bit in his more intimate side. Charlotte Glasson has created a portentous score that is the perfect appropriate underpinning of Dillon's style.

An inventive in-joke that will amuse Shakespearian scholars but which, despite Dillon's towering stage presence, will bemuse those completely unfamiliar with his work.

*Review by **Thom Dibdin***

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