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## Saturday, July 17, 2010

### Henry VI, Part 3



"Henry VI Part 3," one of Shakespeare's earliest history plays, is not exactly his finest. The final part of the War of the Roses history cycle prior to "Richard III," it is

essentially stuffed with two key ingredients: ridiculous family melodrama and bloody battle scenes.

It begins right after the Yorks have won a key battle against the Lancasters. From then on, a constantly shifting power struggle persists between the two factions. While Henry VI could care less about the crown, his power-hungry wife Margaret views things differently. And on the York side, hunchback Richard III is already planning his corrupt rise to power.

In 1970, Shakespeare in the Park performed all three parts of "Henry VI" in a now legendary all-night marathon, and once every blue moon all three parts are condensed into a single theater piece. So Wide Eyed Productions and Columbia University's ambitious Off-Off-Broadway of an uncut and unadulterated Part 3 should be of great interest to Shakespeare fanatics.

Director Adam Marple, who views the unwieldy play through the lens of a medieval morality drama, provides a mostly accessible, entertaining and well-acted production.

Some of Marple's directorial touches are a bit overstated. A giant image of the late Henry V in his prime looms over the set, and one particular actor, Jarrod Bogard, onstage the entire show to change the set, stare weirdly at the actors and deliver all the messenger lines.

Nat Cassidy stands out as a contemplative King Henry, and Candace Thompson makes for a cunning and power-hungry Margaret.


If you attend, we advise you to review your English history. Otherwise you find yourself hopelessly lost within the first ten minutes.

(If you go) "Henry VI Part 3" plays at the East Thirteenth Street Theatre through July 24.  
136 E. 13th St., 212-352-3101, wideeyedproductions.com.

War of the Roses timeline:

1450 - Return of Richard, Duke of York, from Ireland  
1453 - Henry VI of England's first bout of mental illness  
1455 - War of the Roses begins with the Battle of First St. Albans  
1460 - Richard, Duke of York, killed at the battle of Wakefield  
1471 - Henry VI dies in Tower of London  
1485 - Richard III killed at the Battle of Bosworth, Henry VII crowned

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