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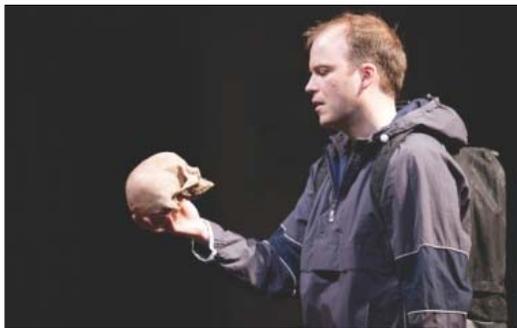
Monday, December 20, 2010

To See or Not to See

Locals can experience London's National Theatre from afar ... and in HD

By Rick Pender

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The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark is a big play. It is, in fact, the longest of Shakespeare's 38 works and arguably his most influential, using the simple measure of how often lines from it are quoted in everyday speech.

The title role is without question the biggest of any in Shakespeare's canon, and certainly one of the most daunting any actor can take on.

Laurence Olivier made his name as an actor playing the role, including a 1948 cinematic performance that many think defines our concept of the troubled prince. At the peak of his long career, Olivier served as the first artistic director of the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain (1963-1973). That now legendary company began with Olivier directing Peter O'Toole, then a 30-year-old actor on the rise, in the role. Much more recently, movie star Jude Law took a swing at the part in London, then brought it to New York City for a much-praised run.

It is indeed a role that can make a career, and that's what it appears to be doing right now for Rory Kinnear (pictured), who is earning accolades that compare him to Olivier and O'Toole (as well as Richard Burton, John Gielgud and others). He's performing at the National — following in the long tradition of Olivier and others — in London under the direction of its current artistic director, Sir Nicholas Hytner, and the praise has been profuse. The October review by Charles Spencer in *The Daily Telegraph* bore this headline: "Kinnear often comes thrillingly close to capturing the full elusive complexity of Hamlet."

So what are we here in the American Midwest to do, short of buying a ticket to London? There's a happy — and much more affordable — answer to that quandary. For \$16 (in advance, \$20 at the door) you can go to the Carnegie Visual and Performing Arts Center in Covington on Dec. 28 for a performance of *Hamlet* captured live in high definition. This is the first of a series of *National Theatre Live* performances that will be available at The Carnegie over the next several months.

As one of Shakespeare's most frequently produced plays, the story of Hamlet is a familiar one. The young prince of Denmark sees his father's ghost and learns that he was murdered by his brother. Tormented with loathing and consumed by grief, he must avenge his father's murder. What he fails to foresee is the destruction that ensues — with a tragic cascade of mayhem and death.

The National's modern-dress production uses a very 21st-century approach, which perhaps fits with the high-tech transmission. Kinnear's Hamlet wears sweats, a choice that attracted a lot of critical comment, including describing his performance as "Hamlet in a hoodie."



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In an interview with *The Toronto Globe & Mail*, Kinnear said, "We try as much as possible to make this royal family as human and as personable as possible, rather than treat them at a distance and have them constantly dressed in their finery."

Kinnear, 32, has not established an international profile yet — he played a small role in the latest James Bond film *Quantum of Solace* (2008) — but the notices he's earned in this staging of *Hamlet* mean he will certainly be on the entertainment radar soon. The international transmission of *Hamlet* is an opportunity to see an impressive young talent at the front door of his career.

In some cities in the U.S. and around the world, the *National Theatre Live* transmission of *Hamlet* was available on Dec. 9 in real time, similar to the popular HD broadcasts from New York City's Metropolitan Opera. Scheduling issues prevented its presentation at The Carnegie until now, but it's still a wonderful gift from Northern Kentucky's largest arts venue and its co-presenter, Cincinnati World Cinema. (It will be repeated at The Carnegie on Jan. 8.)

The Carnegie is one of more than 300 venues around the world participating in *National Theatre Live*, making *Hamlet* and subsequent productions from the National available to hundreds of thousands of eager theatergoers. In fact, The Carnegie is the only venue in Greater Cincinnati where you can see it — you'd have to travel hundreds of miles to see it anywhere else, since it's not happening in Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, Louisville, Chicago or Atlanta.

An added benefit derives from paid admissions: \$1 from each ticket sold will support the Acclaim Awards, the local recognition program for theaters and performers. The Acclaims assisted in making this important HD presentation available to Cincinnati-area audiences.

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK will be broadcast in HD at the Carnegie Visual and Performing Arts Center in Covington at 7 p.m. Dec. 28, with a repeat performance Jan. 8. Visit www.cincyworldcinema.org for tickets.

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Cincinnati CityBeat Ditch the fam and check out some great live acts this holiday:

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In this week's Spill It column in CityBeat, we did a roundup of a few holiday-oriented shows by local musicians coming up this weekend, but it only scratched the surface. With clubs being faced with Christmas Eve and Day falling on what are normally two of the bigger bar nights of the year (the week

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