

Review

It would be a shame if this jewel didn't go on to bigger and better things



■ Director Stash Kirkbride conducts the Q&A session with writer Melvyn Bragg.
Picture: SIMON FINLAY PHOTOGRAPHY

King Lear in New York Hostry Festival, Norwich

This new adaptation of Melvyn Bragg's King Lear in New York, set in the 1980s, is the crowning glory of the Hostry Festival.

It was re-written and shortened by the writer/presenter and the result is 90 minutes of enthralling theatre, running without an interval.

At its centre is a towering, multi-layered performance by Louis Hilyer. He plays Robert, a great actor at the tipping point of his life – torn between treading the boards or finding global fame in movies.

Robert is about to undertake the role of King Lear off Broadway but is battling a love for booze and is in the middle of a complex family trauma.

Around Hilyer is a talented cast of local actors, with Rebecca Chapman playing TV journalist Jackie with real relish, Peter Barrow as Robert's brother Alec, and two actresses who were in



■ King Lear in New York is the crowning glory of the Hostry Festival.

Picture: MATTHEW DARTFORD @ MDI DIGITAL

the Maddermarket's excellent production of King Lear earlier this year – Rebecca Aldred (Bett, Robert's second wife and agent) and Nina Taylor (Juliet, Robert's daughter).

Shakespeare's King Lear is a

timeless story which lends itself very well to modern re-interpretation.

Interwoven into the dialogue in Bragg's beautifully-written play are not only direct quotations from the Bard's play but

other nods to speeches or themes too.

Under Stash Kirkbride's direction, this is a tremendous, perfectly-paced production which certainly doesn't seem 90 minutes long. It ticks every box – is dramatic, funny, poignant and thought-provoking – and always absorbing.

The set is minimalist, but serves its purpose well, with back projections conveying the setting at a glance, and the music and sound effects, which start fittingly with a storm, were all spot-on.

After Wednesday night's performance, the first time Mr Bragg had seen his new adaptation performed, he told the audience he thought the production was 'marvellous' and praised the cast.

It would be a crying shame if this was the end of the road for this superb play – it would certainly look very at home in a London or New York theatre.

Viv Thomas

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Sam Russell

PA reporter

Two men killed a Pizza Hut delivery driver in a botched robbery for three pizzas.

Father-of-two Ali Qasemi, whose wife Fawzia was pregnant with their third child, was delivering three pizzas costing just over £50 when he was floored with a single punch and hit his head on the ground. He died two days later.

Joel Lawson, 25, formerly of Goodhale Road, Norwich, admitted throwing the punch and pleaded guilty to robbery and manslaughter.

His friend Mark Lintott, 29, denied both charges but was found guilty of manslaughter and robbery following a seven-day trial at Peterborough Crown Court.

Lawson told the court a group of friends had been drinking lager and using cocaine at Lintott's flat in Shrewsbury Court, Peterborough.

Lintott phoned Pizza Hut and provided a false address in his street, hoping to snatch the pizzas without paying for them and with no comeback to his address, the court heard.

When 45-year-old Mr Qasemi arrived in the early

“This was a sickening, senseless crime, which has caused misery

Det Insp Lucy Thomson.

hours of Sunday, May 8, he was attacked and the pair made off with the pizzas.

Mr Qasemi's widow screamed at Lawson as he gave evidence: “Burn in hell, you're evil.”

Lawson, describing when he and Lintott arrived back at the flat with the pizzas, told the court: “Everyone was sort of laughing at the time.

“Someone said ‘I can't believe you've done it.’”

The prosecution said that although Lawson threw the punch, both he and Lintott were “equally responsible” as they hatched the plan together.

Senior investigating officer Det Insp Lucy Thomson, speaking after the hearing, said: “This was a sickening, senseless crime, which has caused misery to Mr Qasemi's wife and her young sons.

“They have lost a loving,

devoted husband and father; devastating their close-knit family, all for the price of three pizzas.

“I and my inquiry team send our deepest sympathy to Mrs Qasemi and the boys at this incredibly difficult time.”

The pair are due to be sentenced at Cambridge Crown Court on November 18.

Karen Russell, chief people officer of Pizza Hut UK, said: “We were extremely saddened by the news in May that one of our franchise staff members, Ali Qasemi, had died following an assault.

“The safety of our team members has always been our priority and is an integral part of both our driver training and annual recertification.

“Since May we have put in place a number of measures to prevent this happening again, including a new order verification process and a review of delivery driver safety training.

“We have also been working closely with our franchisee to support Mr Qasemi's family, and our thoughts remain with them during this difficult time.”

Pair killed delivery driver to steal pizzas worth just £50



■ Joel Lawson, left, and Mark Lintott



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