



Actor relishing lead role in Hostry Festival play

HOSTRY FESTIVAL

Media Partners: Eastern Daily Press

Emma Knights

Arts correspondent
emma.knights@archant.co.uk

His career as an actor has seen him do everything from performing in the stage drama *An Inspector Calls* to appearing in the ITV series *Downton Abbey*, and this month Louis Hilyer will be taking on the lead role in the Hostry Festival's main house play.

Mr Hilyer will play the actor Robert in the show *King Lear In New York* at Norwich Cathedral's Hostry.

The show – which opens on October 24 and is directed by festival director Stash Kirkbride – was written by broadcaster and author Melvyn Bragg, who has adapted it especially for this year's festival.

"I would describe it as a family crisis set in a hotel room in New York, the night before the head of the family is to play *King Lear* in an off-Broadway theatre," said 52-year-old Mr Hilyer. "It's not necessarily just a story about a stage actor having a breakdown, of 'I cannot do it

“It's [parts like these that are] pretty much the reason you stay being an actor

Louis Hilyer

any more,' it's more than that. It's about how he tries to solve a big family crisis involving his daughter and his second wife."

He described the show as "beautifully written" and featuring "glorious speeches," and said he was relishing the chance to play Robert.

"This sort of part doesn't come along very often. It's [parts like these that are] pretty much the reason you stay being an actor," said Mr Hilyer, a father-of-three who is married to

King Lear In New York is the main house play for the 2016 Hostry Festival. Pictured is actor Louis Hilyer. Inset, the show was written by Melvyn Bragg. Pictures: MATT DARTFORD/MURDO MACLEOD



actress and Norwich School teacher Matilda Ziegler.

"As an actor [in this play] you are asked to use every skill at your disposal. You plunge to the depths and the heights of joy. It requires everything that you have. That's great because most of the time as an actor you play a policeman on the telly, and that's fine, it's enjoyable, but not particularly stretching."

He said he thought his character in the show had echoes of the stage and screen star Richard Burton.

"We all know Richard Burton was absolutely stunning to watch but he

as a person, I don't think he really believed it," he explained.

As for Mr Hilyer's own acting career, he said: "Pretty much from leaving Rada I went straight into work, an actor's life going from job to job, hoping that the jobs keep coming, and, give or take some lean moments, touch wood they have. You continue to relish the good parts when they come along."

When asked about his highlights, the parts Mr Hilyer picks sum up the variety of an actor's life. There is everything from performing in the stage drama *An Inspector Calls* to filming *Modigliani* with Andy Garcia in Romania to playing a policeman in *Downton Abbey*. He has also just finished filming an ITV series called *Tina and Bobby*, about the story of Bobby Moore during the 1966 World Cup, and is just about to start filming another ITV series, a police drama set in Liverpool called *Broken*.

Some of the performance dates for *King Lear In New York* have changed. The show is now being performed at Norwich Cathedral's Hostry from October 24 to 26 and October 29. All performances 7.30pm. Tickets £15 (£12 concessions).



Rehearsals for the 2016 Hostry Festival's production of *King Lear In New York*.

Picture: MATT DARTFORD

To book tickets, visit www.hostryfestival.org or call 01603 598676.