

QUEEN MARGARET

Hungry for power and angered by their king, the nobles of Henry VI's court plot and scheme against each other. As Henry wavers and the factions split, Queen Margaret is determined to hold on to power and protect the crown that will one day belong to her son.

“Queen Margaret is the history play that has been there in plain sight for four hundred years. Shakespeare wrote more lines for her than he did for King Lear, but because they are scattered across four plays (*Henry VI, Parts One, Two and Three*, and *Richard III*), the first three of which are rarely performed, she remains largely unknown.” Using Shakespeare’s original lines, alongside new text, Jeanie O'Hare retells the Wars of the Roses through the eyes of the Queen.

Characters:

MARGARET *of Anjou, Queen to King Henry VI*
HENRY VI
PRINCE EDWARD, *Prince of Wales, their son**

JOAN *of Arc*

Humphrey, Duke of GLOUCESTER, *uncle to Henry VI**
Earl of WARWICK, *first lord of the North, kingmaker*
CARDINAL Beaufort, *uncle to Henry VI**

Duke of YORK
EDWARD, *his son, later King Edward IV**
RICHARD, *also son to Duke of York, later Richard III**
Earl of RUTLAND, *son to Duke of York**

Duke of SOMERSET*
Duke of SUFFOLK*
Lord CLIFFORD*

HUME, *a petitioner, a page, a scribe, a pickpocket, a soldier, a courtier*
BAGOT, *a Petitioner**
TUTOR *to Rutland**

Chorus (or not) of attendants, messengers, soldiers, drummers, heralds

*means roles that must be doubled with a minimum cast of eleven actors

<i>Queen Margaret was first performed at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, on 14 September 2018, with the following cast</i>	
QUEEN MARGARET	Jade Anonka
BAGOT / PRINCE EDWARD / RUTLAND	Ishan Bhusal
YORK	Lorraine Bruce
SUFFOLK / CLIFFORD	Sarsted Edward-Cook
EDWARD IV / CARDINAL	Oscar Penders
HUME	Helena Lambrey
JOAN OF ARC	Lucy Morgan
SOMERSET / RICHARD	Kwami Ofofon
GLOUCESTER / TUTOR	Roger Mordige
WARWICK	Brigitte Roy
HENRY VI	Mia Ransom

There are seventeen named parts above but those with an asterisk indicate parts that can be doubled to create a minimum cast of eleven. The image above is how the original cast was split, however I'm not absolutely committed to following this dynamic. Much is to be confirmed as yet, dependant on venues which we intend to book A.S.A.P. but my vision of staging 'ideally' would be theatre of the round – however if this isn't viable then certainly keep with the thrust stage approach, have scenes occurring up close to, in and out, and around the audience. I shan't be going contemporary with this – proper old school with the glorious costumes to boot. And I intend to use as much physical theatre as budget, space and abilities allow – the play opens in prologue with a confrontation between The Duke York and Joan of Arc and I'd very much like there to be a bad-ass sword fight

here. Again to be confirmed, but we hope to stage this the latter half of March next year before Easter – So cast it as soon after summer as possible leaving time before Christmas for a reading, line learning, workshops and one on ones, then fire into rehearsals proper in the New Year.

Below are all the named characters with some brief character descriptions and their place on the political ladder. Also with a note on gender; some fixed, some optional. Don't get too fixed on the ages – it'd be lovely if the cast were all the precise age of their historical counterparts but my focus will be more on hitting the character.

MARGARET

Female, playing age 25-45

MARGARET of Anjou is Queen of England. Dismayed by her weak husband and his power hungry relatives, she is determined to maintain her grasp on the crown for the sake of her child. MARGARET is the strong central presence, whose unwavering passion and determination drives the action of the play, as she grows from a young woman in a foreign land to a regal leader of men.

HENRY VI

Male, playing age 25-45

HENRY VI is a weak and pious King, who is easily lead and deeply uncomfortable when confronted by any kind of challenge. HENRY VI is used a pawn in the political manoeuvres of many of the other characters, including MARGARET, GLOUCESTER and WARWICK. During the course of the play HENRY loses his naivety, changing from a weak but optimistic young man, to helpless and desperate King, unable to maintain his own rule.

JOAN

Female, playing age 18-35

A personification of Joan of Arc, she appears only to MARGARET. She is a forceful presence whenever on stage, and must be able to command the stage even in silence. Passionate, righteous and protective, this character is direct reflection of MARGARET's best and worst qualities.

GLOUCESTER *

Male, playing age 45+

Uncle to HENRY VI, the Duke of GLOUCESTER acts as Lord Protector of England during HENRY's youth; he is one of the most powerful men in England. Old and proud, GLOUCESTER is in equal measures protective of HENRY and desperate to maintain his own grasp on power.

WARWICK

Female, playing age 30+

Historically known as The Kingmaker, the Earl of WARWICK is a subtle but scheming presence across the play, who is always looking to advance her own position through clever alliances and tactful changes of side. Powerful, clever and ruthless, WARWICK is dangerous woman.

CARDINAL *

Male, playing 35+

Uncle to HENRY VI, CARDINAL Beaufort is head of the church in England and an influential member of the court during HENRY's early reign before he comes of age. Jealous and power hungry, the CARDINAL is a long-standing rival of the Duke of GLOUCESTER.

YORK

Female, playing age 40-65

The Duke of YORK is an English war hero, and one of the most powerful lords in the realm. She is a force to be reckoned with as a fierce warrior, capable military leader and a cunning politician. YORK's ambition and manoeuvring influences much of the action of the play. She is the mother of EDWARD IV, RICHARD III and RUTLAND.

EDWARD IV *

Male, playing age 25-35

Eldest son of the Duke of YORK, and eventually King EDWARD IV. EDWARD is a righteous and imposing presence, as well as a skilled warrior. Although he is capable of utter ruthlessness, he is portrayed as more generous and level-headed than RICHARD, his sibling.

RICHARD *

Any gender, playing age 20-35

Child of the Duke of YORK, and eventually the person who will become RICHARD III. This is William Shakespeare's vision of RICHARD III; venomous, twisted, vicious and hungry for power. Their only redeeming qualities are their fierce loyalty to and love for their family.

SOMERSET *

Any gender, playing age 20-35

The Duke of SOMERSET is a lord loyal to HENRY VI and MARGARET, and a bitter rival of the Duke of YORK following a legal argument. A straightforward and capable soldier.

SUFFOLK *

Any gender, playing age 25+

A lesser Duke of the English realm, the clever and ambitious SUFFOLK, attempts to use MARGARET (who it is implied he is intimate with) to gain influence over the HENRY's reign and manipulate the politics of the court.

CLIFFORD *

Any gender, playing age 25+

Lord CLIFFORD is a fiercely loyal subject to HENRY VI and Queen MARGARET. Focused and brutal, CLIFFORD is driven by their desire for revenge against the Duke of YORK for the death of their father.

HUME

Female, playing age 20-65

Hume represents a character often absent from Shakespeare's works (particularly the history plays): the common everyman. Pragmatic and forthright, Hume needs to be able to convey humour and raw emotion in equal measure, and have excellent presence to hold the stage alone. Musical/singing abilities will likely (not definitely) be required.

TUTOR *

Male, playing age 45+

A clergyman who acts as TUTOR to RUTLAND, child of the Duke of YORK. A loyal but weak servant.

BAGOT/PRINCE EDWARD/RUTLAND*

Any gender, playing age 16-20

BAGOT is a young petitioner for their master. PRINCE EDWARD is the child of HENRY VI and MARGARET of Anjou. RUTLAND is the child of the Duke of YORK, and younger sibling of EDWARD IV and RICHARD III. I've grouped these together as I'll likely (not definitely) be looking for one talented young actor to play all these parts who'll need to be able to convincingly portray three contrasting characters with ease.