

NEAL STREET PRODUCTIONS ANNOUNCE DETAILS OF BBC SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

BEN WHISHAW, RORY KINNEAR, PATRICK STEWART, DAVID SUCHET, DAVID MORRISSEY, CLEMENCE POÉSY, LINDSAY DUNCAN and JAMES PUREFOY confirmed for *Richard II* – shooting June 2011

A major new cycle of Shakespeare's four most acclaimed historical works will be brought to BBC Two in 2012 as part of a season based on the Bard's life and works.

Involving some of the most pre-eminent Shakespearian actors and directors of our time, the films will consist of bold adaptations of *Richard II*, *Henry IV Parts I and II* and *Henry V*, set in the Medieval period and filmed on locations around the UK and Europe.

Co-produced by Neal Street Productions with NBC Universal and WNET, and commissioned by Ben Stephenson, Controller, BBC Drama, and Janice Hadlow, Controller, BBC 2, these four films will be linked to the Cultural Olympiad of 2012.

Filming on *Richard II*, the first of the four films, will commence next month in Wales. Locations include St David's Cathedral and Pembroke Castle, both being used for the first time as filming locations for a production of this scale. Production designer will be Andrew McAlpine (*An Education*, *The Piano*), with Danny Cohen (*The King's Speech*) as Director of Photography and Odile Dicks Mireaux (*The Constant Gardener*) as Costume Designer.

Ben Whishaw (*The Hour*, *Criminal Justice*) will play King Richard II with Rory Kinnear (*The NT's Hamlet*, *Women In Love*) as his challenger, Bolingbroke. John of Gaunt will be played by Patrick Stewart (*Star Trek*, *The RSC's Merchant of Venice*), with David Suchet (*Poirot*) as The Duke of York and David Morrissey (*South Riding*, *State of Play*) as Northumberland. Tom Hughes (*Silk*) will play Aumerle and Mowbray will be played by James Purefoy (*Rome*). Clemence Poésy (*Harry Potter*) will play the role of Queen Isabella and Lindsay Duncan (*Margaret*, *Alice in Wonderland*) will play The Duchess of York. Other confirmed cast members include Lucian Msamati (*The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency*) and David Bradley (*Harry Potter*).

Pippa Harris (*Starter For Ten*, *Stuart A Life Backwards*), Sam Mendes (*American Beauty*, *Revolutionary Road*) and Gareth Neame (*Downton Abbey*) are Executive Producers with Rupert Ryle-Hodges (co-producer of *Cranford*) as Producer. Rupert Goold, RSC Associate Director, is to direct the film and has adapted the play for screen alongside Ben Power, Associate Director of the National Theatre. Maggie Lunn (*The Nativity*) is the Casting Director.

Pippa Harris, Executive Producer for Neal Street Productions, says, "With the backing of the BBC and NBC Universal, this is a fantastic opportunity to bring Shakespeare to a worldwide TV audience, in a vivid and enthralling way. It's hugely exciting to be working with such an array of talent."

Ben Stephenson, Controller, BBC Drama, says, "A fitting ensemble of some of this country's finest acting talent have assembled for *Richard II*, the first of four film versions of Shakespeare's History plays on BBC Two in 2012. Shooting entirely on location, the director Rupert Goold brings a scale never before attempted on TV to the work by using St David's Cathedral and Pembroke Castle in Wales to give audiences something entirely unique."

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