

BACK FROM THE DEAD: ✦ an Eidophusikon For Richard III ✦



✦ Project Overview ✦
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for more information about the project and the progress go to
www.irinanechaeva.com/richardiii_hologram

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Professor **CHRISTOPHER SWIFT, Ph.D.**
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

An early form of theatrical automation and animation, the eidophusikon was the invention of the nineteenth-century painter and inventor Philip de Loutherbourg. Essentially, it is a miniature theatre for an audience of 4-5 people and a four-foot proscenium frame. Behind the proscenium, a fully mechanized system of pulleys, mirrors, and automated instruments displayed "phenomena of nature." Professor Swift and a team of students from Entertainment Technology will research, design, and build a modern day eidophusikon; a spectacle in three dimensions with a major technological addition: a hologram.

The concept of producing a holographic image of King Richard III came out of a paper written by Irina Nechaeva about Shakespeare's play of the same name. In 2012, the actual bones of the medieval king were recovered and removed from a car park outside of London. Once the bones were confirmed to be those of Richard III, artists and researchers in London reconstructed his facial and body features in computerized and plastic forms. The concept behind our project is to resurrect Richard III in a holographic eidophusikon, dramatically and with moving image and sound. The 7-10 minute presentation of the resurrection will include spoken texts from Shakespeare's play, an animated scene showing Richard's transformation from a pile of bones to a full man, and his reappearance in modern society in fifteenth-century dress. The short script for the performance installation (ideally in the lobby of Voorhees) tells the story of Richard waiting for centuries for a proper burial and then returning to life in order to restore his proper name to history. This semester we have researched the subject of Richard's reign and historiography, written a story outline, produced a graphic model of the eidophusikon, and researched the technical requirements for

construction. In the fall, with the help of two additional students, the eidophusikon will be constructed, the computerized mise-en-scène will be completed, and the hologram machine will be activated for public viewing.

In front of the proscenium opening will be an interactive panel for viewers to read and engage with prior to the spectacle. The panel will contain a brief history of the controversy surrounding Shakespeare's negative, propagandistic portrayal of King Richard III, as well as the recent hagiographic revival of Richard's historical image. Viewers must be aware of this background information in order to fully appreciate the 7-minute show.

SCENE I: 1485, BATTLE OF BOSWORTH FIELD

Visuals: Final scene of Shakespeare's play where Richard loses his horse and then his life. Smoke blowing across the battlefield, shouts of the charge, cries of agony, alarums, fife and drum, arrows piercing flesh, axes clashing with broadswords. Richard is in the deformed shape.

KING RICHARD III

A thousand hearts are great within my bosom:
Advance our standards, set upon our foes
Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!
Upon them! victory sits on our helms.

Exeunt. Alarum: excursions. Enter CATESBY.

CATESBY

Rescue, my Lord of Norfolk, rescue, rescue!
The king enacts more wonders than a man,
Daring an opposite to every danger:
His horse is slain, and all on foot he fights,
Seeking for Richmond in the throat of death.
Rescue, fair lord, or else the day is lost!

Alarums. Enter KING RICHARD III.

KING RICHARD III

A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY

Withdraw, my lord; I'll help you to a horse.

KING RICHARD III

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die:
I think there be six Richmonds in the field;
Five have I slain to-day instead of him.
A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!

Alarum. Enter RICHMOND; they fight. KING RICHARD III is slain. Retreat and flourish. Re-enter RICHMOND, DERBY bearing the crown, with divers other Lords.

RICHMOND

God and your arms be praised, victorious friends,
The day is ours, the bloody dog is dead.

...

Enter their bodies as becomes their births:

...

And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
We will unite the white rose and the red...

SCENE II: SAME FIELD, LATER.

Visuals: Crows squawk. We see Richard's soul depart his lifeless body, hovering over. Two gravediggers enter and stand over the body.

GRAVEDIGGER 1 (heavy cockney accent)

An' who's this one here, mate?

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Alas, poor Yoric.

RICHARD'S GHOST

Wrong bloody play, you cur!

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Dunno. Satin has had his way, though. Ghastly gashes.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

A sight not fit for any mother's son.

RICHARD'S GHOST

Indeed, "am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
...Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time"[this is an snippet from his Act I,
Scene i speech]

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Well – down with him. He goes with the rest.

RICHARD'S GHOST (as his body is dragged toward a mass grave)
Halt, mongrels! This body is anointed matter! Leave be! Ho!

GRAVEDIGGERS (having tossed him onto the heap in a hole)

The worms are for him now.

RICHARD'S GHOST hovers above

To die, to sleep;

'tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wish'd.

(as his spirit is sucked back into his corpse in the hole...)

Release me from this mortal coil!!!!

GRAVEDIGGERS (finally noticing the specter)

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

(they run off)

SCENE III: MODERN LONDON. THE CAR PARK.

Visuals: Fast forward through time to 20th century. Richard's unanointed grave is paved over and made a parking lot. Muffled sounds of a complaining spirit can be heard.

SCENE IV: MONTAGE

Visual: Montage of talking heads – members of the Richard III Society speaking affectionately about their king. Intercut with images of his famous portrait.

Text: At first, usual stuff about the distorted historiography, why Shakespeare was such a bastard, etc. Slowly the tone of the speakers changes; comments become very personal; expressions of love, a kind of incantation. More muffled complaints (in iambic pentameter) from under the car park.

SCENE V: CAR PARK AND GRAVEYARD NEAR A CHAPEL.

Visual: Discovery of the bones. Careful removal, and eventually reburied in sacred ground. Spirit of Richard III finally released from the grave. Shoots out of the ground triumphantly.

RICHARD III

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart tell my story!

SCENE VI: A theatre. Stage.

Visual: A ham actor is limping grotesquely about performing Gloucester's opening speech; cane, distorted face, hump, etc.

ACTOR

...I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;

SCRIPT (alpha version)

Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity...

A fully embodied Richard III (wearing 15th century garb) enters from the back of the house and climbs on stage.

ACTOR (stopping in his tracks)
Who are you? Get off my stage!

RICHARD III
Scoundrel. All the world's a stage and you are merely a player. Make your exit!

ACTOR
Wait. I saw you at callbacks... you didn't get the part. Get over it!

RICHARD III
Nay, thou hast conflated me with another soul, man. I am Duke of Gloucester, the great comely and quite erect King Richard III. (Drawing his sword) And now, your hump must make peace with its maker! (RICHARD whacks the fake hump off the ACTOR).

ACTOR
Help! This guy is crazy! Stage manager!

RICHARD III (stalking the actor around the stage)
Now head, say adieu to thy wielding neck!

Slow motion—Richard decapitates the Actor (as tastefully as possible). Music. Richard mounts a majestic steed and rides up the aisle of the theatre and out the front door, triumphant.

END