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[KING LEAR \(ANTAEUS PRODUCTION\): 100% – Sweet](#)

[Colin Mitchell](#) | Jun 29, 2010 | [Comments 0](#) |





Harry Groener and Robert Pine in an Antaeus production of "King Lear." Credit: Ed Krieger.

SWEET

The Matthews team, featuring Morlan Higgins' stalwart Kent, Kirsten Potter's villainous Goneril, Francia DiMase's vindictive Regan and Drew Doyle's sly Oswald, ultimately had a larger intellectual impact on me — the play administering a lesson on the dangers of dividing language from truth. The Groener crew, with Allegra Fulton's sinister Goneril and Jen Dede's hateful Regan balanced by Gregory Itzin's noble Kent and Robert Pine's sorry Gloucester — allowed me to see (and feel) the instinct of goodness at work in a malignant universe. Dark as "Lear" undeniably is, there is light — and poetry — in the basic human need for justice to triumph over our baser selves.

[Charles McNulty – LA Times](#)

SWEET

And it's that sojourn toward spiritual oblivion that Groener carves with such intrigue, step by step, with alternate bursts of rage and defeat. He's magnificent and ably matched by Allegra Fulton's richly textured Goneril, who conjures memories of Estelle Parsons, mingled with the late, local actress Pamela Gordon. Gregory Itzin's Kent is grand, as is Nick Cagle's Oswald. Less so some of the supporting players, who render comparatively callow and shallow renditions compared to the masters at the helm. DeLorenzo stages a modernist interpretation that starts with Napoleonic military chic (costumes by A. Jeffrey Schoenberg) — all those boots stretching up to the thigh — and evolves to contemporary desert warfare attire. No, this is not an imposition or a gimmick. It fits snugly into the play's expedition into the surreal, in a work about aging and senility, the blessings and curses of time.

[Steven Leigh Morris – LA Weekly](#)

SWEET

The small 49-seat Deaf West Theatre is intimate enough that there's no excuse for actors to not be fully heard, but a couple of them falter in this regard. But this is a minor point in what is overwhelmingly positive. Go see either of the casts and appreciate LEAR all over again.

[Dale Reynolds – Stagehappenings](#)

SWEET

There aren't many performers who can star on Broadway in musical hits like Spamalot, Crazy For You, and Oklahoma! and play King Lear. Groener may well be the only one, and his performance as Shakespeare's most epic monarch is truly monumental. As Lear gets madder and madder (in both senses of the word), Groener's work here becomes truly breathtaking, and his is not the only performance to rave about.

[Steven Stanley – StageSceneLA](#)

SWEET

To experience age appropriate actors, many familiar faces from features and television, working for the love of theater itself is a gift to our community as well as an important present to the tradition of classical theatre itself. The feeling of ensemble permeates this cast as it does in the cast of Fools. Each deserves an audience ..See both shows and make your own comparisons.

[Michael Sheehan – On Stage Los Angeles](#)

SWEET

While not a comedy, this meaty production of one of Shakespeare's most revered classics delivers an uplifting tone at the hands of two marvelous casts. I had the honor of viewing the play twice, with both casts labeled: The Fools and The Madmen. I now face the difficult challenge of comparing them. I was surprised by how different each performance was and yet they were both spectacular.

[Sheryl Scarborough – Socal.com](#)

SWEET

To see "King Lear" once in awhile is an exhaustive experience alone, but to see it twice on consecutive nights is akin to blissful agony. Blissful in that the rotating double-cast Antaeus Ensemble packs an emotional wallop, searing the words to your brain like a scalding red-hot poker. The agony, then, is the tragedy of how the foolish and arrogant antics of a king are his ultimate undoing—again and again—both figuratively and in this case, literally. Yet, if asked to do it all over again, I'd be tempted to say, yes. If that isn't a ringing endorsement, I don't know what is. To be fair, one cast is slightly more riveting than the other. Whether it's the "Fools" with Dakin Matthews in the title role or the "Madmen" with Harry Groener, to see one or the other is better than to miss them entirely.

[M.R. Hunter – EyeSpyLA](#)

SWEET

Dakin Matthews is one of the finest performers to regularly grace southland stages. Period. Bar none. Scholar, company founder, teacher, translator, director and _ above all _ actor, this individual is every bit a gift to the classical stage, and he knows Shakespeare like few others. Between the productions that he has directed, adapted, dramaturged or performed in, there can't be very many Shakespeare plays that he hasn't essayed in some form. Yes, he has played Lear before, recently in Pittsburgh, but the news that Matthews would scale this particular summit in front of an L.A. audience _ and for the very company that he founded 19 years ago _ was as exciting as it was fitting. Finally the Matthews "Lear" has arrived on the tiny but surprisingly adaptable Deaf West Theatre stage, and, guess what! it's superb.

[Evan Henerson – LA Examiner](#)

SWEET

Three hours of superb, sublime Shakespeare never went so fast as Antaeus' production of King Lear. Harvard trained director Bart DeLorenzo had the daunting task of helming a double cast show (Dakin Matthews & Harry Groener as leading, 'career-crowning' role). It's an unsparing look at an aging father, at the brink of senility, about to divide his riches amongst his daughters, and the 'royal family dysfunction' that ensues.

[Bonnie Prieuer – Tolucan Times](#)

SWEET

King Lear, Shakespeare's play about an old, unfortunately unwise monarch who learns to value the worthwhile people in his life too late, is generally performed as a simple tragedy, squeezing pathos from the disconcerting velocity of the high being brought low. There's nothing wrong with that approach—it works and has worked for centuries—but the new production by the Antaeus Company offers something different and equally compelling. Director Bart DeLorenzo and an expert cast (this production has two separate casts that perform alternately—this review only covers one of them) have done a deep reading of the text and the result is an intellectually engaging show that revels in the beauty and nuance of Shakespeare's language and finds a plethora of unexpected humor. King Lear is funny—who knew?

[Terry Morgan – LAIST](#)

SWEET

Bart DeLorenzo's art, combined with actors of this caliber – we can't mention them all – stirs the soul, breaks the hearts, leaves the audience shattered and deeply bereaved. Forget the history, true or imaginary; let go good reason and dramatic through-lines; set aside pre-conceived notions of what a play should be, what it should do...and give full reign to emotions you may never have known you had.

[Madeleine Shaner – Park La Brea News/Beverly Press \(opens in pdf\)](#)

SWEET

Lear is here with two casts, and, in this sizzling production by the Antaeus Company directed by Bart DeLorenzo, it's a winner.

[Laura Hitchcock – CurtainUp](#)

“King Lear,” the [Antaeus Company](#) at Deaf West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. Contact theater for schedule.

Ends Aug. 8. \$30 and \$34. (818) 506-1983. Running time: 3 hours.

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