

RED BULL THEATER

JESSE BERGER | FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JIM BREDESON | MANAGING DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

A KING AND NO KING

BY FRANCIS BEAUMONT AND JOHN FLETCHER

DIRECTED BY JOSÉ ZAYAS

FEATURING

RAJESH BOSE | ROBERT CUCCIOLI | EDMUND DONOVAN

FRANCHELLE STEWART DORN | TOPHER EMBREY | CHUKWUDI IWUJI

TERESA AVIA LIM | CARA RICKETTS | SOCORRO SANTIAGO

REAGAN TANKERSLEY | CRAIG WALLACE | CJ WILSON

PRODUCING DIRECTOR | NATHAN WINKELSTEIN

SCRIPT ADAPTOR | MICHAEL SEXTON

ZOOM COORDINATOR | BETSY AYER

OBS COORDINATOR | JESSICA FORNEAR

DRAMATURG | MARIO DIGANGI

DRAMA LEAGUE DIRECTING FELLOW | EMMA ROSA WENT

READINGS ARE MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF

THE AXE-HOUGHTON FOUNDATION

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020 | A LIVESTREAM PRESENTATION

A RECORDING OF THE LIVESTREAM WILL BE AVAILABLE UNTIL 7:00 PM EST ON
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18 – THEN IT DISAPPEARS.

RED BULL THEATER WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS GRATITUDE TO THE PERFORMERS' UNIONS: ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION, AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, AMERICAN GUILD OF VARIETY ARTISTS, AND SAG-AFTRA THROUGH THEATRE AUTHORITY, INC. FOR THEIR COOPERATION IN PERMITTING THE ARTISTS TO APPEAR IN THIS PROGRAM.

RED BULL THEATER IS SUPPORTED, IN PART, BY PUBLIC FUNDS FROM THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY COUNCIL, AND THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE.

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RED BULL THEATER IS A PROUD MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE OF RESIDENT THEATERS/NEW YORK, THE OFF-BROADWAY LEAGUE, AND THEATER COMMUNICATIONS GROUP.



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DONATE TODAY TO SUPPORT RED BULL THEATER AND INVEST IN THE VITALITY OF CLASSICAL THEATER FOR A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE. FOR NEARLY TWENTY YEARS, RED BULL THEATER HAS TRANSFORMED THE CLASSICAL THEATER EXPERIENCE WITH SPECTACULAR, HIGH-OCTANE PRODUCTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES, RAUCOUS READINGS OF RARELY-PRODUCED PLAYS, AND VIVID REIMAGININGS OF ICONIC WORKS.

WE'RE DEDICATED TO REVITALIZING THE CLASSICS FOR TODAY'S AUDIENCES, AND WHILE WE TREASURE THESE CLASSICS, OUR APPROACH IS ANYTHING BUT PRECIOUS. YOUR SUPPORT IS.

WE'RE COMMITTED TO CONTINUING CONNECTION DURING THIS HISTORIC TIME.
YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP MAKE THAT POSSIBLE.

REDBULLTHEATER.COM/makeagift

CAST

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Mardonius, <i>a Captain</i>	ROBERT CUCCIOLI
Bessus, <i>a Captain</i>	CJ WILSON
Arbaces, <i>King of Iberia</i>	CHUKWUDI IWUJI
Tigranes, <i>King of Armenia</i>	EDMUND DONOVAN
Gentleman/First Swordsman.....	TOPHER EMBREY
Messenger/Second Swordsman.....	REAGAN TANKERSLEY
Spaconia, <i>a Lady</i>	TERESA AVIA LIM
Gobrias, <i>Lord Protector</i>	CRAIG WALLACE
Bacurius, <i>a Lord</i>	RAJESH BOSE
Arane, <i>the Queen Mother</i>	FRANCHELLE STEWART DORN
Panthea, <i>her Daughter</i>	CARA RICKETTS
Lygones, <i>Mother of Spaconia</i>	SOCORRO SANTIAGO

–THERE WILL BE ONE 10-MINUTE INTERMISSION–



THIS THURSDAY

DECEMBER 17, 2020

7:30 PM EST | LIVESTREAM

Join an interactive discussion with
director **JOSÉ ZAYAS**, scholar **MARIO DIGANGI**,
and some of the other artists involved.

REGISTER at REDBULLTHEATER.COM

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS

FRANCIS BEAUMONT (1584–1616) and JOHN FLETCHER (1579–1625) were the famous “double act” of Jacobean playwriting. They began their careers independently, but by 1606 they produced their first collaboration, *The Woman Hater*, a satire on London life. Together, they would write at least twelve plays, including their two most successful, *Philaster, or Love Lies a-Bleeding* (1608) and *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1611). Although Beaumont retired from the theater in 1613, Fletcher continued writing for the stage until his death. He wrote plays alone and with other partners (including Shakespeare, whom he replaced as the leading playwright for the King’s Men), but it was his collaboration with Beaumont that endured in the public memory. Together, they made popular the tragicomedy, a mixed form that audiences adored.

ABOUT THE PLAY

For many twentieth-century critics, *A King and No King* (1611) is the prime example of a Beaumont and Fletcher play: a certain kind of sensationalistic, artificial, and amoral tragicomedy that depicts extreme sexual scenarios and provides implausible resolutions for seemingly intractable problems. In *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (1952), Eugene Waith finds in *A King and No King* all the defining formal characteristics of seventeenth-century tragicomedy, including stylized language, intricate plots, protean characters, and a focus on strong passions. For other critics, scandalous themes and exaggerated characters make tragicomedy a “decadent” genre, a falling off from the tragic grandeur and dignified romance of late Shakespeare. Writing in 1960, Robert Ornstein compared Fletcher’s thematically daring plays not to the edgy, urbane drama of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller but to Hollywood hackwork that indulged the “housewife’s escapist desire for romance and adventure.” More recent scholarship has taken tragicomedy more seriously, illuminating how Beaumont and Fletcher engaged with pressing contemporary social and political issues such as militarism, monarchical government, and changing gender roles. Still, *A King and No King* remains something of a curiosity.

To begin with, the play’s title poses a riddle: are the “king” and “no king” two antithetical figures, or, paradoxically, one and the same figure? A few lines into the play, the soldier Mardonius describes King Arbaces as a collection of antithetical traits: “vainglorious and humble, angry and patient, . . . in extremities, in an hour.” Arbaces speaks in the conquering, boastful idiom of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*, the grandiloquent conqueror, but Arbaces is also a ridiculous figure, squabbling with foolish inferiors such as the cowardly Bessus and subject to “wild moods.”

At the end of this scene, Arbaces suddenly shifts from merry banter into bitter lament when revealing that his mother, Arane, has once again attempted to assassinate him. Arane and Gobrius, the Lord Protector, share some kind of secret knowledge about a “plot” involving Arbaces; while the playwrights hint that the discovery of this plot will end “happily for all,” they ratchet up tension and mystery by letting events take their queer course.

The central complication of the plot unfolds when Arbaces, returning home after years away at war, encounters his sister, Panthea, and refuses to recognize her as such. In a rant typical of the Renaissance tyrant, Arbaces compares his power to that of the sea, which “is to be obeyed / And not disputed with,” and simply decrees that Panthea is no longer his blood relation. Arbaces’ futile assertion of his temporal power against the authority of nature is, we soon learn, a consequence of incestuous lust. At this point, the tone of the play darkens, as Arbaces struggles with the sinful yearning that, as king, he has the power to bring to fruition. Yet even at the height of Arbaces’ political and spiritual crisis, the playwrights deflate the tragic mood, bringing in Bessus cheerfully to offer his services as pander to the king’s sister, and, if he has a mind to it, to his mother as well.

Critic Philip Fisher writes that “wonder occurs at the horizon line of what is potentially knowable, but not yet known.” At the end of the play, having discovered that his love for Panthea is not technically incestuous, Arbaces is filled with joyful wonder, the emotion most often associated with the strange reversals and revelations of romance. By hinting at a comic ending that is on the horizon yet withholding from us the means by which it can be accomplished, Beaumont and Fletcher allow us to experience the wonder of a skillfully managed plot.

MARIO DIGANGI

Professor of English, Lehman College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

SYNOPSIS

The tragicomedy *A King and No King* by Beaumont and Fletcher follows Arbaces, the boastful but much-loved King of Iberia. When the play begins, he has just defeated his rival Tigranes (the King of Armenia) in battle, and resolved to bring him back to his court where he intends to marry Tigranes to his sister Panthea, who he has not seen in many years.

But before Arbaces can return victoriously home, he learns that his mother

Arane has plotted to assassinate him. Arbaces' advisors warn him in time, and he is saved by his Lord Protector Gobrius. Meanwhile, Tigranes' own lover Spaconia resolves to follow him to Arbaces' court, hoping to keep him true to her. Tigranes promises her he will stay faithful, and she travels with them disguised as a lady-in-waiting for Panthea.

Panthea, who has been raised by Gobrius separately from Arbaces, waits for letters from her brother that will summon her to court. When Spaconia arrives, she is accepted into Panthea's service and at first she gives a false name, but quickly she confesses her true identity and her love for Tigranes. Even though Panthea is promised to him, she swears to Spaconia she will respect her prior claim and will not marry him.

The people of Iberia celebrate the end of the war, and Arbaces pardons his mother Arane, while welcoming his sister Panthea to his court. Tigranes is immediately attracted to Panthea despite his promise to Spaconia, but Arbaces suddenly finds himself struck with powerful, incestuous lust. He struggles to resist his passion and instructs his followers to imprison Panthea in a different part of his palace, where he cannot see her and won't be tempted by her. Meanwhile, a cowardly soldier named Bessus whose valor in battle has been misreported deals with ever-increasing martial challenges from the citizens of the town.

As Arbaces wrestles with his conscience, he confesses his sins to his advisor Mardonius, who is repulsed and urges him to resist his desire at all costs. Arbaces then confesses to Bessus, who blithely agrees to help him pursue his sister. Meanwhile, Spaconia confronts Tigranes about his shifting affections, and chastened, he resolves to honor their engagement. Most shockingly of all, Arbaces confesses his ardor to Panthea herself, who seems to return his feelings. With no more power to resist and his soul on the brink of damnation, Arbaces makes a terrible plot to kill Gobrius, rape Panthea, and then kill himself.

EMMA ROSA WENT

Drama League Classical Directing Fellow



JESSE BERGER | FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JIM BREDESON | MANAGING DIRECTOR

Red Bull Theater brings rarely seen classic plays to dynamic new life for contemporary audiences. Our work unites a respect for tradition with a modern sensibility.

Red Bull Theater is named for the rowdy Jacobean playhouse that illegally performed plays in England during the years of Puritan rule, and was the first London theater to reopen after the Restoration. This bold spirit is central to our identity. With the Jacobean plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as our cornerstone, Red Bull Theater is New York City's home for dynamic performances of great plays that stand the test of time. The company also produces new works that are in conversation with the classics.

Red Bull Theater delights and engages the intellect and imagination of audiences. A home for artists, scholars and students, we strive to make our work accessible, diverse, and welcoming to all theatergoers. Educational as well as entertaining, our work keeps a rich and vital tradition thriving.

Red Bull Theater believes in the power of great classic stories and plays of heightened language to deepen our understanding of the human condition. We believe in the special ability of live theater to create unique, collective experiences. And we believe in the timeless capacity of classical theater to illuminate the events of our times.

Founded in 2003 with a production of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Red Bull Theater has been acclaimed by *The New York Times* as "a dynamic producer of classic plays" and by *Time Out New York* as "the most exciting classical theater in New York."

Red Bull Theater serves adventurous theatergoers with OFF-BROADWAY PRODUCTIONS, REVELATION READINGS, and the annual SHORT NEW PLAY FESTIVAL. The company also offers outreach programs including SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOLS, bringing professional actors and teaching artists into public school classrooms, BULL SESSIONS, free post-play discussions with top scholars, and MASTER CLASSES in classical actor training led by veteran theater professionals.

In our 17-year history, Red Bull Theater has produced 21 Off-Broadway Productions and nearly 200 Revelation Readings of rarely seen classics, serving 5,000 artists and providing quality artistic programming to an audience of 65,000. The company's unique programming has received ongoing critical acclaim, and has been recognized with Lortel, Drama Desk, Drama League, Calloway, Off Broadway Alliance, and Obie nominations and Awards.

Visit REDBULLTHEATER.COM for more information.

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