

Oedipus Won (Oh no he didn't!)

A member of our staff managed to catch Jamie Reid Baxter, director and driving force behind Pirate Productions latest musical extravaganza, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, to be seen at the Esch Theatre on Thursday 26 and Friday 27 March.

LN: Jamie, you're really quite old, aren't you? Just how old are you?

JRB: (for it is he) Not nearly as old as the text of *Oedipus*, anyway.

LN: And vintage plays, like port, have more flavour. *Oedipus* contains a reference to port, doesn't it? After they've all sung "God save the King".

JRB: No, that's where the Duke of Wellington says that claret reminds him of blood. There is a mention of maraschino punch in connection with King Swellfoot's gout... brandy-devils get a look-in. Hogwash soup, oats, potatoes... But no port. Greasy rugs, too. But no port.

LN: Let's get back to this swollen feet business. *Oedipus*, as many of us now know thanks to *Antigone*, means "swell foot". But this *Oedipus* isn't a Greek tragedy, is it?

JRB: Neither was *Antigone*. No. I didn't say that, please delete it. Shelley was an Englishman, so I suppose you couldn't really claim that his *Oedipus* is a Greek play. But he does use a chorus.

LN: Of Theban elders?

JRB: No, of elderly Theban

pigs. And young pigs as well. The pigs are the heroes, and they have lots of nice music to sing. They grunt a lot, too.

LN: Yes - David Bullock wrote the music for this satirical opera. Did he compose the grunts as well?

JRB: The oinks and snorts are not all written into the score; David and I sort of worked on that together. But he does conduct the grunts, yes.

LN: Apparently you've wanted to put *Oedipus Tyrannus* on stage since 1974 - is it so bad you haven't been able to convince anyone to do it?

JRB: No, it's a masterpiece, but nobody seems to know that. Maybe they still won't after 26th March, but the more I've worked with and thought about this text, the more impressed I am by Shelley's genius. Both as a comic playwright and as a political philosopher. It really is a text worth knowing. And more than that - worth seeing. This is Pirate's most way-out show yet - it verges on the *Rocky Horror*.

LN: Come off it!

JRB: No, you come and see it. And listen to it. And then buy the video. You'll certainly come out humming the tunes - even the ones you didn't know before. This is a fun piece. The cast are terrific. *Oedipus* is a must.

LN: Well...

JRB: Oh ay it is. See you in Esch.



Caught in the act of just playing around - the well-known and quite auld Scotsman Jamie Reid Baxter, who directs Oedipus Tyrannus at the Esch Theatre on 26 and 27 March.



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