

THE WHITE PRINCESS

PRODUCTION NOTES

STARZ' Original Limited Series "The White Princess," is an 8-episode follow-up to the Golden Globe® and Emmy® award-nominated STARZ Original Miniseries "The White Queen," from Company Pictures and Playground. Drawn from the novel of the same name by Philippa Gregory, and part of "The Cousins' War" book series, "The White Princess" picks up three days after the conclusion of "The White Queen," as a new generation ascends to the throne in a tale of power, political divides, family, love, and betrayal.

"The White Princess" is a gripping historical drama uniquely told from the perspective of the women waging the ongoing battle for the English throne. The story begins as one of England's most politically turbulent times - The War of the Roses - is coming to an end. An uneasy peace is achieved when former King Richard III is defeated at the Battle of Bosworth, and the victor, Henry Tudor (King Henry VII) is married to Elizabeth of York (aka Lizzie) - a princess from a rival house and Richard III's former lover.

Highlighting the suspense and uncertainty of life in the Royal Court in medieval England, the drama follows Gregory's novel by positioning the female protagonists at the forefront and giving life to their unsung contributions to the familiar history.

A COUNTRY DIVIDED

The world of "The White Princess" is a country divided, with deep political rifts roughly aligned into two warring houses who have ruled for over 300 years: the House of York and the House of Tudor (a branch of the House of Lancaster which ultimately subsumed the Lancastrians and their loyalists), which includes Henry Tudor and his scheming mother Lady Margaret Beaufort. Both factions base their claim to the throne on their lineage from the same king - Edward III, and both stem from the Plantagenet family line - which led the conflict to be referred to as "The Cousins' War." It is into this fraught, uncertain political landscape that Elizabeth of York (Lizzie) and Henry Tudor are both ripped from childhood, and forced, uneasily, onto the throne by their mothers and their House in a bid for both peace and power.

England sees a new monarch ascend in Henry Tudor. Born in Wales, he is a foreigner, and a disruptor to the political status quo. Henry doesn't know the customs of England, and is an unsophisticated ruler, choosing intimidation, surveillance and tyranny over diplomacy. As Showrunner Emma Frost explains, "Henry Tudor is a rank outsider. Nobody in a million years thought that this was going to be who ended up on the throne. England is thrown into complete turmoil."

In a shocking first move as king and a warning shot of things to come - Henry Tudor declares the official start of his reign as the day before the Battle of Bosworth, making everyone who took up arms against him guilty of treason. As it was commonly believed that God presided over battles and ultimately decided and

STARZ®

supported the victors transition to power - this maneuver was not only an insult to the honor of the York side but also, as Showrunner Emma Frost explains, a “gigantic blasphemy.” She continues to explain that King Henry’s reign marks “a complete sea change about what it means to be English...there’s no honor, there’s no chivalry - all the old rules are out of the door.”

With the English people deeply suspicious of their new, foreign-born king, King Henry’s only hope of legitimacy rests with his promise to unite the country through a marriage to Elizabeth of York (Lizzie). Daughter of Dowager Queen Elizabeth Woodville and King Edward IV she is a natural York royal who understands her people and country. She alone is seen as a possible peace offering to the York’s who would otherwise oppose King Henry VII. As Executive Producer and Director Jamie Payne points out, “The pressure on that union was huge.” Frost adds, “The sacrifice the two of them make is to give peace to England by marrying someone they absolutely hate, so the war is now moved into this very personal relationship and into this marriage.”

At first Lizzie is against joining with the new King to bring peace, but as she gets to know King Henry and becomes more enmeshed with the Tudors through her children, she does help to normalize him in the country’s eyes at a great cost to both her and the Yorkists in her family.

“The White Princess” is in part the story of extreme, unexpected political change and the coming of tyranny told through the prism of a marriage. As Frost says, “The politics of the whole country are told through the lens of that marriage”. While the day-to-day legislative concerns and actual methods of dispatching political rivals were obviously very different, the motivations and ambitions of the players involved and their roles in the system echo throughout the modern political landscape.

PRINCESS ELIZABETH OF YORK: THE WHITE PRINCESS

Princess Elizabeth of York aka “Lizzie” (Jodie Comer) is the eldest daughter of Dowager Queen Elizabeth Woodville, “The White Queen,” (Essie Davis) and King Edward IV. Lizzie is a York princess and jewel of the court, raised to one day take the throne – however, the circumstances under which she eventually finds herself there are a far cry from the near fairytale love story of her parents.

Before the Battle of Bosworth, Lizzie is promised in marriage by her mother to whomever the victor should be – her lover King Richard III or his rival Henry Tudor (Jacob Collins-Levy). But after Richard is killed at Bosworth by Henry, who claims the throne of England as his own by right of conquest, Lizzie’s family suddenly find themselves positioned on the wrong side of the political divide. Lizzie is forced to marry King Henry VII to legitimize his claim to the throne and provide an end to the York/Lancastrian conflict - ostensibly uniting England under a new Tudor reign and protecting her York relatives. Lizzie’s position is an immensely difficult one - torn between her mother and her staunch York ties, and her new Tudor husband and children.

As the show’s consultant historian Prof. James Clark explains, the marriage was intended “to bring an end to these decades of dynastic rivalry, because it is a fusion of the two families in conflict over control of the monarchy. And the expectation must be for King Henry that joining together with the rival of his family in marriage, surely will bring an end to this conflict, which has not only persisted for decades, but also cost so many lives of his own family, of his wife’s family and so many other individuals across the country.” Clark stresses that at this point, “England is exhausted by this conflict,” but for Lizzie that battle is just beginning. She must live amongst her enemies and fight to establish her own identity and define her own destiny in the face of adversity.

Lizzie has spent most of her life at court, but finds herself a stranger and an outsider in her own home - the foreboding halls of Westminster Palace buzzing with whispers about her and her past.

Clark highlights the mood of the court by explaining, “Members of Henry Tudor’s family may feel in some ways that a union with the defeated House of York represents a kind of defeat for the Tudors. Why would you integrate your enemy into your family at the very moment of your greatest victory?” Lizzie’s role, as far as the Tudors are concerned, is primarily the production of heirs, and a necessary condition of their reign - she is an inconvenience, a cuckoo in the nest. “In some ways, all of the resentment on both sides is focused on Lizzie herself. It won’t be focused on the King because if you want to survive in a medieval court, you keep your feelings about the king to yourself. But the queen is a different matter,” says Clark.

Not one to sit passively on the sidelines, Lizzie enters the union defiantly, vowing to fight from within her marriage. Payne further explains, “This is a young woman who let the world know how she felt about an arranged marriage to a man she hated.”

The character of Lizzie is “passionate,” “impetuous” and “has a natural grace and entitlement,” describes Frost. Far from an ornamental damsel, Lizzie has a core of “determination and wit,” says Jodie Comer of her character.

“The White Princess” gives an unprecedented depth and sense of the interior lives of medieval women, traditionally overlooked in the retelling of history.

HENRY TUDOR: THE UNLIKELY KING

A long and complicated journey preceded Henry Tudor’s victory at the Battle of Bosworth on August 22, 1485. Born to a then 13-year-old Margaret Beaufort (Michelle Fairley), he never met his father, who was an early casualty of the “War of the Roses,” dying of plague while in captivity. While Henry’s claim to the throne was tenuous - by illegitimate descent - it was still enough to endanger him in the turmoil of England’s civil war. His mother Margaret married again, and ultimately sent her son away to Brittany in France to live in exile with his uncle Jasper Tudor (Vincent Regan). Having spent his formative years abroad, Henry is an outsider and a stranger to the English kingdom he eventually wins by conquest.

As much a victim of his lineage as Lizzie, he is fervently supported by his mother Lady Margaret, whose dedication to his royal cause borders on obsessive. Discussing his character, Jacob Collins-Levy says, “We know that this is a man who has plans thrust upon him from the moment that he’s born.”

In a combination of personality and circumstance, Henry Tudor’s rule starts off characterized by mistrust and paranoia. As Collins-Levy explains, King Henry VII is battling a “constant web of threats.” His wife’s own family would sooner see him on the gallows than on the throne, and they’re not alone in their sentiments. Aware of the fragility of his power and the necessity of securing his rule, King Henry wavers between his mother’s tyrannical approach to royal government and his wife’s more benevolent instincts. Emma Frost adds, “In our show the women are in control, and for King Henry particularly he has these two formidable women on either side of him. Lady Margaret Beaufort and Lizzie are constantly pulling him in completely different directions.”

Historically eclipsed by his son Henry VIII, Henry Tudor is a complex and insecure character. In order to retain his kingdom, he must find a way to unite a dissatisfied society, a task further complicated by the stream of York claimants to the throne who emerge to gather support and threaten his rule.

LADY MARGARET BEAUFORT: THE KING’S MOTHER

At the beginning of “The White Princess,” Lady Margaret Beaufort is enjoying the culmination of a lifetime of struggle, sacrifice and subterfuge she endured to secure the throne for her son, Henry Tudor. First given away in marriage before her third birthday, a union that was subsequently annulled, her second marriage at

12 years old was to a man literally twice her age. He died when she was 7 months pregnant with their son Henry - her only child, and for the majority of her life, her driving force.

When the Tudors first arrive at Westminster, Lady Margaret is King Henry's closest counselor, someone he trusts to know the will of England. Emboldened by their newfound status and power, she takes the Queen's rooms for herself to be closer to King Henry and insists that the people at court refer to her as "My Lady the King's Mother".

"Lady Margaret hopes that her son Henry is ready, prepared and able to rule the country, but as time progresses it becomes blatantly obvious to her that this is not the case. It's almost like he has to be educated as to how to be King. And Henry goes along with that until he starts to form his own relationship with Lizzie," says Fairley.

King Henry's growing closeness to Lizzie is a major point of contention in Lizzie and Lady Margaret's rivalry, and another way that the personal and political reflect one another across the series. While King Henry seeks Lady Margaret's counsel in matters of state, distance and time apart from one another in King Henry's formative years leaves Lady Margaret with a yearning for a more personal familial connection, one that becomes harder to achieve as King Henry falls more deeply in love with Lizzie. "When Henry takes the throne, after the Battle of Bosworth, this is the first time they've actually lived together for years, so they are strangers," says Fairley, "Lady Margaret doesn't expect Lizzie and King Henry to actually fall in love, but that's what happens. And in the process she gets hoisted out of the frame. She's humiliated by that."

Frost describes Lady Margaret Beaufort as "pious, fanatical and Machiavellian," an incredibly restrained woman with an unsettling depth of feeling and sense of ambition - who believed above everything else in the divine right of her son Henry to rule England at any cost.

Having already lost two husbands to the "War of the Roses," Margaret was on her fourth marriage at this time in history. An imposing, intense, devout woman, she experienced a lonely childhood, with an unusually strong connection to God and the Church. As Payne points out, "Her maniacal self-belief is so seductive that it actually changes history." Lady Margaret is ruthless in her pursuit of power, but her fanaticism and iron grip begin to clash as her son ascends the throne and is tasked with the very real problem of unifying an exhausted, fractured kingdom.

DOWAGER QUEEN ELIZABETH WOODVILLE: THE WHITE QUEEN

Elizabeth Woodville was a commoner who became Queen, and saw her husband King Edward IV's throne constantly besieged by rivals who thought their marriage illegitimate and Elizabeth unworthy of the crown. She was mother to 12 children, including Lizzie and "The Princes in the Tower," Prince Edward and Prince Richard. Though historians' views differ, in Philippa Gregory's retelling the princes were victims of a Tudor murder plot orchestrated by Lady Margaret Beaufort, though Elizabeth Woodville and Lizzie believe that Prince Richard may have survived.

Years of conflict and threats against Elizabeth Woodville and her family have turned her into a battle-hardened strategist and master manipulator. As "The White Princess" opens, she is once again in danger, as her greatest rivals overthrow the York King Richard III and crown Henry Tudor. Elizabeth eventually finds herself back at court, but this time with a man she views as a pretender on the throne and married to her daughter.

Elizabeth is indefatigable in her quest to restore the York line to power, a commitment that makes her daughter Lizzie's marriage to a Tudor a moral dilemma. Throughout "The White Princess," the ties of family

loyalty are tangled and obscured by the close proximity of the two great enemies – York and Lancaster (Tudor). They have lived and struggled alongside each other almost all their lives; King Henry’s mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, was at one time a trusted lady-in-waiting of the former Queen Elizabeth Woodville, a position she took in order to destabilize the monarchy from within to further her own ends.

In the ever shifting landscape, Dowager Queen Elizabeth Woodville must use her undeniable skill as a strategist and her flair for resourcefulness to maneuver through this dangerous world - all the while hoping that her son Prince Richard, presumed dead, will return and rise up to claim the crown that rightfully belongs to him.

SUBVERTING EXPECTATIONS: WOMEN AND POWER

“The White Princess” shows the complexities, struggles, realities, and influence of women in medieval England, a time period from which women’s lives and contributions have been almost entirely ignored or scrubbed from the historical record.

Despite the harrowing circumstances Lizzie is thrust into she thrives in the Tudor court, becoming a highly influential counselor to her husband King Henry VII. As daughter to a beloved king, Edward IV, Lizzie was schooled in the ways of diplomacy and the will of England. She is a natural royal in a way that Henry is not, and she prevails in helping him to consolidate his rule and bring peace to England for their heirs. The sacrifices she makes to achieve this are central to Lizzie’s character and journey.

Likewise, Dowager Queen Elizabeth Woodville and Margaret Beaufort are formidable players at court; they have a tangible role in the events that shaped history. This series reminds modern audiences that “they [women] weren’t all victims,” explains the female Director (of episodes 4, 5 and 6) Alex Kalymnios.

The political and personal collided for these women who were statesman in their own rights but also had the responsibility to provide heirs and be mothers and wives. “In ‘The White Princess’ these women are driving their own destinies in the face of real challenges because they’re in a world where they don’t have obvious power as women, but somehow they are finding ways to own their lives, pull the strings, and the stakes are life and death,” says Frost. She elaborates, stating that “women do wield a lot of power, but it’s emotional power, it’s psychological power, and it is the power to create life.”

Clark reinforces this, saying, “claims to kingdoms stand and fall on family line, and of course women, biologically, have that capacity to continue family lines.”

Beyond the influence they have over the next generation, Clark goes on to say, “In 15th century England, women in royal and noble families had considerable power. We tend to assume that early periods of history are remote from our own day. But in fact in late medieval England that isn’t the case.”

A FICTION ABOUT A MYSTERY

History is famously written by the victors, and also predominantly written by men. “The White Princess” offers audiences the opportunity to look at the Tudor Court in a whole new way, through the perspective of the women as individuals with their own complicated loyalties and motivations. Most of the inner thoughts and day-to-day activities of medieval women are lost to us because they were never recorded, or if they were, those accounts did not survive. This series aims to breathe life into a succession of familiar dates, conquests and royal coronations to explore the reality of the people in these circumstances.

As Emma Frost points out, “there is no one version of history, and so the idea that there is one single historical truth that we either adhere to or depart from is a false dichotomy.” Kalymnios adds, “We know the

STARZ[®]

facts and figures, but really the emotions of the characters, what they had to do to get where they are - that's the interesting part of history."

The central thread of the story includes the historically documented disappearance of Lizzie's two young brothers - Edward and Richard - from the Tower of London. The two princes are presumed to have been murdered in order to clear the way for other royal successors. However, the lack of clarity surrounding their fate meant that there were a string of "pretenders" who claimed to be one of the princes, throughout the early years of Henry Tudor's reign.

As Philippa Gregory states in her author's note of the book, "It is a fiction about a mystery - so two steps from any historically recorded fact." She goes on to add, "What we can be sure [of] is that the Tudor version of events is not the truth."

CREATING THE WORLD OF "THE WHITE PRINCESS"

"The White Princess" has a commitment to the authenticity of detail, which has seen the entire crew work in concert to ensure every element is cohesive and genuinely representative of the time period.

"Much of what goes on in those personal relationships we simply don't know. Nothing was written down," says Clark. "We have very little that carries us into the private chambers, to the bedroom, and in to the personal relationships of these royal figures. But the setting that they move through, the environment, the world that they inhabit, we know a great deal about as historians and we can bring much of that to life."

As Phoebe de Gaye, Costume Designer on the limited series says, "We're like peas in a pod - because everything has to work together."

Production Designer Will Hughes-Jones was tasked with building a formidable main set at The Bottle Yard Studios in Bristol, England, which consisted of fifteen interconnected rooms serving as various parts of the Palace of Westminster.

The building is a difficult one to replicate: "Its scale was vast and it concentrates several different functions of royal government all in one space," Clark explains. "The Palace of Westminster when King Henry VII occupies it has already been standing for more than 200 years and has been lavishly built and rebuilt throughout that period. It's a great mix of styles of architecture." The main set took a crew of 200 working for seven weeks to create - and every detail of the design was thoroughly researched.

There were also elements of the narrative reflected throughout the production design - as Hughes-Jones highlights, "Within our palace and the storyline there is a great amount of secrecy and small whisperings behind doors and people listening in, so within the set I made sure that we built some peepholes and some little corners that people could just stand around the corner and listen to a conversation going down a corridor without being seen."

The crew also shot extensively on location around the United Kingdom and in Spain. The availability of buildings and villages with ties to the true history of the narrative was an important part of conveying the very specific sense of time and place in the drama - as Collins-Levy commented, "You can kind of feel the ghosts of old kings walking on the grounds" of these historic sites.

Hughes-Jones recalls, "We ended up filming in the castle and outside the castle that Jasper Tudor actually lived in."

STARZ[®]

In addition to the locations, the costuming is a key component of reviving the first Tudor court. "It's a sort of a strange period that is very rarely filmed because it sort of comes at a cusp. It's right at the end of the century so it's not really medieval and it's not really fully Tudor - it's sort of an indeterminate, in between period which makes it very interesting," says de Gaye.

As well as capturing the styles and details of the time, the costumes also serve to add a layer of depth to the narrative.

"Everything we try to do with the costumes is to reflect the journey of the characters and what's happening in the drama as much as we can," explains de Gaye.

The colors used in the costuming are hugely symbolic - with the types of garments and silhouettes conveying hints of a characters allegiances or interior worlds.

Ultimately, the team has come together to recreate a time period where women were hugely influential and traditionally have been undermined or obscured in retellings. Payne sums it up best saying, "The female presence in front of the camera and behind the camera has been the greatest success of this series."

###