



Philippa Langley MBE



19 July 2017

Dear Miss Langley

Letter about the performance of a play by William Shakespeare

I first read the letter in the Leicester Mercury published on 7th July. Several days later I received your letter dated 7th July. I read with interest your account of the finding, identification and reburial of King Richard III. However, we do not agree that there has been any breach of trust even though you have over the years suggested that. We know there are different opinions, also within the Ricardian community which in character is diffuse. We have been working hard to maintain frank and open channels of communication with the Richard III Society and with the Richard III Foundation.

We have received feedback about the play. We read this with care. Some of it has been directly about the play. Much has been about other things. Some of it is passionate and caring; some of it is defamatory or hurtful. You suggest opinion might be gauged by social media or even the attention given this in other media yet we know that this is not a reliable gauge of opinion. Alongside those who have objected, day by day many express their support who would never take to Twitter.

I notice that the Shakespeare play holds a particular concern for Ricardians even though Ricardians generally are the greatest advocates that this is not fact/history but rather a play. The events of these past years have in a sense returned Richard to people's hearts and dozens of conversations now are about is he good or bad in a way that never would have happened before. When people see Shakespeare's play they now ask these very questions. This sense of 'lightning rod' contrasts with for example, when we invited the author Michael Morpugo to read his book 'The Fox and the Ghost King'. There was no outcry even though it is anything but about 'the real King Richard'.

Our care around the reinterment and in the years that have followed demonstrates to the public that **Dignity and Honour** (a phrase we developed) is what we try to do. The play is not staged 'beside his grave' but rather is performed within the cathedral. Having entrusted King Richard III to God's grace, we need not fear his defamation. Indeed we need not be defensive but rather invite people to explore these matters for themselves. We will keep helping people to engage in all sorts of ways into the future with the man and the myth, reaching way beyond the confines of those with a special interest in him. This may include approaches from theatre companies, musicians and artistic productions. This is typical of what cathedrals do in relation to their particular context.

In recent days we have been awarded a Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) National Award for the Richard III Project, including the design and craftsmanship of the tomb. This attests to the care and the quality for which we laboured despite many voices wanting other. As I have said elsewhere, I hope the energy that has been created over these performances of a play can be turned to defending many that remain un-afforded human dignity not only in death but even more vitally those un-afforded it also in life.

Yours sincerely,

CC: The Bishop of Leicester, the Mayor of Leicester, the Chairman of the Richard III Society