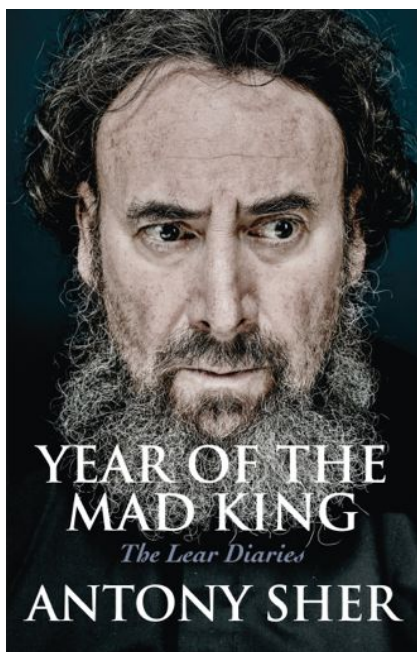


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# Antony Sher on playing Lear



## ***Year of the Mad King***

*The Lear Diaries*

**by Antony Sher**

A leading actor's intimate, first-hand account of researching, rehearsing and performing one of Shakespeare's greatest roles for the RSC

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plus 16pp colour plates

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### **Upcoming *King Lear* production dates**

Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York  
7-29 Apr 2018

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon  
23 May-9 Jun 2018

In 1982, rising actor Antony Sher played the Fool to Michael Gambon's King in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *King Lear*. Shortly after, he came back to Stratford to play Richard III – a breakthrough performance that would transform his career, winning him the Olivier and Evening Standard Awards for Best Actor. Sher's record of the making of this historic theatrical event, *Year of the King*, has become a classic of theatre writing, a unique insight into the creation of a landmark Shakespearean performance.

More than thirty years later, Antony Sher returned to *Lear*, this time in the title role, for the 2016 RSC production directed by Gregory Doran. Sher's performance was acclaimed by the *Telegraph* as 'a crowning achievement in a major career', and the show transferred from Stratford to London's Barbican and on to New York. Once again, he kept a diary, capturing every step of his personal and creative journey to opening night.

*Year of the Mad King: The Lear Diaries* is Sher's account of researching, rehearsing and performing what is arguably Shakespeare's most challenging role, known as the Everest of Acting. His strikingly honest, illuminating and witty commentary provides an intimate, first-hand look at the development of his *Lear* and of the production as a whole. Also included is a selection of his paintings and sketches, many reproduced in full colour.

Like his *Year of the King* and *Year of the Fat Knight: The Falstaff Diaries*, *Year of the Mad King* offers a fascinating perspective on the process of one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of his generation.

**'Wonderfully written and keenly observed' James Shapiro**

**'One of the finest books I have ever read on the process of acting' *Time Out* on *Year of the King***

**'Antony Sher's insider journal is a brilliant exploded view of a great actor at work – modest and gifted, self-centred and selfless – a genius capable of transporting us backstage' Craig Raine, *The Spectator* (Books of the Year) on *Year of the Fat Knight***

**[CONTINUED – PAGE ONE OF THREE]**

## About the author



Born in Cape Town, **Antony Sher** came to London in 1968, and trained at the Webber Douglas Academy. He is now regarded as one of Britain's leading actors, as well as a respected author and artist. Much of his career has been with the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he is an Honorary Associate Artist. He has played Richard III, Macbeth, Leontes, Prospero, Shylock, Iago, Falstaff and King Lear, as well as the leading roles in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Roman Actor*, Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, Peter Flannery's *Singer*, Athol Fugard's *Hello and Goodbye*, and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

At the National Theatre he played the title roles in *Primo* (his own adaptation of Primo Levi's *If This is a Man*) and Pam Gems's *Stanley*. Both productions transferred to Broadway. In the West End, his roles have included Arnold in Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy*, Muhammed in Mike Leigh's *Goose-Pimples*, and Gellburg in Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass*. He played Freud in Terry Johnson's *Hysteria* at Bath's Theatre Royal and Hampstead Theatre.

Film and television appearances include *Mrs Brown*, *Alive and Kicking*, *The History Man*, *Macbeth*, *Primo* and J.G. Ballard's *Home*.

He has written four novels – *Middlepost*, *Indoor Boy*, *Cheap Lives* and *The Feast* – as well as the theatre journals, *Year of the King*, *Woza Shakespeare!* (co-written with his partner, the director Gregory Doran), *Primo Time* and *Year of the Fat Knight: The Falstaff Diaries*. His autobiography *Beside Myself* was published in 2001. His plays include *I.D.* (Almeida Theatre, 2003) and *The Giant* (Hampstead Theatre, 2007).

He has published a book of his paintings and drawings, *Characters* (1989), and held exhibitions of his work at the National Theatre, the London Jewish Cultural Centre, the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield and the Herbert Gallery in Coventry.

Among numerous awards, he has won the Olivier Best Actor Award on two occasions (*Richard III/Torch Song Trilogy* and *Stanley*), the Evening Standard Best Actor Award (*Richard III*), the Evening Standard Peter Sellers Film Award (for Disraeli in *Mrs Brown*) and the Critics' Circle Award for Best Shakespearean Performance (for Falstaff). On Broadway, he won Best Solo Performer in both the Outer Critics' Circle and Drama Desk Awards for *Primo*. In 2000 he was knighted for his services to acting and writing.

### Praise for Antony Sher's Lear

'Antony Sher's monumental King Lear is a crowning achievement in his career. A mightily impressive performance... Incredibly moving.' **Daily Telegraph**

'Sher offers such a vivid impression of power fading that you can feel how a mind would warp itself to make sense of such a decline.' **The Times**

'Sher is magnificent...A production by Gregory Doran that unfolds with great clarity and confidence and boldness of gesture.' **Independent**

'Antony Sher is unbearably moving as the volatile king, in Gregory Doran's stellar production full of standout performances...A Lear fit to rank with the finest.' **Guardian**

'Sir Antony's performance has the grandeur you would expect of a theatrical knight.' **Daily Mail**

[CONTINUED – PAGE TWO OF THREE]

## Author events

- **Jewish Book Week**, Kings Place London, Monday 5 March
- **Oxford Literary Festival**, Sheldonian Theatre, Saturday 17 March
- **National Theatre**, London, Friday 23 March
- **Drama Book Shop**, New York, Monday 16 April
- **Royal Shakespeare Theatre**, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thursday 7 June

Other events to be confirmed

## Selected artwork by Antony Sher from *Year of the Mad King*



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