

A Voice For King Richard III

International Launch Event:

Sunday 17 November 2024, York Theatre Royal

12:00 Noon to 18.00

Conference style to include breaks

<https://www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk/voiceforrichardiii>

<https://www.avoiceforrichard.co.uk>



WORLD PREMIERE – ‘LIVING’ AND SPEAKING RICHARD III

Imagine if you could see and hear King Richard III speaking his own words.

Imagine if you could see him breathing, thinking and effectively ‘brought back to life’.

On Sunday 17 November 2024 at York Theatre Royal, state-of-the-art technology will reveal for the first time: a moving, breathing, ‘living’ face of a long-dead king speaking his own words in the pronunciation of his time.

What started for Yvonne Morley-Chisholm, expert voice teacher and vocal coach, over ten years ago as an after-dinner entertainment to compare Shakespeare’s character with what we know of the real man, developed quickly into a research project with a unique focus: to explore the possibility of creating a literal voice for a long-dead historical figure. Fast-forward ten years and this international launch event will cover how the pieces of a complex puzzle came together using primary evidence.

This is the new science of Historical Human Reconstruction or Postmortalism, which uses an avatar of the person, based on the reconstruction of their head. It provides an entirely new way to learn about the past. In this instance we’ll understand more about the last Plantagenet King. It also paves the way for other historical avatars in the future.

After all the controversy surrounding this monarch and the questions raised about his actions and personality: was he a good man or murderous psychopath?

Now King Richard III will speak for himself.

Experts from across the UK and abroad joined in this unique, pioneering collaboration. Some of them will share presentations during the international launch event at York Theatre Royal starting at 12 noon through to 6pm with the final ‘reveal’ at 5.30pm on Sunday 17 November 2024.

Taking the rostrum with Yvonne Morley-Chisholm is the key collaborator: leading cranio-facial identification expert Professor Caroline Wilkinson and her Face Lab team, and Professor David Crystal OBE, internationally acclaimed linguist and leading specialist in Original Pronunciation.

Joining them will be playwright Dr Bridget Foreman from the University of York, as well as historians Matthew Lewis and Philippa Langley MBE.

As well as exploring the fascinating true history of King Richard III, the event will include discussion on a wide range of topics including Medieval History, Linguistics, Original (Historical) Pronunciation, Craniofacial Reconstruction, Forensic Psychology, Voice and Dialect, Historical Human Reconstruction, Postmortalism, CGI and Motion-Capture among other specialisms.

Tickets are on sale now at <https://www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk/show/a-voice-for-king-richard-iii/> Further information is available at <https://www.avoiceforrichard.co.uk>

The event will also be Live-streamed.

Background information: Richard III was King of England from 1483 until his death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 at the age of 32. He was the last king of the House of York and the last of the Plantagenet dynasty. His defeat at Bosworth was the penultimate battle in the Wars of the Roses and ushered in the Tudor dynasty. The remains of Richard III were discovered in 2012 under a car park in Leicester by Philippa Langley MBE through her original *Looking For Richard Project*. Philippa's search for the king's grave was the subject of the award-winning TV documentary: *Richard III: The King in the Car Park*. The remains of King Richard were identified using a range of scientific disciplines including DNA analysis.

Yvonne Morley Chisholm said: "It's been the greatest privilege to work with Professor Caroline Wilkinson. Her team at Face Lab are currently working towards animating the face of King Richard III from real-time motion capture. Professor Wilkinson's work provides the physical nucleus while mine provides the vocal nucleus in this "world first". This is the new science of Historical Human Reconstruction or Postmortalism using an avatar of the real King based on the reconstruction of his head.

I am also deeply honoured to be working with Professor David Crystal who is the internationally recognised, leading expert in Original Pronunciation. He has created a reconstruction of the king's pronunciation using personal letters and documents. The result is as close as anyone can get to King Richard III's speech from the time in which he lived and reigned.

I am grateful for the many others who have helped to shape each piece of the puzzle in this pioneering and unique collaboration. The project has achieved more than I ever dared to imagine it could.

We are bringing a long dead king back to a kind of “life”. We are learning more about the real man in doing so.

With state-of-the-art motion-capture technology, CGI animation and the like, I hope that - for those who find history a little dull - we are making it “cool” “.

Professor Caroline Wilkinson said: “Since we produced the facial reconstruction of Richard III in 2012, we have dreamt about bringing him alive, to see him move and speak his own words. With the help of advanced digital avatar technology and Yvonne’s voice team, we have been able to realise this dream. The result has exceeded our expectations and represents the most authentic and realistic portrait of this great king, based on all the evidence available.”

Professor David Crystal OBE said: “I think people will be surprised to hear a kind of speech that is a fascinating mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar. English pronunciation has changed a lot since the 15th century, but it’s still very intelligible to modern ears”.

Matthew Lewis said: “We live in an age experienced and digested through media. We’re surrounded by the images and voices of all kinds of people. Yet not so long ago, we have no images beyond portraiture, which often comes years after a person’s death. We have no recordings of their voices to hear them, and in an age before diaries were commonplace, little hope of piercing beyond public personas. The Voice For Richard Project is a stunning example of how science, technology, and history can come together to help bridge the distance of time that separates us from those we have heard of but could never have heard. This is as close as we can get to being in the room in the fifteenth century when a king speaks. I can’t wait for the world to see the culmination of ten years of hard work and innovation.”

Philippa Langley MBE said: “To help bring Richard to life, research into his character focused on contemporary descriptions from his own lifetime. These included private letters and a diary. The results corresponded directly with similar public descriptions offering a probability bordering on certainty of his recognised character from his lifetime. The results, to be premiered on 17 November in York, will be a technological, scientific and historic breakthrough in aiding our understanding of the past and this important historical figure. It’s been the most incredible honour to be part of this cross-platform research over its ten years and I would like to thank Yvonne Morley-Chisholm for inviting me to be a part of her team. The World Premiere in York promises to be extraordinary.”

Notes to editors

Available for interview in the morning and/or presenting during the programme of events:

Professor Caroline Wilkinson and the Face Lab team, Liverpool John Moores University

Professor David Crystal O.B.E., Linguist & specialist in Original Pronunciation

Dr Bridget Foreman, playwright and lecturer in playwriting at the University of York

Matthew Lewis, author, historian and podcaster for *History Hit*

Philippa Langley M.B.E., author, historian & producer who led the search for Richard III

Yvonne Morley-Chisholm, Voice teacher, vocal coach and Project originator

Thomas Dennis, actor, who's vocal performance and facial movements were chosen to animate the avatar that was made from King Richard III facial reconstruction

Schedule for the event from 12 noon to 6pm finish:

12.00 - 13.30 First session: From the myths to the man

Dr Bridget Foreman, playwright and lecturer in playwriting at the University of York

Matthew Lewis, author, historian and podcaster for *History Hit*

Philippa Langley M.B.E., author, historian and producer who led the search for Richard III

13.30 - 14.30 lunch break

14.30 - 16.00 Second session: The experts speak: Historical Human reconstruction

Prof. Caroline Wilkinson, Director for FaceLab, Liverpool John Moores University

Prof. David Crystal O.B.E., Linguist & specialist in Original Pronunciation

Yvonne Morley-Chisholm, Voice teacher and specialist in Vocal Profiling

16.00 - 16.30 break

16.30 - 18.00 Third session: Continuation and culmination: the reveal

Documentary excerpts from *History Hit*

Yvonne talks with **Thomas Dennis**, the actor chosen to be the face and voice, onto

Film of King Richard III's face speaking his own words in his own pronunciation

For further information, to arrange interviews, request press tickets (on site /Livestream) or for filming enquiries, please contact:

- **Yvonne** at email address: **avoiceforrichard@gmail.com**

Ticket information: Box Office York Theatre Royal, Phone: 01904 623568

Theatre tickets: <https://www.yorktheatroyal.co.uk/show/a-voice-for-king-richard-iii/>

Livestream: <https://www.yorktheatroyal.co.uk/show/a-voice-for-king-richard-iii-livestream/>