



Die Diana

Bandit, Mugger & Thief, Canal Street, Manchester

Reviewed by [Stephen Bowler](#) July 2016

Stephen M. Hornby's new play about the life and death of Lady Diana projects a plethora of facts through a prism of fiction. The result is kaleidoscopic, as the colourful pieces of an undeniably spectacular existence fall into a new, even more fantastic order.

Three iterations of Diana tell a story that gets darker and murkier the deeper it delves into the fairy-tale life of the mother of the heir to the throne. *Princess Dee* (**Emily Heyworth**) gives us the 'Queen of Hearts', as affected as she is lost but with a cunning plan to stage her own death in order to escape the misery of her own existence. The resultant identity is

Die Anna

(

Dan Wallace

), an angry drag queen with a bent for impersonating . . . Lady Diana! And then there is

Dee

, (

Ciaran Wilson

), Diana's spirit reincarnated in a child born 'at the very moment Princess Diana is declared dead in Paris'; 03.57 on 31 August 1997.

As psycho-drama the death of Diana was a cultural earthquake, throwing-up a new emotional landscape in which the distinction between public and private all but disappeared. Identities once considered marginal moved to the centre as the search for new forms of legitimacy coincided with a crisis within the aristocracy. The significance of these developments cannot be gainsaid, and the strength of this pithy play is that it takes the mythological unreality of Diana as its main focus. To have dwelt upon the merely objective facts would miss the truth of the historical moment, when subjectivity itself acknowledged a new way of knowing.

All three actors are excellent, and their parts made all the more intense by the slightly claustrophobic confines of the basement of Bandit, Mugger & Thief on Canal Street. *Die Diana* picks an intelligent path around the pitfalls of this most picked-over of topics and comes up with punchy, funny, original drama that deserves a wide audience. Millennials might not get all the references, but baby-boomers will find much to savour.