



[Hamlet](#) by [The National Theatre](#) at [Cornerhouse](#)

Filmed live in high definition from the National's Olivier Theatre and broadcast as part of National Theatre Live, directed by Nicholas Hytner. Reviewed by [Anne Ryan](#) December 2010

For most of us the National Theatre is a building a couple of hundreds of miles away – despite the fact that our taxes support the institution, performances are restricted to Londoners and the odd 'provincial' tour. So three cheers for the screening at [Cornerhouse](#) and in cinemas worldwide – and why did it not happen a few decades ago?

Viewing a play in the cinema is a strange experience – I was never quite sure whether to clap or not! But this was a fascinating and rewarding night at the theatre/cinema.

Nicholas Hytner's new production of Hamlet has a stellar cast – and an award winning and interesting prince in Rory Kinnear.

This is not a romantic prince, but a deeply moral one – facing up to the realities of a brutal power structure. Its modern setting shows that the questions of power politics are relevant to us as to a Shakespearian audience. Hytner and Kinnear highlight the issue at the centre of the play – personal relationships played out on a political stage.

The characters are imprisoned in a totalitarian state – where the security guards may turn their guns on any innocent – including perhaps Ophelia, whose life is destroyed by the Claudian police state. Patrick Malahide is a cold and frightening figure and Claire Higgins portrays a wife taking refuge in alcohol in fear of the power which has attracted her to her husband's murderer.

In some ways the cinema experience may give the viewer a greater insight into the characters – as in film we can see the actors think – perhaps our insight into Hamlet's dilemma is greater – particularly as this a prince who is a thinker and much of his action is internal.

Finally to those who missed this cinematic event – the production comes to the Lowry in February and I for one will be booking my ticket.