

## Redcrosse to be performed by Royal Shakespeare Company

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A new project involving the Shakespeare Institute's [Ewan Fernie \(/staff/profiles/shakespeare/fernie-ewan.aspx\)](#) will be performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) on Saturday 17 November 2012.

Partly an original arts event, partly a groundbreaking religious service, Redcrosse offers its new vision of England and St. George through brand new poetry by the former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, the winner of this year's Costa Prize Jo Shapcott, Michael Symmons Roberts and Andrew Shanks. The work brings St George into the present, into new solidarity with a changed and changing contemporary England.

This collaborative one off performance is directed by Luke Kernaghan and will take place in the beautiful modernist surroundings of Coventry Cathedral as part of its Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Professor Ewan Fernie commented:

'I'm hugely excited that the most famous theatre company in the world has agreed to perform the work. Luke brings a very fresh and distinctive vision to Redcrosse and we hope the RSC production will appeal to all sorts of people from across the Midlands.

'Coventry Cathedral holds a particularly important place in British history and it also stands as eloquent testimony to peace and reconciliation. For these reasons it is perfect for a new work which celebrates what England is and could be.

'Redcrosse is a liturgy for everyone - all spiritual seekers, anyone who's seeking something better and seeking others who want the same. It ultimately celebrates England and St George in terms of our potential openness to each other and to truth. It also attempts to reclaim Englishness and St George from damagingly narrow, jingoistic conceptions.'

A book, edited by Professor Fernie, will be published to coincide with the event. Recently the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, endorsed this commenting:

'How do we think about identity in ways that don't reflect anxiety, fear of the other, uncritical adulation of our past and all the other pitfalls that surround this subject? The Redcrosse project manages to negotiate these difficulties with immense imaginative energy and honesty: no sour notes, no attempt to overcompensate by desperately over apologetic rhetoric, simply a recovery of deep roots and generous vision. As much as it takes its cue from Spenser, it's a contemporary working out of some of the great and inexhaustible legacy of Blake, a unique contribution to what is often a pretty sterile discussion of who we are in these islands.'

This collaboration between the Shakespeare Institute and the RSC lays the foundations for a new MA programme in Shakespeare and Creativity, co-convened by Professor Ewan Fernie and featuring expert tuition from the RSC.

For further information and how to purchase tickets to see Redcrosse please visit

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/events/2012/redcrosse.aspx>

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