



TEENAGE DICK

BY **MIKE LEW**



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TEENAGE DICK received its world premiere by Ma-Yi Theater Company (Ralph B. Peña, Producing Artistic Director), opening on June 20, 2018, at the Public Theater, New York City. It was directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel, the set design was by Wilson Chin, the costume design was by Junghyun Georgia Lee, the lighting design was by Miriam Crowe, the sound design was by Fabian Obispo, the choreography was by Jennifer Weber, and the production stage manager was Alyssa K. Howard. The cast was as follows:

RICHARD	Gregg Mozgala
BUCK	Shannon DeVido
ELIZABETH	Marinda Anderson
EDDIE	Alex Breaux
CLARISSA	Sasha Diamond
ANNE	Tiffany Villarin

TEENAGE DICK was developed during a residency at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's (Preston Whiteway, Executive Director; Wendy C. Goldberg, Artistic Director) National Playwrights Conference in 2016.

TEENAGE DICK was developed by the Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Patrick Willingham, Executive Director).

TEENAGE DICK was commissioned and developed by The Apothetae (Gregg Mozgala, Artistic Director).

TEENAGE DICK was developed at The Lark Play Development Center, New York City.

TEENAGE DICK was developed with the support of Playwrights Foundation (Amy Mueller, Artistic Director), San Francisco, CA.

CHARACTERS

RICHARD GLOUCESTER, m, 17, junior class secretary, slyly ambitious, has CP

BARBARA “BUCK” BUCKINGHAM, f, 17, his best friend, earnest, wheelchair user

ELIZABETH YORK, f, 30s–40s, wry, well-meaning English teacher, kind of naïve

EDDIE IVY, m, 17, junior class president, football guy, kind of a dick

CLARISSA DUKE, f, 17, junior class vice president, Jesus-loving, overachiever

ANNE MARGARET, f, 17, big-hearted yet dark, dancer, formerly the most popular girl in the school

PLACE

Roseland High School

TIME

Now (circa 2018)

NOTE

Cast disabled actors for Richard and Buck. They exist and they're out there.

Also cast diverse actors. This includes both racial as well as gender diversity; depending on the actors cast, you may adjust pronouns accordingly.

Finally, if it's a choice between greener age-appropriate actors versus older comedic geniuses, feel free to “age up.”

TEENAGE DICK

Scene 1—Bare Stage

RICHARD. Roseland High School. Home of the Roseland Stallions.

Now that the winter formal gives way to glorious spring fling we find our rocks-for-brains hero Eddie—the quarterback—sleeping through his job as junior class president. “Oh? Was I president? I’ve had so many *concussions* I must’ve forgot!” *Yeah*. He’s Phoebus Apollo whereas I am but feeble. He makes sport of governance whereas I am not one who is shaped for sports.

I, Richard, am junior class *secretary*. Third in line behind Eddie the quarter-brains and Clarissa the goody-goody vice president. *Welllllll*. Maybe I can’t play football, but I can run a play. The senior elections are upon us and from here I will vault past my inglorious station. Not by a pity vote. Not by campaigning. But by systematically destroying the competition. I’ll take down Clarissa AND Eddie AND hold dominion over all of this school.

“But Richard,” you whimper. “That’s so so *mean*. Why would you wish for something so mean?” Because they all hate me, that’s why! I was stamped for their hatred from birth. They see my unpleasant shape and like a magnet I must repulse, whereas *Eddie* draws in their adoration like so many iron shavings. Eddie who is naught but a Fabergé egg, all pretty surfaces hollowed of brains.

Well Eddie, dear egg, I will crack thee.

I come to *bury* Eddie, not to praise him.

Is this a ballot I see before me?

Eddie, the love I bear thee can afford no better term than this: Thou art a douchebag.

School bell rings.

Aw shit, I’m late for English. No matter. Watch this.

Light shift and we're in English class. Richard approaches Elizabeth.

Sorry I'm late Ms. York. With my locker all the way across campus it's so hard getting to class. You know, with my gait?

ELIZABETH. No worries, Richard! Have a seat.

RICHARD. *(To audience.)* Heh heh heh heh.

He passes by Buck.

What ho, Buckingham!

BUCK. Dirty Rich Yay-Ya!

They slap fives and Richard sits.

CLARISSA. Ms. York? How come Richard gets to show up late but when I'm late you read me the riot act?

ELIZABETH. Richard is different.

EDDIE. Differently *abled*? As in retarded?

ELIZABETH. Eddie don't use that word. What I *mean* is that Richard is... well look at him Clarissa, he's got totally differing needs.

CLARISSA. Buck has differing needs.

BUCK. Please don't involve me...

CLARISSA. And Buck always gets here on time.

RICHARD. Buck is on *wheels* you pox-scrabbled harlot. Do I look like a race car to you?

EDDIE. Yo! Don't make fun of my lil buddy. *(To Buck.)* You cool, lil buddy, I got you.

RICHARD. *Whatever.* You're not even friends! Right Buck?

BUCK. Please don't... please don't involve me.

CLARISSA. It's kind of a double standard, that's all I'm saying.

ELIZABETH. Okay, you know what? Instead of everyone telling me how to do my job let's see if you all did yours. Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Did everyone read it? Buck?

BUCK. Uh-huh.

ELIZABETH. How about you, Eddie?

EDDIE. Like, a *thousand* percent.

ELIZABETH. Great. So then Machiavelli lists four pathways to power. Can anyone name me the first one? Yes, Richard.

RICHARD. The first pathway to power is fortune. Whether by being born into royalty or having a principality gifted to you, fortune is the easiest path.

ELIZABETH. Good! And the second?

RICHARD. Second is virtue. Through strength of character a prince may inspire in his *phalanx* a sense of *virile agitur* and *amor patriae*, thus creating *de novo* a principality *per angusta ad augusta*, which is by and by more impressive than inheriting an empire by fortune.

ELIZABETH. ...okay correct.

EDDIE. Dude: You're a FREAK.

RICHARD. Read a book, *Homo erectus*.

EDDIE. I'm def more erect than *you*.

RICHARD. Why, you've got a boner?

EDDIE. (*Vaguely threatening.*) *Maybe*.

ELIZABETH. *Guys*. Can anyone tell me Machiavelli's third pathway to power...

RICHARD. Civil election.

ELIZABETH. Richard let's give someone else a turn. Can somebody name me the fourth? Anyone. Did anyone else in here read words on a page and remember one word?

Nobody can.

(*To Richard, resigned.*) Okay, Richard, take it away.

RICHARD. The last pathway to power. Is *wickedness*.

ELIZABETH. *Yessss*. Bloody coup. Stabby stabby. Perfect Richard!

EDDIE. (*Mocking.*) *Perfect Richard*.

ELIZABETH. I'm sorry, Eddie, did you have something to add?

EDDIE. No.

ELIZABETH. Then kindly shut up. Or better yet, answer this: What does Machiavelli say about whether it's better to be loved or feared?

EDDIE. Loved all the way.

ELIZABETH. (*Does a "wrong" buzzer sound.*) What about you, Buck?

BUCK. Um. Feared?

ELIZABETH. Care to elaborate?

BUCK. No.

ELIZABETH. *Buck* you're my TA!

BUCK. I'm a shy TA.

RICHARD. Given a choice, it is best to be feared. For man is ungrateful, fickle, and greedy, and thusly being loved is a bond they may break. Whereas being feared is sustained by a dread of punishment that won't ever fail you.

ELIZABETH. Well I'm glad at least *one* of you is soaking up Machiavellian tactics for consolidating ABSOLUTE POWER (*Echoing.*) power power power!

No response.

Okay did *anyone* else do the reading?

CLARISSA. I did the reading Ms. York.

ELIZABETH. Clarissa, great!

CLARISSA. And I totally disagree with this assignment, from a religious and moral standpoint.

ELIZABETH. (*General groans.*) Oh boy here we go...

CLARISSA. This book is telling me it's okay to lie and murder and steal, and all of that is really really cruel and totally goes against all of my Christian values.

ELIZABETH. Machiavelli was Christian. Machiavelli was Catholic.

CLARISSA. Whose work was banned by the Catholic Church.

ELIZABETH. Fine but *The Prince* isn't cruel, it's pragmatic. Machiavelli even speaks out against idle cruelty, because idle cruelty stirs people's hate.

RICHARD. I actually had a question about that.

ELIZABETH. Sure hon go ahead.

RICHARD. It's about that passage, on how not to be hated.

EDDIE. It's easy Dick. Talk less, shower more.

ELIZABETH. *Eddie.*

EDDIE. What? That's good advice! Matter of fact, I'm tweeting that.

He tweets it.

ELIZABETH. No phones in here. Richard, go on.

EDDIE. (*Still tweeting.*) His name isn't Richard, it's Dick.

RICHARD. That's not my name.

EDDIE. What's that *Twisty Dick*?

RICHARD. I said that's not my name.

EDDIE. Richard is a nickname for Dick.

ELIZABETH. Gentlemen.

Richard turns around, hissing to Eddie, all menace.

RICHARD. I want you to know that this is the very best time of your life. It will *NEVER* get any better than this. The rest of your life will be spent searching in vain for this moment of former glory as your downward trajectory plunges you ever further from here.

EDDIE. I think I just peed a little.

ELIZABETH. Let's get back to the text. Richard, what was your question?

RICHARD. (*Shaken.*) Right... Machiavelli says cruelty is at times warranted but that over-cruelty generates hate. But what if you're hated to begin with? If cruelty is a viable tool then why *stop* being cruel if you've always been hated since birth?

ELIZABETH. Jeez, I uh—Richard where is this coming from?

The bell rings. Everyone starts packing up.

Uh-oh, looks like that's an answer that'll have to wait. Okay but everybody if we could just listen up for one second. Please stop packing your bags. I just wanted to mention that as some of you know I'm the faculty advisor for Class Council and that speaking of civil election, *senior elections* are coming up. You all should think about running. Or re-running! Two years in a row with Ms. York! Whaaat?! *Woo-hooo party time. Untz-Untz-Untz-Untz!*

Clarissa and Eddie stare incredulously, then exit.

BUCK. Hey buddyboy you coming to lunch?

RICHARD. In a minute.

(*Direct address as Buck exits.*) Pop quiz, friends. What's the first step of staging a populist uprising? Convincing the populace that they

TEENAGE DICK

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2 men, 4 women

In this brilliant retelling of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, one of the most famous disabled characters in history is reimagined as a 16-year-old outsider taking on the political turmoil of high school. Bullied for his cerebral palsy (and his sometimes disturbing tendency to speak with a Shakespearean affect), Richard plots his revenge...as well as his glorious path to the senior class presidency. But as he falls deeper into a pattern of manipulation and greed, Richard is faced with an unexpected choice: Is it better to be feared or loved? **TEENAGE DICK** is a hilarious and sharp-witted adaptation about perception, disability, and the treacherous road to ascendancy.

"...moving, exciting and profoundly eye-opening... whenever [Lew] questions or complicates Shakespeare's assumptions, even if that means departing from his template, it is riveting. ...[TEENAGE DICK] suggests how much richer the theater will be when it is truly open to artists of all kinds. Not just because those artists deserve employment but also because the canon of classics deserves reimagining to match our world."

—**The New York Times**

"[Lew] has constructed—well and tightly constructed—a thoroughly engrossing and entertaining play that zips through humor and pathos, building inexorably to its climax. It echoes the Shakespearean plot without simply aping it, and it's filled with humor, Richard-referential and otherwise."

—**NYStageReview.com**

"[TEENAGE DICK] is never boring, pretentious, preachy, or afflicted with any other of the deadly sins of bad playwriting. Instead, [the play] is genuinely entertaining and edifying. ...brilliantly dramatized..."

—**CurtainUp.com**

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