
THE STAGE

By [John Thaxter](#)Published **Mon 6 August 2007** at 11:35[Bookmark this review with del.icio.us](#)[Find blogs that mention this review](#)[Digg this review and share it with others](#)[Reviews RSS feed \(What's RSS?\)](#)

Craig Gazey (Will) and Louise Callaghan (Lizzie) in Holding Fire! at the Shakespeare's Globe, London Photo: Tristram Kenton

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Two decades ago Jack Shepherd's first play, set in Lambeth, was an intimate conversation piece about revolution and its bloody consequences. Now thanks to a Globe commission, he creates another revolutionary drama, an epic story of the Chartists, the protest movement which in 1839 helped set us on the road to universal suffrage - a turbulent upheaval with surprisingly little bloodshed.

Across almost three hours, Shepherd's rambling history can scarce be "crammed within this wooden O". Indeed, Mark Rosenblatt's fluid staging places much of the action in the galleries and among the groundlings, even though at times the main platform remains almost unoccupied.

A voice from the recent past, John Tams' storytelling ballads, hauntingly hymned by Keith Kendrick, set the scene, while leftist credentials are nicely in place with stirring speeches from Peter Hamilton Dyer's Lovett and Jonathan Moore as the flawed but dynamic O'Connor, winning applause from the Globe crowd with words that could still have us manning the barricades.

From among an excellent 18-strong cast, Dale Rapley and Mark Rice-Oxley catch the eye as Establishment figures, while Kirsty Besterman makes an attractive Yorkshire 'lady bountiful'. But this headlong flow of events - taking in a royal Christmas ball, a howitzer crew aiming their cannon at the audience, and an horrific public hanging - is loosely held together by a foreground melodrama involving Lizzie, an ambitious young Cockney flower-seller.

Played with impressive pluck by Louise Callaghan, she is rescued from London poverty, bathed, groomed and whisked off for a high-class term of service in a Yorkshire mansion. But groped by the cook (Cornelius Booth), she also foolishly falls for Craig Gazey's hapless boot-boy, leading to murder and a tragic life on the run.

Production information

By:	jack Shepherd
Composer:	John Tams and Joe Townsend
Management:	Globe Theatre Company
Cast:	Kirsty Besterman, Philip Bird, Cornelius Booth, Jim Bywater, Louise Callaghan, Philip Cumbus, Leander Deeny, Craig Gazey, Alice Haig, Peter Hamilton Dyer, Adam Kay, Jennifer Kidd, Pippa Nixon, Jonathan Moore, Christopher Obi, Dale Rapley, Mark Rice-Oxley, Nicholas Shaw
Director:	Mark Rosenblatt
Design:	Janet Bird

Production information can change over the run of the show.

Run sheet

Shakespeare's Globe London

August 3-October 5

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