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Christina, The Girl King



Synopsis

Michel Marc Bouchardâ™s latest play tells the story of Queen Christina of Sweden, who wreaked havoc throughout northern Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century. An enigmatic monarch, a flamboyant and unpredictable intellectual, a woman eager for knowledge, and a feminist before her time, Christina reigned over an empire she hoped to make the most sophisticated in all of Europe. In 1649, Christina summoned RenÃ© Descartes to her court in Uppsala to share with her the radical new ideas emerging from science and philosophy at the time – ideas that contradicted long-held, faith-based views about the world. Astronomer Johannes Kepler had recently proposed the elliptical trajectory of planets – including Earth – around the sun, and Descartes himself contended, despite condemnation from the Church, that individuals, not God, determined their own destiny. Descartesâ™s ideas about free will and reason appealed to Christina, who was struggling to reconcile tensions between her rational, thinking self and emotions she dared not name – including her love for a woman. Rather than bow to pressure to conform to the expectations of a nation that demanded she give it an heir, the twenty-six-year-old queen abdicated her throne to convert to Catholicism – rendering her ineligible to rule, according to Swedish law. Was this an act of madness? Or a bold gesture of autonomy by a modern woman born out of her time – one whom the seventeenth century simply could not contain? *Christina, the Girl King* premieres at the 2014 Stratford Festival. Cast of 4 women and 6 men.

Book Information

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Talonbooks (September 9, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0889228981

ISBN-13: 978-0889228986

Product Dimensions: 4.9 x 0.3 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.3 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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