

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Bad Shakespeare

Theatre OCU and William Shakespeare

Theatre OCU

Greenside @ Infirmary Street

5–10 August 2016



*Bad Shakespeare* from Theatre OCU is another company analyzing one of the vast aspects of Shakespeare.

An endless wealth of human behaviour, nothing more fun than actors divining for material culled from the canon on such as love, hate, marriage, war, friendship, death and, in this case, “bad” or evil.

Several have gone down this path (not the least of which is Steven Berkoff, *Shakespeare’s Villains*). Evil is a delicious dramatic tool. And what fun; both for the actors and audience.

OCU successfully offers most of the villains (and some who are not) in their own definitions; they break badness down into five acts (causes). The actors are able and fluid in performance; they offer their research in a very polished production; fast-paced, lively, entertaining.

But, although well done and well researched, they present their characters as bad without the finesse and sympathy of the inclusion of the “why”. Shakespeare gives us plenty of opportunity to sympathize and empathize with Shylock, Richard III and Macbeth.

In fact, most of the tragic figures are products of environment rather than just born bad.

**Reviewer:** [Catherine Henry Lamm](#)