

Fringe 2024 – Elizabeth I – in her own words

Gloriana, The Virgin Queen, destroyer of the Spanish Armada – Elizabeth I has become one of the greatest icons of female power.

But who was the woman behind the legend, ruling alone and sometimes lonely, for decades in an age of warfare, treachery, misogyny and religious strife?

Tammy Meneghini digs deep into the loves, thoughts, feelings and fears of the last of the Tudor dynasty in *Elizabeth I in Her Own Words* at this year's Fringe.

As one of the co-creators of the drama, as well as the actor playing Elizabeth, she has developed a deep admiration for Elizabeth and says: *"This play is about the woman behind the icon – using the letters she wrote to strip away the majesty and find the person."*

"And the more I find out about Elizabeth I, the more I'd love to have met her. She was fierce, funny, feisty and spicy."

"Something I really admire is that she learned from her mistakes – she made a ton of them, but never the same one twice."

"I try to channel my inner Elizabeth I in my own life."

Tammy who, as well as being an actor is an associate professor of theatre at the University of Colorado Boulder, used her deep love of Shakespeare to bring an extra dimension to the

production.

She said: "As we went through Elizabeth's life we found pivotal moments, and that there were passages from Shakespeare that perfectly parallel what she was going through.

"So, we have incorporated Shakespeare into the play because they so brilliantly bring her experiences and feelings to life.

"He is so brilliant at articulating moments of heightened emotion. It's almost like musical theatre where something so momentous happens that the character just has to sing."

Indeed, the production includes a passage from *Richard II* which is believed to have actually been honouring Elizabeth.

She said: *"We know that Elizabeth was aware that Richard II was a representation of her, so we started with that."*

One of the biggest characters in the play, the other woman of power in the British Isles at that time, Elizabeth's cousin and fellow monarch Mary Stewart – queen of Scots.

They never met but were life and death to each other. Mary continually plotted to have Elizabeth murdered and Elizabeth eventually agreed to have Mary executed.



Pictured is Tammy Meneghini as Elizabeth I, in the meadow beside Craigmillar Castle, Edinburgh – which has connections to Elizabeth's cousin Mary Queen of Scots.

Photography from: Colin Hattersley Photography –

And despite their similar social and political positions, Tammy sees them as very different characters.

She said: *"Elizabeth was very cautious, people tried to manipulate her, but she did her best to prevent it. Mary seems very reactive, and when people did things in her name, without*

her consent, she allowed it."

The play is directed by **Lynn Nichols** who has who has worked extensively with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival.

It is produced by award-winning director, and stalwart of the Edinburgh Fringe, **Penny Cole** whose company, *Flying Solo! Presents* specialises in fostering new work by American artists on the international stage.

They provide an ideal team to bring the story of the woman who faced down the Spanish Armada, overcame rebellions, struggled to reconcile religious divisions and endured deep personal heartache to the Edinburgh stage.

<https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/elizabeth-i-in-her-own-words>