



BWW Interview: Ronald Peet in LION IN WINTER at Two River Theater

By Marina Kennedy



The Lion in Winter will be performed in Two River Theater's Rechnitz Theater from November 12th to December 4th. Written by **James Goldman** and directed by **Tyne Rafaeli**, the play is set during Christmas in 1183. This great American classic is filled with ruthless scheming, deception and romance. It is the ultimate fight for the throne. Join Henry II of England, his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their three sons for a sharp-tongued and witty look at how dysfunctional the royal family can be.

Broadwayworld.com had the opportunity to interview **Ronald Peet** who plays Phillip in *Lion in Winter*.

Peet's credits in New York include: Kentucky (**Ensemble Studio Theatre**, Page 73), LOVEPLAY/PLAYMONEY (La MaMa), Tilly the Trickster (**Atlantic Theater Company**), I'll Never Love Again (Drama League), Boats And (**Ars Nova**), Debutante (**Ars Nova**), and New Saloon's I'm Miserable but Change Scares Me (The Brick). Regional: peerless (Barrington Stage), The Golem of Havana (Miami New Drama, Barrington Stage); 30 roles in 13 plays over three seasons at the American Shakespeare Center. Upcoming film/TV: Girls, **Noah Baumbach's** The Meyerowitz Stories, Dianne Dreyer's Change in the Air. Peet received his training at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

When did you first become interested in theatre and performing arts?

Growing up in the Bahamas, I was an extremely gregarious and energetic child and my parents wanted to let me explore all the various outlets available to help hone my energy and focus including soccer, piano, taekwondo, track and field, horseback riding, and swimming. Acting in the school play was just another available opportunity to engage creatively with my peers. I didn't truly see it as a viable profession for myself until my freshman year at Emory University where I doubled majored in Theater and Philosophy and, through the theater department there, discovered how theater encapsulates the tenants of sociology, anthropology, psychology, anatomy, politics, spirituality, *and* philosophy. Then I was sold!

Tell us a little about your experience studying at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

I auditioned for Tisch in Atlanta, while attending Emory, and when I was admitted, I became a transfer student thrown into the magnificent and overwhelming belly of New York City. I studied at the **Atlantic Theater Company**, along with Atlantic's Summer Intensive in Vermont, and the Experimental Theater Wing's International Theatre Workshop in Amsterdam. I also doubled majored in Philosophy and graduated with an Honors BFA in Drama.

Who are some of the performers have inspired you?

Philip Seymour Hoffman was the first actor to make me feel as though a performance could transcend the limits of the form and immediately connect you to the soul of humanity, the core of the human experience. He's the only person I've ever idolized and the reason I chose to audition for NYU, his alma mater. My senior year I ended up interning with **LAByrinth Theater Company**, which he was a founder of, and got to hang around him a bit - it was life-affirming! I'm now on the subcommittee for the Relentless Award which is honor of Phil, and it feels like I'm helping to continue the tradition of soulful and fearless storytelling that he essentially introduced me to. I'm also trying to be this century's **Sidney Poitier**, but don't tell him!

What have been some of the challenges of your career?

The program I was in at Tisch didn't have a showcase, per se so I didn't get an agent right out of school - it actually took me 4 years to get one. During those years I choose to leave NYC and do Shakespeare on tour and then in Virginia. The work was world-class but I felt like I needed to be back in NY - saying no to guaranteed regional work in order to bet on booking something potentially life-changing in NYC was an enormous challenge. Also, watching countless friends go to MFA acting programs and deciding to stay in the city and "keep at it" has proved to be one of my biggest challenges. At some point you have to make the decision to stay the course and fully embrace the ride.

Tell us a little about working at TRT.

TRT is an actor's dream. That's the truth. The facilities are gorgeous, **John Dias** and the rest of the artistic staff are brilliant and generous, the community is tremendously engaged and hungry for theater, and the cast and director I'm working with are redefining my understanding of genius every single day.

What would you like area audiences to know about *Lion in Winter*?

Our fearless director, **Tyne Rafaeli**, put it best the other day in rehearsal when she said that the power to producing period pieces is finding their immediacy in the present day socio-political sphere. With the upcoming election, a play like *Lion* that examines power and the innately messy humanness of those who hold it, is a perfect play to help us increase our empathy, if only a little, for the people tasked to run this country.

What are some of your future plans?

I'm looking forward to the releases next year of some films I took part in including **Noah Baumbach's** *The Meyerowitz Stories* and Dianne Dreyer's *Change Is In The Air!* For more information about **Ronald Peet**, visit his web site at www.ronaldalexanderpeet.com. *The Lion in Winter* will be performed at Two River Theater from November 12th to December 4th. The theater is located at 21 Bridge Avenue, Red Bank, NJ 07701. For ticketing and more information, call (732) 345-1400 or visit their web site at <http://www.tworivertheater.org/>.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of **Ronald Peet**