



Year of the Fat Knight: The Falstaff Diaries

Antony Sher

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Thirty years ago a promising young actor published his account of preparing for and playing the role of Richard III. Antony Sher's *Year of the King* has since become a classic of theatre literature.

In 2014, Sher, now in his sixties, was cast as Falstaff in Gregory Doran's Royal Shakespeare Company production of the two parts of *Henry IV*. Both the production and Sher's Falstaff were acclaimed by critics and audiences alike, with Sher winning the Critics' Circle Award for Best Shakespearean Performance.

Year of the Fat Knight is Antony Sher's account – splendidly supplemented by his own paintings and sketches – of researching, rehearsing and performing one of Shakespeare's best-known and most popular characters. He tells us how he had doubts about playing the part at all, how he sought to reconcile Falstaff's obesity, drunkenness, cowardice and charm, how he wrestled with the fat suit needed to bulk him up, and how he explored the complexities and contradictions of this comic yet often dangerous personality. On the way, Sher paints a uniquely close-up portrait of the RSC at work.

Year of the Fat Knight is a terrific read, rich in humour and with a built-in tension as opening night draws relentlessly nearer. It also stands as a celebration of the craft of character acting. All in all, it is destined to rank with *Year of the King* as one of the most enduring accounts of the creation of a giant Shakespearean role.

Praise for *Year of the King*:

'This is a most wonderfully authentic account of the experience of creating a performance' *Sunday Times*

'The most exciting actor of his generation and an eloquent writer on the side' *Observer*

Praise for Sher's Falstaff:

'A magnificent, magnetic performance... Sher plays down the fatness to emphasise the knight's upper-class origins. But, just as you start to warm to this Falstaff, you are reminded of his rapacity' *Guardian*

'It is Sher's irrepressible Falstaff that will linger in the memory – a lord of misrule who's absurd, delightful and in the end deeply sad' *Evening Standard*

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