

The Last Wife was first produced by the Stratford Festival and premiered at the Studio Theatre in Stratford, Ontario, on August 14, 2015, with the following cast and creative team:

Kate: Maev Beaty
Thom: Gareth Potter
Henry: Joseph Ziegler
Mary: Sara Farb
Bess: Bahia Watson
Eddie: Jonah Q. Gribble

Artistic director: Antoni Cimolino
Executive director: Anita Gaffney
Producer: David Auster
Casting director: Beth Russell
Creative planning director: Jason Miller

Director: Alan Dilworth
Designer: Yannick Larivee
Assistant designer: Nancy Anne Perrin
Lighting designer: Kimberly Purtell
Assistant lighting designer: Kaileigh Krysztofiak
Dramaturge: Bob White
Original dramaturge: Andy McKim
Sound designer: Alexander MacSween
Stage manager: Melissa Rood
Assistant stage manager: Katherine Arcus
Production assistant: Jacki Brabazon
Production stage managers: Bona Duncan and Marylu Moyer
Technical director: Robbin Cheesman

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

This is a contemporary play. This is a domestic play. No historical costuming or accents are required. Diversity in casting is strongly encouraged.

The following edited versions of extant manuscripts appear in the script: two letters of Edward VI; the marriage vows of Henry VIII and Katherine Parr; *The Confession of Lady Mary*; *The Third Act of Succession*; the resolution for and commission of Katherine Parr's regency by Henry VIII; *The Prayer of Queen Esther for Help Against Her Enemies* and *The Prayer of Manasses, Sixth King of Judah* from Katherine Parr's "Personal Prayerbook"; the lyrics of "Whoso That Will All Feats Obtain" by Henry VIII; sections of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*; and an epitaph by John Parkhurst.

Word / word indicates the next speaker should overlap their dialogue at the slash, including at the beginning of a line.

There's something deeply, mercilessly wrong in the way the world treats women. Gender equality is the single most important struggle on the planet. Patriarchy is a crime against humanity.

—Stephen Lewis
Stratford Festival Forum
August 17, 2013

CHARACTERS

Kate: a lady of the court, later a queen; early thirties

Bess: a princess; eleven to fourteen years old

Mary: a princess; late twenties

Henry: a king; in his fifties

Thom: a naval officer; late thirties

Eddie: a prince; six to nine years old

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: MEETING

In public. KATE is wearing a grey gown, with seventeen little buttons of gold garnished with small pearls. THOM stands across from her.

KATE It's a bit surprising to me, that's all.

THOM What is?

KATE The way you know me.

THOM Not enough of you.

KATE You see through me.

THOM In what way?

KATE Well what am I feeling?

THOM Guilt.

KATE In that way.

THOM I wish you didn't.

KATE If anything's true it's what we feel.

THOM So you feel guilty.

KATE My husband is very good to me.

THOM Not for much longer.

KATE Who knows.

THOM The doctor.

KATE The doctor said he wouldn't make it through the trip up north last year.

THOM touches KATE's shoulder.

THOM I'm not suggesting you don't love John.

KATE I've been devoted to John.

THOM But he doesn't give you what you need.

KATE He gives me what's his to give. That's all I can ask.

THOM It's all I ask of you. But it doesn't stop my desire. Or yours, I hope.

THOM drops one of the straps on KATE's gown.

KATE It's almost dinner.

THOM He's always late.

KATE stops his hand.

/ Sorry.

KATE Sorry.

THOM That's okay. I'm patient.

KATE You are.

THOM Sure. It's pretty rare.

KATE What is?

THOM Your self-control, considering . . .

KATE What?

THOM Well, how much fun can it be with John? What is he, seventy?

KATE Forty-nine.

THOM Still . . .

KATE He gives me other things: stability, loyalty.

THOM He can't protect you.

KATE He can. He does.

THOM Except . . . ?

KATE Only that once.

THOM Once was enough.

KATE He shares his children with me. There's more to life you know than sexual—

THOM Pleasure?

KATE Achievement.

THOM But if you've never even known the fun you / can

KATE It makes me uncomfortable to talk about it.

THOM Okay.

He looks at her.

KATE What.

THOM I'm imagining you . . . with me . . .

KATE You're embarrassing / me

THOM having fun . . .

KATE Please . . .

He touches her face.

THOM I won't let anyone hurt you.

KATE That's a lot to promise.

HENRY enters the room.

HENRY Thom!

THOM I— / oh . . .

HENRY I forgot you were coming.

(to KATE) Hi.

(to THOM, but not taking his gaze from KATE) An introduction to the lovely lady, if you will.

THOM Uhhvv course, His Majesty, Henry the Eighth, by the grace of God, King of England and France: Defender of the Faith, and on earth, immediately under Christ, Supreme Head of the Church of England.

HENRY Don't forget Ireland. *Never* forget Ireland.

And . . . ? Thomas . . . ?

THOM Majesty?

HENRY gestures toward KATE.

Uhh, sorry . . . I . . . Katherine Parr, Majesty. The Lady Latimer. Wife to John Neville, the third Baron Latimer.

KATE Majesty.

HENRY And the ever-handsome playboy Thom Seymour . . . Darn! No title.

(to KATE) Come from the North, haven't you? I knew your father.

HENRY formally kisses KATE on the lips.

Katherine Parr.

Too many Katherines, don't you think. Too many Marys. Too many Henrys, for that matter. What is it with the English and their names. Only the half-dozen we can spell correctly, I suppose.

Lady Latimer: your husband is not with us I see. A miraculous recovery is not expected?

KATE He sends his best wishes, Majesty.

HENRY Does he. Wants to placate me with his “best wishes”? Thinks that “best wishes” will deter me from avenging his sedition? from wiping out the estates he pilfered from me?

KATE I’m afraid I’m little equipped to understand the intricacies of my husband’s estates, or your intentions for them.

HENRY Is that so.

KATE If you’ll be so generous, Majesty, as to spell out your plan, I’m sure I’ll be in your debt.

HENRY Oh, you’ll be in my debt all right. When he croaks? Accounts must be settled. Even you must be equipped to grasp that much.

(*to THOM*) Didn’t take you too long to get chummy with the Lady Latimer, eh, Thom? Providing her a little sturdy comfort as her old man flails listlessly toward his end?

THOM We enjoy taking the air together, Majesty.

HENRY Quite. And what other little gems do you share, along with particles of oxygen, heh?

THOM Well . . . we’ve been discussing Plato’s *Republic*. You see, we’re / both

HENRY Whoa. Thomas. *You’re* reading Plato?

THOM Lady Latimer suggested I read / it and

HENRY Ah hah! An ill-equipped mind, has she? Yet reads the classics, and all. Does she have a little French? a little Italian, perhaps? In what language is the lady studying Plato, one might ask. For the sake of . . . conversation.

KATE In Latin, Your Majesty.

HENRY Pah.