

Introducing Brad Raider

By [Peter Filichia](#)

7/2/2000

NEW YORK – Yes, I loved Stephen Dillane in *The Real Thing*, and thought that Gabriel Byrne, David Suchet, and the two *True West* boys were great, too. But for my money, the best performance by an actor in a play last season was given by Brad Raider as Henry V.

Who?

Brad Raider is a kid not long out of NYU whom I met years ago, when his high school teacher, Thomas Stretton of Cheltenham (PA) High School, asked me to come see him. The two had collaborated on *Frankly Capra*, a one-man show about the noted film director, whom Raider would impersonate. The kid, aged courtesy of Bob Kelley make-up, did a yeoman's job in capturing the pride and pathos of the man at the end of his life.

Last October, Raider gave me a call to catch up, and although I was furious to learn that at NYU he'd played Larry Foreman in *The Cradle Will Rock* and hadn't informed me, I still forgave him and headed to somewhere on the lower east side to see his theater company, RED DOG SQUADRON, present *Henry V*. And was blown away.

For one thing, the kid's glorious looking. But looks only go so far, and Raider had the rest. He spoke the Shakespearean language so matter-of-factly, letting it roll around his tongue as deliciously as a Godiva chocolate that was thrilled to be in that mouth. I was riveted, and so were the other 12 people in the house.

Notice to fledgling theater companies: Never, never ever do Shakespeare and expect that the media will come to see you. Critics inherently believe that Americans – even the most accomplished veteran Equity actors – can't touch the English when it comes to the Bard. If we have doubts about Kelsey Grammer's doing Macbeth, what do we feel when John Q. Nobody announces he'll do it?

A press release from an unknown company producing Shakespeare soon lives in a wastebasket. Believe me, had I not know Raider, I wouldn't have given a thought to attending. And I would have really missed something.

This happened in October, when I wasn't yet writing for Theatre.com, and because the show wasn't produced in New Jersey, I couldn't write about it for the *Star-Ledger*. All Raider got out of it from me was an enthusiastic phone call on his machine. Not much for all that work.

But now I've heard good news about him, and while it doesn't cheer me theatrically, I am thrilled for the young man. Brad Raider went to Hollywood, and promptly got cast as one of the leads in a new ABC TV-series that will debut this fall, Fridays at 8:30 EST. The show is called *The Trouble With Normal*, and Raider plays Max, who's suspicious of the world. But as they say, "Being paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you," and courtesy of Jon Cryer (Gretchen and David's kid), Max finds out there's some basis in fact for his anxieties.

While I predict that many a teen will drool over him and fan clubs will be as plentiful as performances of *Cats*, I would of course rather that Brad be on Broadway. But as Bebe Neuwirth once told me, the reason she went to California is because she knew it was the quickest and easiest way of becoming a name, after which she'd come back and be a Broadway star. Here's hoping that Brad Raider takes the exact same route.