

Minneapolis Post

Review: 'Frost/Nixon' (the play) packs a lot of punch

By Ed Huyck | Published Wed, Jan 7 2009

You can take in the film version of "Frost/Nixon" at a lower price than the touring production inhabiting the State Theatre in Minneapolis, so why choose the play? I could go on about the connection between the performer and the audience, maybe even toss out fancy words like "gestalt," but the answer is pretty simple: Stacy Keach (as Richard Nixon) and Alan Cox (as David Frost) fully inhabit their roles to the point that the verbal battles between the two at the show's climax feel as intense as the real thing.

The film explores the aftermath of Nixon's presidency via the famed TV interviews conducted by Frost in 1977. As one of the characters notes, the two spar like fighters. Playwright Peter Morgan has a knack for exploring the human toll of politics (past work includes "The Queen," about Tony Blair, Queen Elizabeth II and the death of Princess Diana) and that's in full effect here.

While it gets off to a slow start, "Frost/Nixon" finds its pace and drive once the two characters begin their on- and off-screen battles. Keach certainly gets the meatier role here, and takes full advantage of it, making his complex character come to life. Cox has a tougher role, as Frost buries his doubts beneath his playboy image. This comes into sharp focus in the play's final quarter as the men share a late-night phone conversation. Frost asks Nixon the questions that everyone wants answered, and the disgraced former president obliges.

In the end, this smart and well-paced production scores with the intensity and immediacy of the two main performers -- and that's something you can never get on the movie screen.

"Frost/Nixon." Through Sunday, Jan. 11. State Theatre, 805 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis. Tickets: \$21 to \$61. Call 612-673-0404 or go [online](#).

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