

A Minute With: 'The King' cast on Shakespeare and role models



US actor Timothee Chalamet attends the premiere of Netflix's 'The King' at SVA Theater in New York City. — AFP

Actor Timothee Chalamet plays an unwilling heir who inherits the throne in "The King", a mediaeval coming-of-age tale loosely based on William Shakespeare's plays about Prince Hal and his transformation into England's King Henry V. The 23-year-old "Call Me by Your Name" and "Beautiful Boy" actor stars alongside Joel Edgerton, who plays Hal's hard-drinking friend and mentor Sir John Falstaff, Lily-Rose Depp, who portrays Catherine, daughter of France's King Charles, and Ben Mendelsohn, who features as Hal's father, Henry IV.

The Netflix film premiered at the Venice Film Festival last month, where Reuters spoke to the cast members and director David Michod about the drama, which also features a recreation of the 1415 Battle of Agincourt. Below are edited excerpts of the interviews.

Q: This was a very different part from your previous leading roles, what were the biggest learning lessons making this movie?

Chalamet: "I felt less interested and less naturally drawn to anything that had to do with power but more to do with helplessness and being human and a young human at that - when you're still figuring out who you are, who you want to be and having to navigate world affairs basically or governments or the snake-like nature of a royal court."

Q: You, like your character, are a young woman in a position of power, how do you cope with the pressures of being someone many look up to or scrutinize?

Depp: "You do feel that responsibility whether you want it or not. But I think it's also ... important to remember that it's hard to consider yourself a role model ... when you're still kind of figuring out who you want be yourself."

Q: You wore many hats on this project - you co-wrote it, produced it and star in it. Why was this a film you felt so passionate about?

Edgerton: "Quite often when you see this story, and there's been so many wonderful versions of it, you never really see a super young person playing Henry, and Henry was 25 or 26 when he became king. So this was our chance to not only tell our story for other purposes, political purposes, and extract our own essence out of that story but to put youth in the seat of power."

Q: What was it like making this film? The battle scenes in particular must have been hard work.

Michod: "They almost killed me... That sounds like an exaggeration but it's only a little bit... It was something about the heat and the mud and the stress of it. I mean, it's so huge."

"We shot that battle in two weeks. Normally I think (in) a movie of this ambition, you would maybe have five weeks to do it ... I remember driving away from that battlefield when we'd finished it, just feeling like I'd survived something and feeling traumatized ... Anyway it looks good in the movie, I think, now."

Q: Is there a hope the film will help modernize Shakespeare for younger generations, especially given it's a Netflix movie?

Mendelsohn: "When you have Timothee Chalamet playing King Henry, you're opening doors... to an audience that most probably isn't familiar with the Shakespeare stuff ... Timmy's a movie star. Timmy's got bang."—Reuters



In this file photo Swedish environment activist Greta Thunberg speaks at a climate protest outside the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP photos



In this file photo a bust of Alfred Nobel is pictured prior to the awardings of the Nobel Prizes in medicine, economics, physics and chemistry in Stockholm, Sweden.

Nobel buzz for Greta and literature duo

Experts are cautious, but bookies are tipping teenage climate campaigner Greta Thunberg for the Nobel Peace Prize next week, while two literature laureates will be crowned after last year's award was postponed over a sex harassment scandal. Odds from bookmakers such as Ladbrokes indicate the 16-year-old activist is the one to beat for the Nobel Peace Prize after she launched a school strike that inspired millions to join her "Fridays for Future" movement.

However any prediction carries a great deal of uncertainty, since the list of candidates considered by the Nobel Committee isn't made public, and experts are still divided over whether there is a direct link between climate and violent conflicts. A day before the Peace Prize announcement on October 11 in Oslo, the Swedish Academy, which awards the Literature Prize, will reveal its choices in Stockholm.

The literary body is at pains to restore its honor after a scandal exposed members' scheming, conflicts of interest, and a culture of

silence and harassment. Long held up as Sweden's bearers of culture, Academy members traded barbs in the media and seven of the 18 members resigned. For the first time in 70 years, the 2018 prize was postponed, as the institution found itself without a quorum to make key decisions. This year, there will be one Literature Prize announced for 2018 and one for 2019, each accompanied by a gold medal and nine million kronor.

Unless "the winner or winners refuse it" because they think the prize has been tarnished, warned Madelaine Levy, literary critic for Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet. Each year since the prizes were first awarded in 1901, literary circles are abuzz with speculation—often more a reflection of their own wishes than any real insight into the Academy's leanings. Among those mentioned are Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk, Kenyan author Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Albania's Ismail Kadare, US novelist Joyce Carol Oates and Haruki Murakami of Japan.

The Academy is widely expected to try to steer clear of controversy this year, and is therefore seen making conservative picks. The laureates are expected to include at least one woman. The unorthodox decision to honor US singer-songwriter Bob Dylan in 2016 outraged traditionalists. The subsequent 2017 nod to "Remains of the Day" author Kazuo Ishiguro, a British novelist of Japanese origin, was seen as a consensual choice aimed at making amends.—AFP

Feuding children reach truce on funeral for Mexican superstar Jose

After days of drama involving a missing corpse, a family feud and a soundtrack of heartbroken love songs, late Latin singing sensation Jose Jose's children have set aside their differences and agreed on plans for his funeral, the Mexican government said Wednesday. Moreover, his "missing" body has now been found, at a funeral home in Miami, said his son, Jose Joel. Jose Jose, known as "The Prince of Song," one of the most famous Mexican singers of all time, died Saturday in Miami at age 71. His death set off a bitter battle between his youngest child and her two half-siblings, who accused her of hiding his body, seeking to get rich off his death and "putting on make-up" and "straightening her hair" amid the family's mourning. But the Mexican foreign ministry, whose consulate in Miami brought the three siblings together Tuesday night to mediate the dispute, announced the family had reached an agreement.

Jose Jose will be given a funeral Friday in Miami, the ministry said in a statement. Then his body will be flown to Mexico City next week for a series of public tributes, tentatively including events at the capital's Palace of Fine Arts and National Auditorium. "Jose Jose's family agreed to first pay tribute to him in Miami, and then again in Mexico City," the statement said. It did not say where he would be laid to rest. However, one key mystery did get cleared up: his body is at a funeral home in Miami. "He's here, we're certain now," Jose Joel told journalists outside the establishment. "They're preparing him, embalming him." "We're united as a family to give our father, our prince, the tribute and burial he deserves, with all our love," he added.

Mourning and mystery

Jose Jose's death unleashed an outpouring of emotion in Mexico, where fans belted out his hits through tears in public and flocked to mourn at a statue of him in his native Mexico City neighborhood. But the tears had not even finished flowing when the loss took a telenovela-like turn. Jose Joel and Marysol, his eldest children, said their half-sister, Sarita, would not let them see his body. They called for an autopsy, filed a police report, hired a lawyer and insisted they would not believe he was dead until they saw him with their own eyes.—AFP