

Lord Velvet: A SYNOPSIS

A musical in two acts; 23 scenes

TIME: 1989, the year Denmark became the first country to legalize same sex unions.

PLACE: Regalia, a fictitious island kingdom near the coast of England. A stylized set serves as both within and without the royal palace.

CHARACTERS: An ensemble of 5 men and 4 women

THE REGALIANS

PIM DUFFIN, Third Assistant to the Royal Goldsmith; late forties; lyric baritone

KING HAROLD VII, King of Regalia; handsome heir to Harold VI; mid-twenties; tenor

QUEEN MILDRED, mother of King Harold VII; mid-forties; mezzo-soprano

PRINCE HUGH, the younger brother of King Harold VII; early twenties; tenor

VERNON RUMPSHAW, Prime Minister of Regalia; mid-fifties; bass

PERCY BUMPHREYS, Archbishop of Regalia; late fifties; baritone

TRAMP, MADMAN, CONVICT, GOSSIPS, POLICEMEN, NIGHTMARE KINGS,

PROTESTERS, GUARDS, STROLLERS

THE AMERICANS: Peter Cochran, Polly Cochran, Jane Buttons

THE CHORUS OF CROWN JEWELS: Ruby, Sapphire, Pearl

PLOT SUMMARY: In the Kingdom of Regalia, after the death of the ruling monarch, young King Harold is instructed by the Prime Minister, Archbishop, and Queen Mother to behave as a wise and dutiful ruler. They are dismayed that Harold is courting Polly Cochran, a visiting American, but Harold discovers that his passions are even stronger for Polly's brother, Peter, and soon both men are hopelessly smitten. When King Harold's true sexual nature is disclosed, the queen mother disowns him, the parliament threatens to resign, the clergy vows to boycott his coronation, and Harold is plagued by nightmares of past kings cajoling him to uphold the values of tradition and propriety. Meanwhile, Peter begs Harold not to abandon his throne, claiming he could never replace an entire kingdom, but Harold has no delusions about the power of kings in the forthcoming century. He knows he cannot serve his country well or find personal fulfillment without Peter's love, and since acknowledging Peter would cause a constitutional crisis, Harold decides to abdicate. He will sail to America and be hailed a hero, then fly to Denmark where he and Peter can be legally married. Harold expects his kingship will be passed to his younger brother, Prince Hugh, but since the Queen Mother feels that neither son is fit to rule Regalia, she steals the crown for herself!

The story of *Lord Velvet* is revealed from the viewpoint of Pim Duffin, an assistant to the Royal Goldsmith, who began life as an orphan. Throughout the play, a Chorus of Crown Jewels is visible exclusively to Pim, following him as he exaggerates the importance of his role in King Harold's affairs. The Crown Jewels also serve to lampoon royalty's overwhelming privileges which reflect a class system that still supports inequities of wealth, power, and opportunity, as well as onerous gender stereotypes.