# Autumn revival sparks debate over Christopher Marlowe's neglected legacy



For a brief season this autumn, Christopher Marlowe is poised to reclaim a spotlight on the London stage, an event that underscores the playwright's fading presence in Britain’s cultural consciousness. Marlowe, once a mainstay of the theatrical canon and England’s second most famous Elizabethan dramatist after Shakespeare, has largely drifted from public awareness. His works, once staples of theatrical repertoires, are now produced sporadically, and eerily, he is more commonly known for his violent and mysterious death at a riverside tavern in London than for the pioneering literary craft he exhibited.

The anticipation surrounds the West End premiere of Liz Duffy Adams’s two-hander, Born With Teeth, which features Ncuti Gatwa as Marlowe and Edward Bluemel as William Shakespeare. The play boldly speculates on the nature of their relationship, suggesting collaboration on parts of the Henry VI trilogy and hinting at a romantic involvement. It also weaves in conspiracy theories about Shakespeare’s possible involvement in Marlowe’s death in 1593, adding layers of intrigue to the dramatization. This production is part of a wider tradition of pairing Marlowe and Shakespeare dramatically, recalling works such as Shakespeare in Love, where Marlowe is portrayed as charismatic and overshadowing Shakespeare’s initial struggles.

Despite these dramatic representations that keep Marlowe’s figure alive, his plays have lost much of their former prominence. The Royal Shakespeare Company continues to stage his works, with a recent production of Edward II, and the Malthouse Theatre in Canterbury—Marlowe’s old school city—also honours him. Yet the National Theatre, which once opened its Olivier Theatre with Marlowe’s Tamburlaine in 1976, has not produced anything by him for over a decade. This silence from the National Theatre highlights a wider institutional neglect of Marlowe’s legacy.

Advocates argue for a twofold approach to restoring Marlowe’s rightful place in British culture: increasing the study and production of his plays, and formally commemorating his legacy. While schools and exam boards hold responsibilities in this regard, subsidised theatres are urged to lead the way by regularly staging his works. Meanwhile, the physical space marking Marlowe’s violent death in Deptford Strand remains neglected—a stark contrast to his cultural significance. A modest plaque at St Nicholas’s churchyard acknowledges his burial site, but the area itself is marred by neglect and litter. There is a compelling call for a more fitting monument to honour the playwright whose early death left an indelible mark on literary history.

This autumn's theatrical revisit to Marlowe, therefore, is not only a reminder of his artistic contributions but also a prompt for cultural institutions and the public to re-examine and celebrate his enduring influence on English drama.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him), [[3]](https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth), [[4]](https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth), [[5]](https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth), [[6]](https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth), [[7]](https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him> - An editorial from The Guardian discusses the revival of Christopher Marlowe's works in London's West End, highlighting the play 'Born With Teeth' featuring Ncuti Gatwa as Marlowe. The article reflects on Marlowe's diminished presence in British culture and advocates for increased study and production of his plays, as well as better commemoration of his legacy.
3. <https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth> - The Royal Shakespeare Company's page for 'Born With Teeth', a play by Liz Duffy Adams featuring Ncuti Gatwa as Christopher Marlowe and Edward Bluemel as William Shakespeare. The play explores the relationship between the two playwrights, including the possibility of collaboration on the Henry VI trilogy and Marlowe's mysterious death in 1593.
4. <https://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/born-with-teeth> - The Royal Shakespeare Company's page for 'Born With Teeth', a play by Liz Duffy Adams featuring Ncuti Gatwa as Christopher Marlowe and Edward Bluemel as William Shakespeare. The play explores the relationship between the two playwrights, including the possibility of collaboration on the Henry VI trilogy and Marlowe's mysterious death in 1593.
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