# Hamlet: Hail to the Thief merges Shakespearean fury with Radiohead’s haunting soundscapes



# Hamlet: Hail to the Thief — A Convergence of Anger and Art

In a striking convergence of theatre and music, "Hamlet: Hail to the Thief" emerges as a thought-provoking adaptation, merging Shakespeare’s timeless tragedy with the haunting soundscapes of Radiohead's 2003 album. This co-production between the Royal Shakespeare Company and Factory International, helmed by co-directors Steven Hoggett and Christine Jones, presents a contemporary reflection on righteous anger that resonates deeply within today's socio-political climate.

At the heart of this production is Samuel Blenkin's portrayal of Hamlet, whose performance captures the anguished spirit of the titular character with remarkable depth and intensity. Emerging as a voice for a generation grappling with disillusionment, his Hamlet rails against the moral decay embodied in the figure of Claudius, played by Paul Hilton. The dynamics between Hamlet and the other characters, particularly his interactions with Gertrude (Claudia Harrison) and the distressing trajectory of Ophelia (Ami Tredrea), are laden with emotional weight, embodying themes of betrayal and despair.

Christine Jones's earlier musings on the connections between Shakespeare’s tragedy and the socio-political narratives portrayed in Radiohead’s music have come to fruition in the design and execution of this adaptation. The production envisions Elsinore not merely as a royal court but as a dystopian surveillance state, mirroring the anxieties prevalent in modern society. The oppressive atmosphere is further accentuated through the stark, minimalist set designed by the collective AMP, which, combined with Jessica Hung Han Yun’s precise lighting, establishes a visual landscape that echoes the chaotic energy found in Radiohead's works.

The soundscape crafted by Thom Yorke is another exemplary component of this adaptation. The reimagined tracks from "Hail to the Thief" weave seamlessly into the narrative, amplifying the emotional stakes and highlighting Hamlet’s internal conflicts. Yorke’s arrangements, performed live by a five-piece band, inject a visceral intensity into key moments, resonating with the themes of paranoia and grief that pervade the play. Songs like "Sail to the Moon" serve to depict Ophelia’s unraveling, while more intense arrangements accentuate moments of confrontation, creating an audio-visual synergy that strips the play down to its raw essence.

Moreover, Yorke himself has noted the intricate challenge of aligning his musical interpretations with Shakespeare's text, emphasising a quest to uncover the deeper connections between two seemingly disparate artistic expressions. This endeavour reflects a broader cultural resonance, illustrating how art can transcend its original context to critique power structures and societal malaise. The adaptation, therefore, invites audiences to engage critically with both the play’s foundational themes and the contemporary issues echoing through Yorke's music.

Despite being at the helm of a project renowned for its blend of established literary tradition and modern sonic exploration, Hoggett and Jones do not lose sight of the narrative's core. The urgency of Hamlet’s quest for justice reverberates as a testimony to collective indignation against systemic corruption and moral vacuity. In its brisk two-hour runtime, the production deftly balances innovative physical theatre sequences with Shakespeare’s iconic dialogues, creating a dynamic and interactive experience that captivates and provokes.

"Hamlet: Hail to the Thief" is not merely a retelling of a classic; it is a clarion call for introspection amid societal turbulence. As audiences grapple with their own frustrations and disappointments, this adaptation stands as a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of Shakespeare's work in articulating the human condition—a poignant dialogue with both the past and the present.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/cac61301-b1fb-49ed-b4e1-91d1fcfddddd)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce8d25wzd8wo), [[5]](https://pitchfork.com/news/thom-yorke-adapts-radioheads-hail-to-the-thief-for-new-production-of-hamlet/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead), [[6]](https://www.loudersound.com/news/radiohead-thom-yorke-hamlet-hail-to-the-thief)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/cac61301-b1fb-49ed-b4e1-91d1fcfddddd), [[6]](https://www.loudersound.com/news/radiohead-thom-yorke-hamlet-hail-to-the-thief), [[7]](https://www.audacy.com/national/music/thom-yorke-turning-radiohead-hail-to-the-thief-into-hamlet-production)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/cac61301-b1fb-49ed-b4e1-91d1fcfddddd)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce8d25wzd8wo), [[5]](https://pitchfork.com/news/thom-yorke-adapts-radioheads-hail-to-the-thief-for-new-production-of-hamlet/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/07/hamlet-hail-to-the-thief-review-study-of-righteous-anger-links-shakespeare-to-radiohead> - This review discusses the 'Hamlet Hail to the Thief' production, a collaboration between the Royal Shakespeare Company, Factory International, and Radiohead's Thom Yorke. The play intertwines Shakespeare's tragedy with Radiohead's 2003 album, highlighting themes of righteous anger and corruption. Samuel Blenkin's portrayal of Hamlet is praised for its depth, and Yorke's reimagined soundtrack is noted for its intensity and relevance to the play's themes.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/cac61301-b1fb-49ed-b4e1-91d1fcfddddd> - This article explores the innovative 'Hamlet Hail to the Thief' adaptation, blending Shakespeare's play with Radiohead's 2003 album. The production reimagines Elsinore as a dystopian surveillance state, reflecting modern political and psychological unease. It highlights the collaboration between the Royal Shakespeare Company, Factory International, and Thom Yorke, noting the play's relevance in addressing themes of power, corruption, and societal unrest.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce8d25wzd8wo> - The BBC News article covers the 'Hamlet Hail to the Thief' stage production, detailing the collaboration between Thom Yorke, Christine Jones, and Steven Hoggett. It discusses how Yorke reworks Radiohead's 2003 album to align with the themes of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' focusing on grief and paranoia. The article also highlights the production's premiere dates and locations, emphasizing the fusion of classical literature with contemporary music.
5. <https://pitchfork.com/news/thom-yorke-adapts-radioheads-hail-to-the-thief-for-new-production-of-hamlet/> - Pitchfork reports on Thom Yorke's adaptation of Radiohead's 'Hail to the Thief' for a new 'Hamlet' production. Yorke describes the challenge of integrating the album's music with Shakespeare's text, aiming to uncover connections between the two. The article includes insights from director Christine Jones, who reflects on the thematic parallels between the album and the play, particularly concerning power structures and internal conflict.
6. <https://www.loudersound.com/news/radiohead-thom-yorke-hamlet-hail-to-the-thief> - Louder Sound discusses Thom Yorke's involvement in reworking Radiohead's 'Hail to the Thief' for the 'Hamlet Hail to the Thief' production. Yorke shares his perspective on adapting the album's music to complement Shakespeare's tragedy, focusing on the interplay between the music and the play's themes. Director Christine Jones provides her insights on the thematic resonances between the album and the play, emphasizing the exploration of despair and power structures.
7. <https://www.audacy.com/national/music/thom-yorke-turning-radiohead-hail-to-the-thief-into-hamlet-production> - Audacy reports on Thom Yorke's adaptation of Radiohead's 'Hail to the Thief' for the 'Hamlet Hail to the Thief' stage production. Yorke discusses the process of reworking the album's music to align with the themes of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' focusing on the underlying grief and paranoia. The article also features comments from director Christine Jones, who highlights the thematic connections between the album and the play, particularly regarding power structures and internal conflict.