



# Magnificence (Modern Plays)

*Howard Brenton*

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*I loathe us, I loathe our stupid puerile view of the world ... That we have only to do it, that we have only to go puff, and the monster buildings will go splat ...*

London, the early 70s. Poverty, homelessness, rising inequality, unemployment, industrial disputes. Five young activists squat a disused building and try to make a stand against it all.

Fired up by left-wing idealism, but short on pragmatism, they discover that the revolution may be a long time coming and when the protest leads to tragedy, some of them are driven to more violent methods. Meanwhile, two Tory MPs meet for a quiet chat to pass over the reins of power.

Both epic and intimate, Howard Brenton's 1973 play *Magnificence* takes us from the grubby barracks of the revolutionary struggle to the heart of centre-right Tory politicking, creating a panoramic vision of Britain at a pivotal moment in history. Many of its themes remain burning issues today – police brutality, drug abuse, the deceptions of professional politicians, the social housing crisis and whether violence can ever be justified for political ends.

*Magnificence* originally premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in June 1973, directed by Max Stafford-Clark and with a cast that included Pete Postlethwaite, Kenneth Cranham, Michael Kitchen and Robert Eddison. This edition was published to coincide with the first professional London revival in over 40 years at the Finborough Theatre in October 2016.

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