



Historical Background

The Wars of the Roses were a succession of civil wars fought between 1455 and 1485. This complex period in English history was often characterised by bloodshed and shifting allegiances. Conflict centred on the bitter dynastic fight between two rival factions of the Plantagenet royal house - the House of Lancaster (red rose), and the House of York (white rose). During the course of the wars, the crown swapped between rival claimants several times.

Synopsis

"A MOTHER'S WAR: THE MUSICAL" is based on the history of the Wars of the Roses, with some events reimagined for dramatic purposes.

Henry VI - supported by his wife, Margaret of Anjou - is the frail Lancastrian contender for the throne. Edward IV - husband of Elizabeth Woodville - is the Yorkist claimant. Into the mix steps Margaret Beaufort - an ambitious mother of Lancastrian blood - who has bold plans of her own for her only child, Henry Tudor. The musical opens with the three women looking back across time to briefly review their lives. They all have high expectations for their sons.

So the scene is set and the plot line begins. It is 1470, midway through the duration of the wars, and Edward IV is king. However, Margaret of Anjou and Warwick are conspiring to restore an ailing Henry VI to the throne. Meanwhile, Anne of Beaujeu - once considered a potential wife for Edward IV - is vengeful because he married Elizabeth Woodville. Warwick convinces Lord Stanley to support the Lancastrian cause, and the crown successfully returns to Henry VI. This allows Margaret Beaufort to be reunited with her son, Henry Tudor. Margaret of Anjou remains overseas and, some months later in the spring of 1471, she explains to her son (Prince Eddie) how difficult it is for a woman to be strong and in power.

Whilst in sanctuary, Elizabeth Woodville gives birth to a son. Edward IV and his brother Richard visit her secretly to see the baby and to tell her they are confident they will overcome Margaret of Anjou's forces.

Margaret Beaufort and her husband, Sir Henry Stafford, discuss which side would be best for them to support. At the battle at Barnet in April 1471, Edward IV is victorious; Warwick is killed and Sir Henry Stafford is fatally injured. By the time of the next battle at Tewkesbury the following month, Margaret of Anjou and Prince Eddie have arrived in England; she encourages her son to fight. However, once again the Yorkists are victorious, and Prince Eddie is killed. Margaret of Anjou, overcome with guilt and grief, is eventually exiled.

Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville celebrate their return to the throne with Richard. Lord Stanley is promoted within the royal household, despite his earlier Lancastrian allegiance. Henry Tudor, who has Lancastrian claims to the crown, remains a problem for Edward IV. Henry Tudor is warned by his distraught mother to stay safe in Brittany, although this means they will be separated. Now a widow, Margaret Beaufort engineers a politically astute marriage to Lord Stanley. Anne of Beaujeu does not help Edward IV with a plan

to capture Henry Tudor, and, following Margaret Beaufort's persuasion, Edward IV allows him to remain safe in exile.

Some years later, in 1483, Elizabeth Woodville is grief-stricken when Edward IV dies. Margaret Beaufort forcefully expresses her own ambition. Disenchanted by Elizabeth Woodville's political influence, Richard does not honour the line of succession. Realising the risk he poses, Margaret Beaufort encourages others to revolt against him. Richard's nephews - the Princes in the Tower - die suspiciously whilst under his guardianship, and he becomes king himself.

Devastated, Elizabeth Woodville looks to her daughter, Elizabeth of York, to ensure Edward IV's dynasty. With the military aid of Anne of Beaujeu, and also with Lord Stanley's support, Henry Tudor defeats Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485. Henry becomes king and marries Elizabeth of York, to the satisfaction of both their mothers. Thus the two royal houses are united at last, and the Tudor dynasty begins.

