

THE LAST MEASURE

A New Play by Richard Ehrlich

The Last Measure is a two-person psychological drama set in a sealed interview room late in the life of a former president. The man—once powerful, now physically diminished—has requested a private, non-broadcast session to "set the record straight." Across from him sits an Archivist: not a journalist, not a prosecutor, but a keeper of record whose task is preservation, not judgment.

What begins as an attempt to control legacy becomes a sustained moral excavation. Through carefully structured movements, the Archivist dismantles the former president's self-definitions of strength, leadership, and victory. The play confronts the consequences of leadership rooted in appetite rather than restraint: preventable deaths, fractured families, the erosion of shared reality, and the degradation of constitutional norms.

As testimonies are introduced—mostly read, once heard directly—the former president cycles through denial, justification, rage, and exhaustion. His most persuasive defense arrives midway through the play, when he nearly succeeds in reframing himself as a necessary fighter in an unforgiving age. That false victory collapses when it becomes clear that benevolence, restraint, and quiet competence were viable options all along—and were knowingly rejected.

The climax is not redemption, but clarity. The former president ultimately recognizes that what he called strength was fear dressed as dominance, and that the greatest harm lies not only in what he did, but in the good he refused to do. The Archivist does not forgive him. He does not condemn him. He preserves the truth and leaves it behind.

The Last Measure ends in silence, with power stripped of performance and legacy reduced to moral accounting.

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