

Richard Armitage

Profile: Born in 1971, British, gained huge followers in the UK playing main characters in *MI-5/Spooks* (2002-2010) , *Robin Hood* (2006-2009) and others, seen in Hollywood in *Captain America: the First Avenger* (2011) and also in the coming *Into the Storm* (opening in the US in August 2014).

Introduction: Richard Armitage who plays Thorin Oakenshield, the other main character in the *Hobbit* series, is a British stage actor. In the movie he plays a dwarf with prosthetics, but he is 6'2" tall and a surprisingly handsome man. It is a kind of mystery why he has not got a huge break in Japan. Here is the interview with him, which shows his charm and to understand his philosophy as an actor.

Your first time on stage was in *The Hobbit*, wasn't it?

RA: That's right. I was only in my teens and played an elf. I remembered it when I was talking with Peter (Jackson) during my audition for *The Hobbit*. I don't call it fate but I certainly felt it was something special to revisit *The Hobbit* in this way.

You did musicals when you were young, but now you play exclusively straight drama?

RA: Yes, I wanted to get into human psychology more deeply. My desire to study Shakespeare seriously became strong. That's why I first studied classic drama again at LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) and then another two years with the Royal Shakespeare Company. After that my work expanded to TV and movies. Currently I am thinking about studying silent movies. I am interested in the reactions of viewers to movies without words.

Your Thorin is an important character that sets the tone for the series, and that tone darkens gradually. It must be worthwhile for you as an actor.

RA: That's right. His madness starts showing in the second installment. And also Thorin is fully aware of it, well that is my interpretation. That is why the complex feelings of fear of the madness and strong temptation of the gold hoarded by Smaug was challenging to act and gave me great satisfaction. Although I was a bit surprised when Peter offered me the role of Thorin. 'Am I to play a dwarf?'

Because you are tall.

RA: That's one reason. I had never played any character that was not tall before so this casting was more than a little surprise. However it felt strange only at the beginning, now I am very much at home with Thorin.

You, Martin Freeman and other Brit actors are very popular. What do you think of the frenzy?

RA: Well, I am not sure. But, well.... It might be our tradition of great playwrights and our training to express those stories. Such institutions might be the reason. Also we British cherish words. How about the theory that the basis of our language supports Brit actors?

Do you have a favourite actor?

RA: I have been a huge fan of Gary Oldman. I enjoy seeing him disappearing into a role. In most of his movies I only realise he was acting once the movies were over. 'Yes, Gary was playing that role.' That is my idea of acting which I am striving for.