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Trinity's Macbeth is a visual spectacle full of heart and fury

June 11, 2011

4:22 PM MST



Richard Haratine and Elizabeth Mason
Amy Peterson

Macbeth

Rating: ★★★★★

Macbeth has always been a challenge. A challenge to read, to perform, to watch. If you're going to do a production you had better get it right, because everyone knows how *Macbeth* should be done. Everyone's got an opinion, always different, often conflicting. The only way to negotiate this is to know what you want, where you want it to go and be painstakingly meticulous in getting there. The Trinity Shakespeare Festival's production of *Macbeth*, currently running at Hays Theatre, TCU Campus, ticks all three boxes perfectly delivering a visual spectacle with some outstanding performances.

Macbeth is renowned for raising more questions than it answers, but at its core lies a simple story full of darkness, blood and horror. A general, spurned on by his wife and some questionable

prophecies, kills his King and assumes the throne. Once King he becomes paranoid (or the victim of supernatural forces depending which approach you take) and begins killing those he believes to be a threat to him. Succumbing to hallucinations and delusions, Macbeth begins to believe himself invincible and his bloodlust knows no bounds. In response the King's true son returns to exact justice, a final battle is waged, the guilty are punished and harmony is restored in the guise of the rightful King, Malcolm.

In directing *Macbeth* Stephen Fried has the courage to allow the actions to speak for themselves rather than serve as a metaphor for something else. His careful exploration of the rich nuances of Shakespeare's language yields rich dividends, making it extremely accessible, deeply engaging and forms the basis for some strong performances. Richard Haratine's Macbeth is no Mama's boy spurned on against his conscience, but a man fell victim of absolute power corrupting absolutely. Haratine's commanding Macbeth dominates all those around him and his increasing descent into madness is portrayed with utter conviction. Elizabeth Mason as his partner in crime, the shrewd Lady Macbeth, is the perfect hostess, full of charm, warmth and a quiet authority, offering a wine goblet with an effected smile while clutching a dagger behind her back. Guilt may come to her in her sleep, but awake she is ruthless and lethal. Mason's Lady Macbeth is a model of self control and her despair of losing the power already won, and her inability to prevent her husband's destructive madness, avoids histrionics and Mason's performance is all the more compelling for it. Together, Haratine and Mason play against each other beautifully, revealing a balanced contrast of opposites united by their lust.

This story of murder and intrigue is fleshed out with some equally strong performances. Tim Hystad's, Banquo, Macbeth's friend who is ultimately betrayed, is a quiet, yet powerful presence. Jonathan Brooks', Malcolm, the rightful successor to the throne, brings an understated, but convincing strength which rallies those to his cause. Foremost of these is Alex Organ's McDuff, whose compelling performance has him visibly transform from a sort of interested bystander to a fighting rival to match Macbeth in a pivotal scene when he learns the fate of his family. David Coffee, alternately playing King Duncan, the Doctor and an Old Man, subtly differentiates his various roles with a skillful use of gesture. Robert W.L. Krecklow as the Porter, provides some delightful comic relief.

Trinity's *Macbeth* is a visual spectacle and a master class in attention to detail, best seen in Morgan McClure, Kelsey Milbourn and Sophie Smith as the three witches. From makeup, to movement, to voice, to costume, right down to the whites of their eyes, nothing has been left to chance. Aaron Patrick Turner's costumes don't simply attire the actors, but create an entire world of their own whose rich atmosphere and texture is not just convincing, it's almost palpable. These form a striking contrast with Brian Clinnin's set design, a barren, rocky landscape with a single, withered tree which adapts itself effortlessly to a castle court yard or battlefield, and its dark, gapping maw of a cave looms at all times like a gateway to madness inhabited by dark and mysterious forces. Michael Skinner's light design brings forth the sinister shadows and silhouettes that hover menacingly in the mind and seems to steep the stage with an undercurrent of violence and blood. But real blood abounds during some well executed murders and frenetic battles choreographed by fight director, Eric Dourmet. If there is one area that doesn't work quite as effectively it is music,

with Celtic overtones reminiscent of Enya and wailing bagpipes that were a little too obvious, but Toby Jaguar Algya's haunting soundscape creates an overpowering sense of danger and darkness.

Macbeth is demanding, and at almost three hours is demanding of the audience. But Trinity's *Macbeth*, never feels like an endurance test. Rather it is a powerful, energetic, visceral experience drenched in blood, murder and madness.

Macbeth runs at the Hay's Theatre, TCU Campus, [Fort Worth](#), June 11th– June 26th.

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