

Macbeth

by Eleanor Sutcliffe

I went to see Macbeth on the 10th of August, regarded as one of the Bard's darkest tragedies, illustrating the damaging physical and psychological effects of ambition on those who quench for power; it was certainly interesting and rather ironic to see it staged in Kings College, a highly renowned place of learning, additionally, and certainly a real contrast with the beautiful scenery of the garden to a gory, hate-filled battlefield. Though I'd studied the play in Year 9 and had to write an essay on the personage of Lady Macbeth, I felt rather ignorant towards the play and its themes, and in a way had lost some understanding; so was more than delighted to take the chance to go and see it with a hope to take the chance to learn something.

I was certainly not disappointed. From start to finish, the audience were taken on a captivatingly disconcerting journey into the psychological darkness of humans and the demons within us. The witches, at the start, were excellently performed with the presentation of three figures with different, but creepily disturbing psychological problems. One particular moment was when one of the witches brutally launched herself on Banquo, and sent a chilling, icy breath through the audience.

Harry Anton made a huge impression in the title role of Macbeth, with his strong, enthralling presence, especially when he descended into some sort of monstered madness. This really empathised the psychological consequences of ambition, and how our actions bring to life the hidden depths where one would dare not to go. From starting of as proudly stable, then like a senseless puppy desperate to please his wife, to then into some sort of demonic figure believing himself to be invincible was really quite freaky but also awe-inspiring to watch. When he put on the black over his eyes of his white face, was very powerful and even watching him and how he demean the audience made me want to run away. Another moment was how he murdered a fellow character as he said the famous 'tomorrow and tomorrow' monologue.

Another credit must go to Katherine Swan as the twisted Lady Macbeth, wrapping her husband round her little finger so he can feed her ambition. Though it's questionable as to who the real villain or conductor in her relationship with Macbeth. One of my favourite scenes was when she angrily threw herself on Macbeth at his guilt of his vile, cowardly deed. There was certainly much to learn from watching her, particularly as Lady Macbeth herself descended into the depths of insanity, particularly notable in her monologue admitting her part in Duncan's murder.

The chemistry between these little dignified characters was very well done and the sexual images as implied in the text really brought something incredible to this abhorrent theme of the play.

Banquo was fantastically played by Max Sterne, having enjoyed watching him in another one of Shakespeare's tragedies this year and in Merchant of Venice last year, there were certainly contrasts. But again, Max gave a brilliant performance as the unfortunate

fated Banquo, former friend of Macbeth. Though maybe Shakespeare was trying to bring across of paranoia takes control of one's mind and commands our instincts which was represented with Macbeth having Banquo murdered to feed this.

I was particularly gripped by Max's performance in the banquet scene when we saw Banquo's ghost appear covered in blood with a grotesquely demented look in his eyes as he pierced his gaze on Macbeth as he cowered in fear. This was definitely a memorable highlight of the play. The powerful ending of the play was aided by his dramatic second death as Young Seward.

Rob Goll gave a very prodigious performance as MacDuff, that I can't imagine anyone else doing the role. This was most powerful as he skulked around the audience, circling in a flamed rage to meet Macbeth in mortal combat. The fight certainly had me hanging on the edge of my seat though I couldn't take my eyes off what was happening.

Alexandra Parker, Amanda Maddison and Alexander Gordon-Wood all did a superb job multi-rolling. Certainly the scene between the comical porter resembling a humorous parody of a Billy Connelly character and the impish Halloween dressed character antics was very entertaining and lightened the atmosphere. This was very effective as though entertaining really brought a sickening kind of sense that the audience were laughing after a character's grotesque murder. Perhaps this was to emphasise the different parts of what makes us human.

Amanda's physical energy throughout this whole festival is something really noteworthy and I really learnt a lot from watching her. Alexander also had a wonderful energy which was present in every part he played.

Remembering Alexandra fondly from Love Labours Lost, I looked forward to seeing her again in a dissimilar piece as this. Once again she impressed me in the roles of one of the witches, Lady Macduff and Lady Macbeth's servant. This was most particular in her desperate cries for mercy in the scene where she and her child were murdered as ordered by Macduff. The image they left was very powerful, and really well let the play progress to the end.

Richard Blackman also did a brilliant job in the supporting role of Ross and others. He too had fantastic energy which was evident whenever he came on stage. A particular moment was when he came on at the end to announce the crowning of a new king, which brought the play to a relieving end.

A mention must also go to Adam Boyle in the roles of Malcolm and the Murderer sent out to do Macbeth's dirty work for him. The point where he creepily smiled upon hearing the murders of Macduff's family and his cries of grief, though inappropriate and quite self-absorbing worked very well. Also, when he appeared in a rather ghost like manner but with elements of an animal about to go in for the kill to murder Banquo there was real sickening sense which made the play even more powerful and memorable.

Macbeth was an absolutely incredible play to watch, and I would give full marks to everyone involved. The energy, commitment and skill was just mesmerising to see, and I really came away feeling as though I'd learnt a lot.

The standard rises every year, and this play really showed off what the festival can really put together which has made me want to come and be a part of the festival even more.

Well done everyone, thank you so much for such an awesome evening! 😊

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