

Shakespeare gets sexy with "Fleetwood Macbeth"



"Lady Macbeth" (Lisa Valenzuela) and "Macbeth" (Morgan Rusler) in Troubadour Theater Company's Fleetwood Macbeth playing at the Falcon Theatre. (Photo courtesy of Chelsea Sutton)

By Dink O'Neal

July 14, 2011 | 5:22 p.m.

Those masters of murderous mirth who make up the Troubadour Theatre Company are back again at the Falcon Theatre in Burbank, this time with a rocking Shakespearean revival called "Fleetwood Macbeth."

The work, which premiered at the Falcon Theatre in January of 2004, is a wild-eyed rendition of one of Shakespeare's famous tragedies augmented by rock band Fleetwood Mac's memorable music catalogue.

Director Matt Walker has dusted off and refreshed the earlier adaptation, emphasizing the bard's renowned text by tightening the show's comic smorgasbord.

Which is not to say that the proceedings don't run the gamut from giggles to groans, gasps to guffaws and, in a couple of truly outrageous moments, scream-out-loud laughter.

Witnessing the rehearsal process as this wacky group concocts such mayhem might be just as entertaining as the final outcome.

Following an amusing pre-show cavalcade introducing myriad characters, the production takes flight with the remarkably talented Morgan Rusler in the title role and Lisa Valenzuela as his homicide-inspiring spouse.

Rusler expertly displays both sides of the comic coin with a flawless mix of dry wit and clownish shtick.

This, coupled with his heartfelt recitation of Macbeth's monologue lamenting his wife's death, demonstrates why Rusler is a standout amongst Southern California's acting community.

Valenzuela's impish grin and smoky vocal timbre make her song stylings the perfect match. Her duet version, with Rusler, of "Say You Love Me," as well as her solo rendition of "Dreams," is noteworthy.

Walker himself inhabits the role of Banquo who, following a toe-tapping performance of "Go Your Own Way" with Rusler, is dispatched to the afterlife, taking up residence as a recurring ghostly visage.

Award-winning comedienne Beth Kennedy plays Hecate, a goddess that leads her coven of scantily clad witches through many of the show's musical numbers.

Wearing costumer Sharon McGunigle's figure-flattering lingerie-like designs, it's easy to see why these nine witches are preferable to Shakespeare's traditional trio.

Troubie veterans Evan Arnold, Andy Lopez, Joseph Keane and Brandon Breault are back as various Scottish nobles while newcomers Rob Nagle, channeling Sean Connery as the murdered King Duncan, and Jason Turner — manipulating a puppet through a show-stopping slow-motion martial-arts fight sequence choreographed by Ken Merckx — further sweeten this pool of talent.

Supporting nods go to musical director Eric Heinly and his onstage combo, as well as to vocal director Rachael Lawrence and sound designer Julie Ferrin for nary a dropped lyric.

Production values, courtesy of Mike Jespersen's scenery, Jeremy Pivnick's lighting and Corey Womack's stage management, are equally well done.

Fleetwood Mac's signature hit wraps up the show perfectly while offering sage advice to local theatergoers. "Don't Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow)," get your tickets today.