

STAGESCENELA

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Fleetwood Macbeth



WOW!

FLEETWOOD MACBETH

The Troubies are back with their musical spoof of Macbeth. Though The Scottish Play and The British-American Rock Band might not at first glance seem made for each other, once Lisa Valenzuela as Lady

Macbeth has started belting out Stevie Nicks tunes in Nicks patented flowing robes and batwing sleeves, it's clear that the Troubies are on to something, and that the audience will be all the more entertained for it. It would be hard to count the newsmakers referenced in the show's scripted and unscripted lines, but Fleetwood Macbeth doesn't forget its Shakespearean roots. On the other hand, these abovementioned characters may not be quite what you remember, and not simply because of their humungous prosthetic Hobbits feet. It goes without saying that those lucky enough to have tickets to Fleetwood Macbeth will be having a Troubadourtastic time!

FULL-LENGTH REVIEW

They've done As You Like It as "As U2 Like It," A Winter's Tale as "A Wither's Tale," Much Ado About Nothing as "Much Adoobie Brothers About Nothing," A Midsummer Night's Dream as "A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream," and Hamlet as "Hamlet The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Of Denmark." Now, the Troubadour Theater Company (affectionately nicknamed The Troubies) are back with a revival of their 2004 musical spoof of Macbeth, which they've titled "Fleetwood Macbeth."

As U2, Bill Withers, Doobie Brothers, Saturday Night Fever, and Prince slash Troubies fans can tell you, Fleetwood Macbeth (like its predecessors) finds ways to fit hit songs into Shakespeare plots, with an emphasis on the outrageous and the adlibbed. Though The Scottish Play and The British-American Rock Band might not at first glance seem made for each other, once Lisa Valenzuela as Lady Macbeth has started belting out Stevie Nicks tunes in Nicks patented flowing robes and batwing sleeves, it's clear that the Troubies are on to something, and that the audience will be all the more entertained for it.

The show opens with several Troubies trademarks—a one-by-one introduction of each character, audience participation (this time four lucky gents get to be bad guy soldiers and even dance a bit before being slain in battle), and a rousing chorus of "You're So Late" sung to the unfortunate tardy to the tune of "You're So Vain."

It would be hard to count the newsmakers referenced in the show's scripted and unscripted lines, but Schwarzenegger's love child, drug-addled Charlie Sheen, the Palin otherwise known as Sarah, the

impending 405 closure (aka Carmageddon), and Weiner's online wiener all make cameo appearances, and there are numerous SoCalcentric jokes, e.g. "Silverlake, the New Echo Park." There's also a more-than-hilarious "Is this a dagger I see before me" dream sequence which features quite possibly the longest series of puns in Troubies history: "Is this a gagger (Mick Jagger, lollygagger, swagger, on-the-ragger) I see before me?"

Still, Fleetwood Macbeth (you can say the word in a theater if it's part of the play) doesn't forget its Shakespearean roots, with King Duncan, Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm, Ross, Seyton, and Hecate all central figures alongside the titular Thane of Glamis and Cawdor and his evil, plotting spouse.

On the other hand, these abovementioned characters may not be quite what you remember from your favorite high school, community theater, or Free Shakespeare In The Park production, and not simply because of their humungous prosthetic Hobbits feet. Duncan (Rob Nagle) is a gargantuanly bare-and-barrel-chested Sean Connery wannabe; Banquo none other than Troubie's head honcho Matt Walker in Scottish brogue ('nuff said); Macduff an Afroed noble who doubles as his two-foot-tall baby self; Malcolm (Joseph Keane) a fey surfer with shoulder-length blond hair and a thing for big beefy soldiers; Lennox (Andy Lopez) a loveable lug of a nobleman; Ross (Evan Arnold); an occasionally wig-challenged messenger; Seyton (Brandon Breault) a 1980s heavy metal skater with an evil glint in the eye to match his name's devilish homonym; and Hecate (Beth Kennedy) the sole non-babelicious witch amongst eight sultry bustiered and fishnetted glamazons. Each deserves a paragraph of praise for his (or her) terrific work here.

Director Walker and his band of uniquely gifted triple-threats fit in a fair number of Fleetwood Mac hits, including "Go Your Own Way," "Landslide," "Chain," "Tusk," and "Gold Dust Woman" with lyrics tweaked to fit the onstage action, but there seem to be fewer than usual. (I counted only one song in the first half hour or so of the show.) The best are those performed by the dazzling vocal powerhouse that is Valenzuela, and those that turn into great big production numbers choreographed by Nadine Ellis, Christine Lakin, and Monica Scheider and performed by the hottest eight-witch coven you've likely ever seen: Annalea Rawicz Arnold, Heidi Brucker, Marissa Ingrassi, Erin Matthews, Tammy Minoff, Darrin

Revitz, Schneider, and Jan Seifert, with Margaret Hamilton-lookalike Hecate (the always game Kennedy) making it nine.

If I've left the title character for last, it's simply that Morgan Rusler ends up being the best in just about any show he's in, whether in dramatic mode in *Driving Miss Daisy* and *All My Sons*, in comedic mode in *The Foreigner*, or in Troubies mode in *The First Jo-el* and *It's A Stevie Wonderful Life*. Not surprisingly, Rusler's sad sack of a Macbeth gets his fair share of laughs, but equally unsurprising, his soliloquizing to "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, To the last syllable of recorded time" would not be out of place in any summer Shakespeare festival.

Troubies musical director/drummer extraordinaire Eric Heinly is once again masterfully in charge of the four-piece onstage band. Vocal director Rachael Lawrence gets the entire cast harmonizing to perfection. Mike Jespersen's set design is the usual simple-but-functional one you expect at a Troubadour show, where it's the lighting (sensational as always from Jeremy Pivnick) and costumes (big thumbs up to Sharon McGunigle) that dazzle. Julie Ferrin's sound design is another terrific one. Corey Womack does double duty as producer and stage manager.

Troubies shows are always big-ticket draws at the Falcon, and with mid-week shows nixed this time around, ticket-buyers this late in the game may well hear their own version of "You're So Late" at the ticket window. I had a blast on Opening Night. It goes without saying that those lucky enough to have their tickets in hand or at Will Call will be having an equally Troubadourtastic time!

Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Drive, Burbank. Through August 14.
Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00, Saturdays and Sundays at 4:00. No Shows July 15-17. Reservations: 818 955-8101
www.falcontheatre.com

--Steven Stanley

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Photos: Chelsea Sutton