

Shakespeare's Macbeth

Antaeus Company at Deaf West
Theatre



Bo Foxworth and Ann Noble
Daniel Blinkoff

July 12–Aug. 26. 5112
Lankershim Blvd. Free parking
is available in the uncovered
Citibank lot on Lankershim just
south of Otsego. Thu–Fri 8pm,
Sat 2pm and 8pm, Sun 2pm.
Running time 2 hours, 45
minutes, including intermission.
\$30-34. (818) 506-1983.

www.Antaeus.org

<http://goo.gl/maps/B6Gn>

Reviewed by Dany Margolies

Are we, as an educated audience, expected to know exactly when Macbeth “turns”—when the pathologically evil ambition overtakes his soul? Or must the change in him be left open to interpretation? The answer may determine which cast to see in this double-cast production of Shakespeare’s “Scottish play,” illuminatingly directed by Jessica Kubzansky.

All the dramatis personae are introduced to the audience in Kubzansky’s prologue—not the only interesting emendation to the play but certainly the first and most apparent. The Macbeths are burying their dead infant, while fellow families come to mourn, spilling onto the stage, wearing sashes in the plaids of their real-life clans to establish for the audience, early on, the characters’ relationships (costume design by Jessica Olson). There, Rob Nagle’s Macbeth weeps openly for his child, whereas Bo Foxworth’s Macbeth holds it together until he is alone. Their Lady Macbeths join in the rending of garments. And so, the director seems to be saying, out of the deepest grief parents can feel, some succumb to the darkness within.

One of the not-dark aspects of this production is the depth of talent onstage. Between Kubzansky and text coach Armin Shimerman—who shares the role of Ross with the equally articulate John Sloan—even the “minor” players on the stage know whereof they speak. Christian Barillas and Brian Tichnell are exceptionally fine as young Malcolm, and minds may wander to imagine them taking on the title role in a few years.

The witches are played by veteran stage actors Fran Bennett, Susan Boyd, Jane Carr, Sandra McClain, Joyce Lorna Raver, and Elizabeth Swain—and could have kept the audience’s attention all evening with their clear, distinctive interpretation of the dialogue. Notably, Kubzansky brings them to the banquet; Banquo’s ghost is in Macbeth’s mind only.

Among the more differing of the portrayals are Tessa Auberjonois and Ann Noble as Lady Macbeth. Auberjonois introduces her as initially insecure and paints her with realism, even her

extreme ambition, which makes hers the more terrifying portrayal. Noble begins as heightened, one might say “theatrical,” but the actor offers so much insight into the language that hers might be the more cerebrally interesting performance. So which cast to see?

Assuming the characters are changing as a result of their grief, sadness guides Nagle’s Macbeth down his path, while anger motivates Foxworth’s Macbeth. And, in answer to the question of the character’s turning point, Foxworth seems to begin changing with the witches’ first prophecy. One may not even notice the change in Nagle.

Certainly both Macbeths can keep an audience in thrall. On opening weekend, the house was completely silent and still during Nagle’s “Is this a dagger which I see before me” speech; next night at the same point during Foxworth’s delivery, an audience member turned to see whether a dagger indeed hung in the air.

Tom Buderwitz’s set is an outdoors-indoors affair, with seating that appears to be rocky benches or draped chaises longues, as circumstances demand. A back gate somewhat hidden by a sturdy tree allows the witches to disappear into Scottish mists. John Zalewski’s subtle sound design surrounds the audience with weather effects, animal calls, and general malaise. Jeremy Pivnick’s lighting creates frosty days, eerie nights, and, upon Malcolm’s accession to the throne, thawing sunlight.

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