

FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2012

review - Macbeth



**Guest reviewer
Steve Peterson**

**CRITIC'S PICK
*Macbeth***

by William Shakespeare
directed by Jessica Kubzansky
Antaeus Theatre
through August 26



Paul Culos, Ned Schmidtke, Christian Barillas

Photo by Daniel G. Lam

Macbeth, don't wait until tomorrow or tomorrow or tomorrow ...

The funeral of a baby, the grieving parents look for reasons why their child should be taken from them. Finding no reason but the caprice of fate, the couple moves forward to exercise that caprice on those around them. Their hope for immortality through their child dashed, they will live on through infamy. As one begins in amoral certitude and descends to a moral madness, the other travels the road from moral doubt to a profane confidence to awful self-knowledge, neither losing sight of the love and loss that propelled their actions.

The Antaeus Company's new production of Shakespeare's ***Macbeth***, directed by Jessica Kubzansky, is a spare and compelling telling of the

story of a couple that loved too well. She moves her cast briskly from that opening funeral to the final fight and restoration of order and peace. Her focus is ever on what tells the story and moves it forward. She trusts the text and has her actors do the same. The play flows in a continuous motion that is easy to follow, never rushed and never predictable.



Kimiko Gelman

Photo by Daniel G. Lam

Antaeus is famous for double casting its productions. “The Thanes” were on for Sunday afternoon’s performance with Rob Nagle and Tessa Auberjonois heading the cast as the bloody couple. From that heartbreaking opening funeral—director Kubzansky’s invention which informs the rest of the play—the couple’s intensity and depth of feeling for each other is riveting. Mr. Nagle gives the lord a humanity that is by turns appealing and appalling. Ms Auberjonois’ descent into madness is truly effective.

They are supported by a very skilled cast. Standouts include: Ned Schmidtke doubling as Duncan, the ill-fated good king, is wise and robust, and as Seyton, the steward of the house, is funny and treacherous. Lorna Raver, Jane Carr and Sandra McClain as the three witches instill a sense of security—false and otherwise—whether showing up at the funeral, on the heath or as surprise banquet guests. Ramon De Campo’s Banquo is a man sure of what he is: a good and faithful soldier and a loving father. Daniel Blinkoff as Macduff and Armin Shimerman as Ross fill their roles with strength and pathos. Ross’ informing Macduff of the slaughter of his “pretty chickens and their dam” is among the most spare and effective scenes in the play.



Rob Nagle and Tessa Auberjonois

Photo by Daniel G. Lam

The stage is almost bare, paneled in dappled gray with three strategically placed boulders and breaks of bare trees, their branches tipped in blood, and an inner above. The fog comes in and out and the lights shift and move with the action. Tom Buderwitz's set and Jeremy Pivnick's lights are as much a character in the play as any of the cast, creating mood and reflecting the emotion and allowing for the flow of action which never lags as it builds to its inevitable conclusion. They are aided by a subtle sound design by John Zalewski.

Jessica Olson's modern/traditional mash-up of plain cloth kilts with tartan accents add to the spare telling of the tale.

Shakespeare is everywhere in the summer in the Southland. From Thousand Oaks to Orange County to San Diego you can find the Bard's works being presented in a variety of outdoor settings. Antaeus' indoor and very intimate production does not require the bringing of blankets or lawn chairs. Nor will you miss a word to the croaking of frogs or the passing of a helicopter or nearby traffic. All you need bring is a love of great, straightforward and very human storytelling.

5 out of 5 stars



Kimiko Gelman on the balcony Below: Jane Carr, Lorna Raver, Saundra McClain

Photo by Daniel G. Lam

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