



Move over Freud and Jung: It's Dr. Shakespeare

July 28, 2012 By [Ed Rampell](#)



Bo Foxworth and Ann Noble

T rue confession: Until I attended the Antaeus Company's luminous production of *MacBeth*, I had never actually read or seen a stage or screen adaptation of the Scottish play, as it is called. Sure, when I was a lad I attended *MacBird!*, the 1967 satire that combined elements of *MacBeth* with the JFK assassination. And I was familiar enough with Shakespeare's immortal lines to know that "Out, out damn spot!" was not Dick and Jane chasing a dog away from their home.

The good news is that Antaeus' rendering of the Bard's tragedy about power mad social climbers made *MacBeth* well worth the wait for me. The ensemble's admirable acting, which ranges from the psychopathological to the vaudevillian, is adeptly directed by Jessica Kubzansky. Antaeus has a full double cast — the "Kinsmen" and the "Thanes" — of around 20 players each tackling the production on alternate nights. At the premiere the Kinsmen performed, with Bo Foxworth and a not so noble Ann Noble portraying the murderous schemers who would be king and queen of Scotland.



Adam Meyer and Bo Foxworth

The Antaeus version opens not with the trio of witches, but with a bit of poetic license, adding an entire scene that's only suggested by the drama's actual dialogue. In it, MacBeth (Foxworth) and Noble (Lady MacBeth) lament the death of their infant. The loss drives the couple to the brink and actually supplies an explanation for their subsequent power grabbing behavior. Unable to control the course of the natural world (childbirth), in a bizarre form of compensation, the MacBeths seek to seize state power and run the government so they will have some sense of control over a capricious world.

This prelude enhances insight into the lead characters' motivations and enriches the play's innately psychological text and texture. With her sheer will to power, come hell or high water, Noble is chilling as she pushes her husband to perform heinous deeds in order to attain then maintain the throne. Along with Hamlet, that other tragedy about those who wear the crown uneasily upon their troubled heads, *MacBeth* is arguably Shakespeare's most psychological play.



Elizabeth Swain, Fran Bennett, and Susan Boyd Joyce

Indeed, MacBeth says to the Doctor (Steve Hofvendahl) about his sleepless, guilt wracked wife: “Cure her of that. Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, Raze out the written troubles of the brain And with some sweet oblivious antidote Cleanse the stuff’d bosom of that perilous stuff Which weighs upon the heart?” Well, what is this if not a prescription for creating psychoanalysis, some 250-plus years before Freud?

But as the personal is also the political, Shakespeare elevates his drama beyond the realm of the mind and into statecraft. Although it’s rarely, if ever remarked upon, a recurring Shakespearean theme is the toppling of bad rulers by a more righteous wing of the elite, which seeks to set things right. This faction fighting leitmotif runs through many of the Bard’s epics, including: *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Measure for Measure*, *Julius Caesar* and but of course *MacBeth*.

There are too many actors to cite them all but allow me to single out Peter Van Norden as a droll Seyton (he also doubles as Duncan), Joe Holt as Banquo and James Sutorius as MacDuff. Foxworth plays MacBeth as if he has a Napoleonic complex, seeking to make up through swordplay, murder and mayhem what he lacks in stature. Returning to Noble as Lady MacBeth, she is the ultimate henpecker, ever prodding her beleaguered husband on. She’s more terrifying than Scotland’s other infamous horror, the Loch Ness Monster. Noble is positively harrowing with her crimson locks and reddish period outfit, all redolent of her blood obsessed psyche costumed by Jessica Olson, who effectively garbs the rest of the cast in kilts, gowns and armor. (But where was that bagpipes player to complete the scene?)

Scenic Designer Tom Buderwitz, who brilliantly crafted a faithful replica of a British pub in the same playhouse where Antaeus presented Noël Coward’s WWII era *Peace in Our Time*, has worked his magic again on the diminutive stage, with sets that conjure up castles and misty Scottish moors. One can almost smell the heather...

Of course, the real star of this production remains Shakespeare, that inventor of proto-psychoanalysis. As Humanism swept Europe the Bard’s ultimate gift was to dramatize the “double toil and trouble” of the cauldron of the mind.

Had he put quill to parchment and wrote the phone book, every time one looked a number up he or she would laugh or weep. Antaeus' hair raising production does the playwright from Stratford-upon-Avon proud.

MacBeth is being performed Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. through Aug. 26 at the [The Antaeus Company](#), 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. For more info: (818)506-1983.

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