

The Antaeus Company Delivers an Expert Production of "Macbeth"



Bo Foxworth and Ann Noble in the Antaeus Company production of "Macbeth". Photo - Daniel Blinkoff

Macbeth has never been my favorite Shakespeare play. I don't have anything against it, but it's never spoken to me in the way *King Lear* or *Hamlet* has, doesn't have quite the flights of poetical brilliance. That being said, when the combined talents of the Antaeus Company take on a particular work, it's always worthy of one's time. The new production of *Macbeth* is expertly done, highlighted by Jessica Kubzansky's deft direction and superb performances from its two lead actors.

Antaeus, as always, double-casts its shows. This review is specifically of the "Kinsmen" cast. Bo Foxworth impresses as Macbeth, initially guilty and hesitant and finally murderously reckless in a powerful turn. He's especially fine in a scene where he displays Macbeth's charisma and ruthlessness in convincing a pair of assassins to kill Banquo, and he sells the "tale told by an idiot" speech with wonderful wounded vehemence. Ann Noble offers a more sympathetic Lady Macbeth interpretation than one often sees, but it makes sense,

considering that the character is not initially an evil person and has to steel herself for the murder and its subsequent cover-up. She excels in a late scene at a banquet, her husband raving at visions, where she has to quickly take on the role of gracious hostess before their crimes are revealed to all, the parameters of the ongoing nightmare she's in just beginning to be revealed.

Peter Van Norden does strong work in two roles, from the noble King Duncan to the ignoble Seyton, getting good comic mileage from the "porter of Hell Gate" monologue. James Sutorious is properly grief-stricken and vengeful as the wronged Macduff, but Joe Holt seems a bit monochromatic as Banquo, using the same hearty delivery in every scene whether merited or not. Finally, Fran Bennett, Susan Boyd Joyce and Elizabeth Swain bring a welcome level of subtlety and realism to their work, something that can rarely be said about the trio of Witches in other productions.

Director Kubzansky keeps things moving with a propulsive pace, not getting bogged down in scenes of troop movements and such, and she tweaks the play in a couple of ways, one that works and one that doesn't. The former change is the addition of an original scene at the very beginning of the story, a silent funeral for the child of the Macbeths (a child that is implied in the actual play but never seen) that reconfigures the rash actions of Macbeth and his wife to those of parents changed by grief. The latter change is the inclusion of a scene with Hecate that is rarely performed in modern productions. Considering how it adds nothing but confusion, one can see why.

Tom Buderwitz's bi-level set of trees and boulders suits the rugged feel of the play, and the occasional use of props such as tables and chairs for inside scenes is unobtrusive. Jeremy Pivnick's lighting heightens the sense of psychological tension, from the red glowing portal leading toward Macbeth's initial murders to the way light and shadow frame Lady Macbeth as she nervously awaits the return of her husband from his killing spree. John Zalewski's sound design mirrors the play's theme of how murder skews the natural world into the supernatural, using naturalistic sound effects as well as an unnerving rattling noise for later scenes of madness, as if masses of chittering insects buzz within the damned Macbeth's skull.

"Macbeth" plays through Aug. 26 at the Antaeus Company. Tickets are available [online](#).

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