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The Acting Company's production of Macbeth is dark and powerful



Megan McQuillan, Kaitlin O'Neal, and Deb Heinig as the haunting prophetic witches in William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. Photo by Richard Termine for The Acting Company.

Bermuda Festival Review by Robin Holder

The Acting Company production of Macbeth at City Hall on opening night presented a gripping psychological thriller of one man's lust for power and his tragic downfall.

William Shakespeare's play contains some of the most sublime poetry in the Bard's cannon and Matt Sullivan's rendering of the title role did not fail to express the beauty of his language. The memorable soliloquies delivered by Mr. Sullivan resonated with passion and exuberance.

Directed by Eve Shapiro, the opening scenes of this drama unfold with a vibrant and frenetic energy as the audience is introduced to the principal characters who become complicit in an orgy of violence and foul deeds. With a minimalist stage design, the supernatural is resurrected when the witches (Deb Heinig, Megan McQuillan and Kaitlin O'Neal) appear shrouded in billowing black attire to deliver their prophecy to Macbeth.

Michael Chybowski's lighting effects evoke a feeling of dread and foreboding as the cast emerge from shadows and dark corners to send a chill through the theatre and Fitz Patton's sound design also added authenticity to the intrigues of this Scottish kingdom. It didn't require much manipulation or skulduggery from the witches for Macbeth to hatch his diabolical plan to kill king Duncan played by William Brock.

The question was raised as to what extent Macbeth is a victim of powers beyond his own control but here, Macbeth appeared more inclined to explore his dark side. Mr. Sullivan's Macbeth is only too keen to blindly follow his destructive ego but it didn't help matters that he had an equally megalomaniac partner in the form of Lady Macbeth (Carine Montbertrand). Her performance made it seem plausible that this man lauded for his military prowess on the battlefield should fall prey to the ambitious schemes of a woman who exceeded him in ruthlessness, cold calculation and cruelty.



Carine Montbertrand's Lady Macbeth reaches the brink of madness in The Acting Company's latest production of the Shakespeare classic. Photo by Richard Termine for The Acting Company.

(Continued on reverse)

Shakespeare revisited: The Acting Company's 'Macbeth' opens at City Hall

(Continued from page 1)

Ms. Montbertrand's presence was intoxicating as she writhed on stage drunk with the idea of achieving the trappings of power and she brought an element of levity as well as mendacity to the role. When Macbeth experiences doubts and remorse after murdering Duncan, she is the one to act resolutely in ensuring the brutal deed was completed.

Mr. Sullivan ably confronts the personal demons which possess Macbeth. During the scene of Banquo's ghost, Mr. Sullivan delivered a convincing display of paranoia and psychological trauma and was physically threatening to his entourage on stage, missing them by inches when he swung some chairs above their heads. But even as the storm clouds gather around him there is still a sense that there is a poet aware of the vicissitudes of fortune which can alter a man's destiny, a set of circumstances he called a sick joke.



Matt Sullivan in the title role 'Macbeth.'
Photo by Richard Termine for The Acting Company.

...Mr. Sullivan delivered a convincing display of paranoia and psychological trauma...

In supporting roles Cedric Hayman as Banquo brought an eloquence to the role as the misguided friend of Macbeth. Mr. Hayman's natural flair for character exposition was a delight to observe and as Banquo he garnered sympathy as a loyal friend deluded by the witches prophecy and betrayed unjustly.

Chad Hoepfner's Macduff is suitably torn by the desire for revenge and Spencer Aste's Porter was hilarious. On stage for a brief interlude this charming rogue caused fits of laughter from the audience for his lewd behaviour.

The return of the Acting Company was most welcome to Bermuda Festival 2006. ♦