

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most well-known scripts and often considered something of a taboo within the world of theatre. The main theme centres around destruction from ambition. Director Susanne Crosby achieves a childhood ambition of bringing her favourite piece of Shakespeare to life whilst successfully avoiding any destruction.

The Barn Theatre is a delightful venue, one I am very familiar with having been both on and off stage numerous times over the last decade. It lends an "old" feeling to a play like Macbeth which is very fitting.

Performed in the round, the stage is sparsely populated with the only real set being the witches pot and a tree in one "corner". There is always a danger performing in the round that the actors fail to engage with the audience on all sides. Inevitably, there were parts which I missed however, Susanne's clever direction ensured this was kept to a minimum. For me, the most distracting part was the lack of wings and seeing the actors creep down the sides of the audience from the corner of my eye. Because of the proximity to the audience, no microphones were used (which negated any sound problems) and credit should be given to the whole cast who delivered lines with clear diction and at a good volume.

The lighting was simple, perhaps a little too so, with subtle changes in hues depending on the mood and characters on stage. I felt the lighting could have been focussed more on the stage as the audience were lit for the most part, again occasionally distracting from the performance.

The costumes were excellently done (apart from a rogue pair of Nike trainers) and the wardrobe team should be commended.

The scene changes, carried out by the actors, were swift. These were covered in recorded music which sounded a little too modern for the traditional setting. There were a couple of times a piece was played which seemed to very closely resemble the theme tune of current superhero franchise.

The play, which is written in five acts, carried a good pace throughout with the dialogue delivered clearly and concisely. It is commendable that the deliverance of Shakespeare's language felt as fluent as modern-day language. Despite the excellent pace, at over 90 minutes long until the interval, the first "half" did feel a tad long.

There were strong performances from all the cast. Guy Steddon, as the titular character, gave an assured and measured performance, John Garland deeply impressed as Banquo, Kane Magee as Malcom and Sam Razavi as Lennox were confident and engaging, David Aitchison

showed an excellent range by portraying Donalbain, Menteith and a Murderer, each with a distinct different persona, and finally, the witches. Katie Hunwick, Nettie Sheridan and Emily Hale's portrayal was haunting. Their entrance, which drew gasps from the audience, really sent shivers down my spine. The chemistry between them was intense and reciting chants and spells, back to back, in perfect synchronicity was testament to the talent these three actresses clearly ooze in abundance.

For me, there were **three stand out performances**. **Phil Nair-Brown's** portrayal of Macduff was superb. **Dan Dryer** commanded the stage whenever he appeared. His tone and inflection particularly impressed and I found myself watching him even when he was not speaking. Finally, **Jacqueline Harper** as Lady Macbeth was incredible. I would run out of superlatives trying to praise her performance which contained true depth and emotion. From her darker side to her final breakdown, she showed a magnificence in every facet of character.

Being exceptionally nit-picky, there were a few things which caught my eye; King Duncan did not seem to have the regal air one would expect of a Shakespearean king, Banquo could have been "bloodied" for his reappearance as a ghost, the deliverance of the news Lady Macbeth had died seemed emotionless as did Fleance seeing his father killed, the sword fights felt a little too choreographed and could have been more epic, Macbeth was still clearly breathing after his death.

All in all, the production was well executed, slick and enjoyable. I left with a deep appreciation for Shakespeare's genius, but also for the sheer hard work and dedication which had been evidently poured into the production.

**Wick Theatre Company should have no qualms in mentioning the word Macbeth in the future.**

Dan Dryer left with  
Phil Nair-Brown



Jacqueline Harper



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by Gary Walker