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BWW Reviews: Antaeus Serves Up Shakesporean Magic with MACBETH

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Tuesday, July 17, 2012; 02:07 PM - by Don Griqware

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review by Steve Peterson (guest of Don Griqware)

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

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



Kimko Gelman Photo by Daniel G. Lam

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.

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' decent 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 Saundra 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.

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.

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Don Grigware is an Ovation nominated actor and writer whose contributions to theatre through the years have included 6 years as theatre editor of NoHoLA, a contributor to LA Stage magazine and currently on his own website:

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




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