



Elizabeth Heflin as Lady Macbeth and Lee Ernst as Macbeth. (Photo credit: Paul Cerro)

Posted in: [Professional Theatre](#) on November 19, 2014 at 7:21 pm

MACBETH: A Throne Made of Blood at Resident Ensemble Players

Posted by [Ruth K. Brown](#)

It is safe to say that everyone who walked into the Roselle Center for the Arts to see the opening of MACBETH presented by the Resident Ensemble Players (REP) was unprepared for what happened during the next two hours. Whether the audience has seen multiple productions or this was their first, they undoubtedly were overwhelmed with the dark energy and negative spirits that emanated from the stage. Director Leslie

Reidel, took this classic tale of ambition and power to a new level of nightmarish cruelty. And Reidel does this with a hauntingly dark, angular, and spinning set, designed by C. David Russell, that keeps the deaths piling up and the characters plunging along in their realities. *The stage lighting used almost betrays its name by being anything but light. Thomas Hase designed degrees of darkness and areas of shape to support the unfolding criminal circumstances.* While these emotional depths are plumbed in every MACBETH production, Reidel introduced a fantastical element with the use of puppets as spirits who wander these vile grounds. Similar to early Japanese bunraku puppets, Reidel introduces these large, expressive puppets with the three witches and then continues their use throughout the production to provide additional connections to the spectral plane.

REP has a very competent ensemble of performers and Reidel pulled emotional depths and heights from them. Using the phrase “Fair is foul and foul is fair” as inspiration, Lee Ernst takes the audience on a disturbing ride as his Macbeth lets the audience know that he is aware of his destructive actions AND their dire consequences AND yet he goes on! From the initial praise heaped upon this thane who is critical to the success of his king and his country, the tide slowly turns to condemn a man who cannot control his driving evil impulses. Ernst gives the audience a performance of unusual understanding and endless energy. Ernst is a dynamo even when sitting. A Macbeth played with such passion needs a matching Lady Macbeth, and this production has one in the performance of Elizabeth Heflin. Heflin defines Lady Macbeth as a strong woman in the opening speech well aware of her husband’s weaknesses and yet deftly shows her crumbling as death and destruction follows Macbeth and so she also. Inexperienced auditioners often want to use the “crazy scene” of Lady Macbeth, but they should be warned that doing this speech in the manner of Heflin cannot be done without talent, restraint and a worthy director. Mic Matarrese portrays the betrayed and suffering Macduff with solidity and ultimate believability. Ernst and Matarrese are locked in a final sword fight that leaves the audience panting and gasping.

The ensemble literally and figuratively move the play toward its inevitable conclusion. From the stately King Duncan (Stephen Pelinski) to the bumbling porter (Dougfred Miller), each performance is passionate and fully involving.

By presenting this MACBETH in the style of Shakespeare, there was no intermission. Reidel used this decision and his cast to very effectively propel each scene forward and into the next. Two hours passes very quickly leaving one reveling in the resolution and exhausted from the journey.

Do not miss this production!

MACBETH

Written by William Shakespeare

Directed by Leslie Reidel

November 13 – December 7, 2014

Resident Ensemble Players (REP)

Thompson Theatre, Roselle Center for the Arts

Newark, DE

Box Office: 302-831-2204

www.rep.udel.edu