

You've got time for this Shakespeare

THE STARPHOENIX NOVEMBER 3, 2015

Nov. 3 to 15

AKA/Paved Event Space

Tickets \$10 to \$15

www.embracetheatre.ca

Got a minute? Got 70?

If so, you've got time for Embrace Theatre's version of Macbeth.

"We're done usually around the time there's an intermission," says director Skye Brandon.

The professional production is aimed at all audiences but particularly students.

"I think the biggest hitch for people is that they think they won't understand what's going on, which is too bad," Brandon says.

"High school is how I came in touch with Shakespeare. I can remember not being able to understand every single word, but I could still understand the story. The stories are so epic and the characters are so interesting, that's what hooked me early on."

With a short running time comes a small cast. With only five actors on board, each plays at least two roles and usually more. It makes scheduling rehearsals easy, Brandon jokes. And the small cast adds its own kind of drama to the thing.

"The actors have gotten really good at exiting as one person and, in some instances, immediately coming on right after someone else which is exciting for me to watch and a challenge for them. They're getting better and better doing it."

This Macbeth stands out for another reason: the title character is played by Kate Herriot. Brandon has dabbled with cross-casting before in his own productions of Cymbeline and Richard II and sees it as an evolution of that process.

"I thought, why not? In Shakespeare's day, the companies were all male. So why can't a female play a male character? It's kind of a shame that really good or emerging mid-career artists like Kate may never get a chance to play an interesting role like that."

And he likes what she's doing with the part.

"There's an emotional depth without overplaying it. I don't know if that's because she's a woman or not. I think it has more to do with that's the type of actor she is. She can convey a lot without having to do a lot, which I'm finding very interesting."

Note the special times and place: AKA/Paved Event Space, 424 20th Street. There are 1 p.m. matinees on Nov. 3, 4, 9 and 10 and 8 p.m. shows on Nov. 4, 7, 12 and 15.

CURTAIN CALL

The Globe: Brandon has recently returned from a fellowship at the Globe Theatre in London. The professional development opportunity had only three Canadians in it, two from Saskatchewan (Brandon and Bob Wicks) and one from Toronto. The experience was "awesome. It was jaw-dropping. It solidified a lot of things that I already believed in terms of how I approach performing it but it also gave me insights. I hope that stuff will start creeping into everything I do from now on."

Bad Luck? Macbeth is a play that superstitious theatre folks tip-toe by cautiously. Saying the actual title is a no-no, for instance. "It's so ingrained in me now I always say Mac or Mackers," says Brandon. "Not that I personally think there's a lot to it but there are people who really take it very seriously and I don't want to upset them."

Even so, no one in this production has been forced to leave the theatre and spin around three times or do whatever ritual is required to restore order to the universe, Brandon says.

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