Well worth the toil and trouble

BY CAM FULLER, THE STARPHOENIX NOVEMBER 5, 2015

Embrace Theatre has something wicked brewing.

They're taking a stab at a five-person Macbeth that runs in one act and clocks in at something like 70 minutes. And it's a blast.

All the landmark lines are there — out damn spot, strus and frets, toil and trouble, by the pricking of my thumbs — not to mention the long (hit) list of cold-blooded murders.

Kate Herriot plays Macbeth with a manly swagger and many telling looks. You don't forget she's a woman but it doesn't really matter because she's so good at what she does. Elizabeth Nepjuk's Lady Macbeth is terrifically icy and her insanity scene chilling.

As you'd expect from a show directed by someone with the experience of Skye Brandon, the language shines through clearly for the most part and you're free to sit back and watch an ill-formed murder plot unravel messily, triggering much chaos and more death.

The production values are basic with a largely bare set fitted with some background decor that the cast can exit behind. They use some plywood cubes for furniture and the cauldron but these should have been omitted. Nothing looks more like an actor lugging a set piece around than an actor lugging a set piece around.

With so many bodies to account for, there are logistical challenges in preventing the bodies from getting in the way. The solution here — having a mortally wounded person lurch for cover — doesn't seem to work; some members of the high school class watching the play on Wednesday's matinee found the self-disposal tactic kind of funny, and you can't blame them.

Donovan Scheirer, Charlie Peters and Jeanine Wildman Thrasher round out the busy cast in what amounts to a solid, entertaining and educational outing that reminds you why this oft-done play is so often done. It's killer.

Macbeth runs at the AKA/Paved Event Space, 424 20th St. W.

Run dates: 1 p.m. Nov. 9, 10; 8 p.m. Nov. 4 to 7 and 12 to 15.

More info: embracetheatre.ca

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