

METRO ARTS & CULTURE

Macbeth zombies not too Bard

THEATRE

MACBETH RE-ARISEN

By David Mence, White Whale Theatre, Trades Hall, corner Victoria and Lygon streets, Carlton, until November 23.

Running time: 150 minutes

www.whitewhaletheatre.com

Cameron Woodhead Reviewer

DAVID Mence's *Macbeth Re-Arisen* is a zombie sequel to the Scottish play.

After a successful season at the Edinburgh Festival it returns

home to shake its gory locks at Melbourne audiences.

A diabolically entertaining fusion of Shakespearean tragedy and B-grade horror, the play picks up where the Bard left off.

Macbeth (Craig Annis) has been slain by Macduff (Grant Foulkes). When the newly crowned Malcolm (Ben Ewing) refuses to grant the tyrant a Christian burial, it plays into the hands of Hecate (Pieta Farrell) and her witches (Shireen Morris, Brooke Antulov, Erin Oliver).

They use necromantic arts to resurrect Macbeth, and he soon embarks on a wild killing spree, turning most of the Scottish court into zombies and raising the corpse of his wife (Laura Maitland) along the way.

When the cowardly Fleance (Michael Finney) assumes the throne, it seems that Scotland's only hope lies with Macduff, who must quest into the maw of hell itself to stop an undead scourge laying waste to the country.

Remarkably, Mence has written the play in iambic pentameter. He has a flair for it. While there's a lot of groanworthy Shakespearean parody, there's just as much clever pastiche and occasionally, the sort of vivid and inventive homage that could sustain a scholarly hoax.

Then there are the zombies. With ghoulish make-up, bits of offal and fake blood, the actors come into their own as the play descends into a schlocky gorefest (much of it inspired by

Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* movies — Macbeth even chops off his own hand and attaches a chainsaw to the stump).

Some of the delivery could have been funnier. There's room for the actors to take a bath in the inanity; at times the irony ought to be more heavily sign-posted. And Mence's grasp of the conventions of trash horror is not as imaginative as his imitation of Elizabethan drama. But *Macbeth Re-Arisen* is still a hoot.



Laura Maitland in *Macbeth Re-Arisen*