

THEATRE REVIEW: *Macbeth Re-arisen*

By [Madeliene Wilson](#) Arts Hub | Thursday, November 20, 2008



At first impression, *Zombie Shakespeare* doesn't sound like a natural pairing of genres, but the result is an intelligent, irreverent and thoughtful take on one of the best-known literary classics (and gore movies). *Macbeth Re-arisen* is, as the title suggests, both a 'sequel' to Shakespeare's original and a zombie-genre production.

The production, performed by Melbourne theatre company White Whale Theatre at the Trades Hall, was a success at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This is no surprise. *Macbeth Re-Arisen* skilfully balances the serious and the absurd – just when the audience is drawn into a tortured soliloquy from Macduff, one of the undead will stagger on groaning, "Brains!", or a chainsaw will be introduced to the melee.

The intelligent and humorous writing of David Mence (also the director) makes this production flow easily. The dialogue is truly Shakespearean in rhythm and phraseology. And it is worth stopping and just thinking about what a tremendous feat this is – a modern play, running for a little under two hours, written in iambic pentameter. The script is engaging, easy to follow, and contains enough Shakespearean in-jokes to satisfy literary buffs.

The cast are very impressive, both in terms of physical skill such as is displayed in a fight scene between Macbeth and Macduff but also in showing the vulnerabilities and humanity of each of the characters. Laura Maitland is a memorable Lady Macbeth, managing to portray both palpable sexuality and a devious mind.

The combined efforts of Grant Foulkes as Macduff, Ananth Gopal as Lennox, and Liam McIntyre as Ross give subtle insight into the machinations behind maintaining the crown of Scotland. I especially enjoyed the truly creepy and moving performance of Alexander Aldrich as the Cripple No-Toes.

Craig Annis's portrayal of a zombie Macbeth is also extremely well-done, complete with stiff-jointed staggering and gaping neck wounds.

On that note, the make-up, costumes and special effects (mostly blood and gore) are excellent. The minimal set is evocative of the foggy tors of Scotland, the inner chamber of the King, and the Underworld in turn.

For me, the most impressive aspect of this production was how engaging it was. It would have been easy to coast along on sheer novelty value, but happily the play goes far

beyond that, to an intelligent exploration of Shakespeare's original characters. The depiction of Macduff's experiences after beheading Macbeth, especially his struggle with his conscience at the fate of his family (played out through a conversation with the spirit of his dead wife) is just one example of the literary value of the play. An examination of the essential nature of each of the Macbeths is also extrapolated into the afterlife.

All of the old hoary chestnuts from VCE Literature curriculums, such the motivations of characters the power of guilt and the role of women are given fresh life in this wonderfully original play. I highly recommend it to fans of both Shakespeare and zombies, and anyone in between.

Macbeth Re-Arises

Trades Hall, New Ballroom | Cnr Victoria and Lygon Street

8.00pm: 5-8, 12-15, 19-22 November

6.30pm: 9, 16, 23 November (Sundays)

Tickets: \$25 (full) \$20 (concession) \$15 (preview)

For bookings call Easytix 9639 0096 or visit easytix.com.au