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EFFECTS BRING MACBETH ALIVE

WHEN the Questor's production of Shakespeare's Macbeth opened with the three weird sisters giggling rather unconvincingly over the body of the wounded Captain my heart sank.

But in spite of this unsatisfactory opening, the play developed from strength to strength and ended up as a most powerful production.

Director John Davey used many theatrical effects to great advantage: the burning torch held by Macbeth before the murder of Duncan; the shadows of the show of kings in the cauldron scene; Lady Macbeth's single candle; the silhouettes of the branches; plus the use of sound to remind us of the supernatural helped to build up a terrific atmosphere.

All this, however, is nothing without the actors and in a large cast there were many excellent performances. Peter Healy grew in the part of Macbeth and showed very clearly the development to his downfall. Jilly Ann Healy as Lady Macbeth began a little shakily but gained in strength.

I was disappointed with the Porter. It is a difficult role and needs a clown to make the humor work.

But this is a small carp in an otherwise exciting production which ended superbly with a convincing duel between MacDuff and Macbeth and a fine closing speech from Howard Shepherdson as Malcolm.

SANDRA WILLIAMS

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'THERE TO MEET WITH MACBETH'

SHAKESPEARE'S Macbeth is being staged at the Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, Ealing, from June 21 to June 28, at 7.45 each evening.

Everyone knows something about Macbeth, even if it's only 'Double, double, toil and trouble' and 'Is this a dagger that I see before me?' A. C. Bradley opens his essay on "Macbeth" with the words: 'Macbeth is a statement of evil'.

That rings true, people's essential images of the play are of darkness, night, ill-lit castle steps, and so on. The atmosphere is laden with blackness and the blackness is intertwined with the evil.

But — a statement? This makes it sound static, fixed, a play with a particular message. One of the good things about the play is that it isn't these things; it has a dynamic of its own which works as much now (though perhaps in different ways) as it did in Elizabethan times.

The play is about evil and the way it works inside people. We find the traditional witches hard to take because no one

really behaves in that sort of being. We find it easy, however, to acknowledge the evil inside Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and to see how a single act of evil brings with it inevitable consequences.

Macbeth thinks that he can escape these at first, even though his 'seated heart knocks his ribs against the use of nature' reminding him that he will go against the better part of himself in committing cold-blooded murder. He thinks the deed need be no part of himself; until it is committed. So he fragments his personality, and finds that the first step on the path

of evil means no turning back.

The increasing isolation of Macbeth, his courage in the face of the revenge he brings upon himself, his torment in the world of personal nightmare, all demand our empathy, if not our sympathy. It is by no means a simple moral tale. The play is directed by John Davey.

A cast of considerable strength includes Peter Healy as Macbeth, Jillyann Healy as Lady Macbeth, Alan Waldock as Banquo, Ian Clarke as Macduff, Kay Scrivener as Lady Macduff. The play goes to Minack Cliff-side Theatre in Cornwall at the end of July.

- 3 JUL 1980



Review

MACBETH is a tale of barren heaths at midnight, of evil presaged by evil, and of blood most royal spilling upon ancient flagstones.

And that's where the Questors Theatre production, which opened last week, fails completely.

There is neither foreboding, murderous ambition or malicious fate in this indifferent version of Shakespeare's classic.

There is no attempt to plumb the subtler reasonings which set Macbeth on his bloody path to kingship, nor new insights into a great drama.

Macbeth played by Peter

Healy, stalks the stage spouting a line here, a gesture there.

His calculating wife, played by Jillyann Healy, delivers every speech with a melodramatic blend of grimace and sneer.



The weird sisters are played by three young ladies whose haggish cackling sounds more like nymphs giggling.

The only gem came from kingy Colin Ponger as King Duncan, who fought the tide of indifference which enveloped the rest of the cast.

In short, this is a weak, unoriginal production, best avoided.

Travelling players

QUESTORS' actors are going to be kept busy over the summer break with productions travelling to Cornwall and Edinburgh in the next few weeks.

The cast of Macbeth, which was recently performed in Questors' main theatre, travel down to Porthcurno in Cornwall this weekend to put on the play from Monday to Friday at the cliffside Minack Theatre.

Then in August the theatre will be taking Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata and an entertainment entitled The Gentle Art Of Seduction up to the Edinburgh Festival. Previews of these two shows will be given at Questors Theatre from August 12 to 14.

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Name is no play on words

IT WAS very civil of you to publish my photograph in last week's Gazette in connection with the current Questors' production of Macbeth.

Thank you also for giving me such an arresting new name.

My real name (which either by luck or by judgment you may print correctly at the end of this letter) has over the years been prone to lurid mutilation.

I have been called variously Prodder, Ponger, Progger, Ponder, Pringer and, on one memorable occasion, Plunger, but never before, sir, have I been called PONCER.

Lest the Butchers, the Bakers, the Farmers and the Smiths be tempted to conclude that the name you have given me is direct evidence of the trade of my ancestors, may I assure them that my own earnings are not immoral.

(They come from my soliciting).

COLIN PRINGER
Burdenshott Avenue,
Richmond

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Diary dates



COLIN PONCER, Martin Rutherford and Peter Healey in a scene from Macbeth, which opens at Questors on Saturday.