

## Macbeth (dir. Kama Ginkas) / Helsinki City Theatre's Small Stage

Entering the Helsinki City Theatre, one never knows what to expect. Avant-garde for its architecture, even in the sixties, it became equally well-renowned for its productions, their stark realism, both in set-design and direction, being in direct contrast to the traditional confections of the Finnish National Theatre. I'd arrived early, the foyer was deserted, I went for a little walk. On my return, it had filled up considerably, topics of discussion ranged from the sublime, "Thank heavens it's in Finnish", to the ridiculous, "Its Three & a half hours long," from a woman staving off imminent malnutrition by munching her way through a shrimp-salad sandwich.

The play deliberately begins while the audience is still being seated. Two actors, gate-keepers from Hell, occupy centre-stage, in an unconventional opening replacing the witches on the heath. Their purpose, is as much to disconcert as to narrate.

Some of the more intricate details and events from the traditional Macbeth are not always easily recognized, as Ginkas has altered some scenes. Using a relatively small cast and recycling some of the actors causes some disruption in the form and flow of the play, especially for a new audience.

The single-level set design and neutralized costumes by Sergei Bahron - actors completely bandaged - are far from historically correct or what is used conventionally, but these work for the play. All resources are inventively used. The stage-area is defined by many small trap doors, a larger garage-like opening (actually the entire right-hand wall) and a large ramp on the left-hand side. These are all cleverly played on with props - dead baby-dolls leaves, etc. - and lighting, to sweep into scenes or scenery.

Overall, the acting was hard to evaluate, it was inconsistent, but not without merit. The actors' interpretations of Shakespearian theatrical mannerisms sparked little reaction from the audience (unless one could ascribe fright), unaccustomed as it was to this type of confrontation.

Much of the inexplicable screaming and brutal if not plain crude gestures, which do not always fit in well with the plot, could however, if toned down, serve to cleverly detail fennocised characteristics within the play. So much emphasis is attached of the part of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and Banquo, that the rest of the cast is noticeably vague.

Macbeth, as directed by the acclaimed Lithuanian Kama Ginkas takes us to a quite unconventional presentation of the story. Colourfully drenching it in a new wardrobe, he brings an intuitive approach to heighten his interpretation of the text (in a new Finnish translation). Macbeth blends elements from his previous productions, for example Crime and Punishment or Hamlet, with aspects of modern day life, and in this production it is also very much the marriage of the current Finnish Acting Tradition with a Baltic director's touch.