

“SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES”

PUTNEY HIGH SCHOOL DELIVERS FIVE STAR PERFORMANCE

Macbeth

Putney High School

20th November 2020

Appraised by Bethany Appleton



I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Putney High School for your exceptional production of Macbeth as part of the 2020 Shakespeare Schools Festival, One Night of Shakespeare. Against all odds you have shown the world that theatre can be created in the darkest of times, demonstrating the best of yourselves. It was a wonderful performance, and I'd like to highlight a few aspects that really stood out.

You set the scene with a creepy, atmospheric beginning that transported your audience immediately to Macbeth's Scotland. Your production had a really clear sense of place, heightened by the dance sequences and Scottish folk song which you incorporated. This was such a multi-talented cast! I love how you put live musicians onstage and wove that into the performance, with the flutes and timpani acting as props and pieces of set as well as instruments.

Every single cast member brought depth and intelligence to their performances. There was some brilliant acting on show here; it helped that the entire company had such a fantastic command of Shakespearean language. You were truly at home in the text, to the point where you were able to be creative with it. Acting to camera or with complicated vocal effects can be a challenge, but it was one to which you all rose magnificently and to great effect.

Your ensemble work was one of your greatest strengths. There were some fantastic movement sequences in this production, which always kept the stage busy and interesting, from the opening with the witches to the climactic final duel. An atmosphere of dread and menace built even through scenes that were superficially lighter in tone. You created a genuinely spooky ghost with Banquo at the feast, and your take on the sleepwalking scene was absolutely inspired. It was so original to have the witches haunting Lady Macbeth, slowly driving her mad – a great take on perhaps the play's most famous scene. It takes a lot of skill to make a moment like this feel genuinely fresh, but that is exactly what you did.

This was a slick, bold and engaging production of Macbeth from a highly professional ensemble.

I am in awe of your boundless creativity, talent and determination. This was the year for experimentation and you rose to the challenge of performing Shakespeare for the camera with bravery, resilience and ingenuity. This demonstrates a great deal of maturity as actors, and innovation as theatre-makers. I know you will look back on 2020 with a great deal of pride at what you have achieved especially in light of the challenges you have faced. You all deserve a round of applause and standing ovation!

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