

“SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES”

VALENCE SCHOOL DELIVERS FIVE STAR PERFORMANCE

Macbeth

Valence School

Appraised by Bethany Appleton



I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Valence 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.

It was an absolute joy to see so many students involved in the production! I loved how you divided the scenes between different classes to showcase different actors' strengths. This was a performance that really demonstrated that in Shakespeare 'there are no small parts.' It was great to see such a collaborative approach to film-making that took advantage of the new circumstances under which you were performing this year. Your storytelling and characterisation were strong enough that even with this approach, the play always felt like one cohesive narrative from start to finish – not an easy thing to achieve for any company!

You clearly all had a really sophisticated understanding of play, its world and its characters, and this shone through in abundance in all the actors' performances to create a really striking and memorable show. You handled the language with confidence, maturity and nuance, delivering some of Shakespeare's most famous speeches very affectingly. You blended Shakespeare's text seamlessly with your own words to make some

moments more accessible for your audience in a manner than always felt smooth and considered.

There were some brilliantly creative pieces of set and costume throughout this production. Your Birnam Wood looked brilliant on-screen, as did your banquet scene and your witches in the forest! I also really enjoyed how you created a contrast between the outdoor world of the witches and the interior world of the court – both with their own kinds of tension.

The whole performance was also strengthened by very skilful camerawork and editing (including vanishing witches, and daggers being handed back and forth between actors participating remotely!) – you adapted beautifully to the new filmed format. This was a slick, sophisticated production of Macbeth from a highly accomplished 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!

“This was a slick, sophisticated production of Macbeth from a highly accomplished ensemble.”