

Care for a night at the theatre?

Reviews from yours truly

A truth in jest and gibberish

Geordie Productions gives Shakespeare a make-over in *Möcshplat*

Before watching live performances, especially theatre productions, I am always filled with fear, a reflexive anxiety that the entertainment of the evening will somehow fail. Unlike a poorly written novel one can shut and put away at any moment, a play must be sat through in its entirety. What causes the anxiety is that, of all the art forms in which a conversation is established between auteur and audience, theatre's spatial and temporal proximity to the observer allows for perhaps the closest kind of artistic dialogue with its audience. When a live performance fails, I want to rush to the exit without delay, but when it is successful, I feel changed, sometimes enriched.

Before *Möcshplat* began, the anxiety was powerful, and for good reason. The play is essentially a gibberish-tongued reworking of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, performed by clowns. It's hard to imagine how the concept could be pulled-off with overwhelming success, but within the play's first minute, my fear of constant, unfunny gag-humor was dispelled. During the standing ovation of *Möcshplat* it became clear to me that the play is a gorgeous work of great ingenuity.

What often separates mediocre plays from excellent ones is the acting, and it is superior acting that is the leading factor of *Möcshplat*'s success. Each performer not only had the task of making the audience laugh, but also that of creating an easy-to-understand, accessible performance in an invented language. They achieved both coherence and entertainment through the use of exaggerated gestures and speech. The actors were so proficient that the play could have very well been performed in Swahili or Arabic and remain largely understood, but part of the whole experience was the hilarious gibberish itself.

Magnifying the many traits, peculiarities, vices and virtues of the characters they represent, the cast was spot on in their reinvention of the archetypal figures. *Möcshplat* (*Macbeth*) paraded around the stage, chest puffed out, delighted with his political success like a young child

who had just won out in sword fight with an imaginary foe. Laädie (*Lady Macbeth*) clucked like a chicken as she began to lose her mind.

This kind of comedy isn't all that easy to communicate through written text or even the spoken word, mostly because its medium of ex-

pression is the body and the voice, not language. It's a nice break from the bleak, modern humor of defeatist irony or the trendy, Judd Apatow-style wit. *Möcshplat* rejuvenates a kind of comedy that is both primitive and profound. Making one think of cavemen entertaining each other

around a campfire, grunting and flailing their limbs, communicating with the language of gesture.

For all those familiar with *Macbeth*, or just plain old aficionados of the Bard, a viewing of *Möcshplat* will likely provide a fresh outlook on his original text. Watching Laädie openly fantasize about her future life as queen of Scotland highlights the absurdity of the whole ambition thing. During these fantasies, Laädie's movements about the stage are comparable to a rap video. It was like a quick montage-shot of the materialistic "good life," complete with drinking, dancing, partying in general, and limitless killing. If *Möcshplat* does Shakespeare any justice, it does so by identifying the absurd desires of a tragically flawed species.

Aside from the ingenuity of the play, it was also just really fun. The death scenes were all incredibly violent, but their inherent silliness made them seem almost cute.

There was a lot of quite witty fourth-wall breaking and audience interaction, along with parodic pop-culture reference, stoner jokes and effortless humor.

"If they'd showed me this in grade five, I'd have been way more open to study and learn about Shakespeare," audience member Joe Z. said.

This play may not sound all that special to you, it may in fact seem like a cheap rehashing of a classic work for the less cultured, less literate and less thoughtful generations of the modern era, but this is not the case. If anything, the play serves as a testament to what our teachers have always told us of the supposed "universality" of Shakespeare. It also augurs well for the longevity of the old saying: "There is much truth in jest." What's most important about *Möcshplat* is that the audience and the performers feed off of each other's excitement and carry out a successful aesthetic conversation from start to finish, an uneasily won accomplishment for any kind of artist, especially if the conversation's in gibberish.

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Giddy gobbly ghgh nargggg

Photo Credits: Julian Haber

Praise the Rat Dragon!

Metro tunnels scoured as crust punk meets musical comedy

Getting your windshield cleaned by punk kids on the streets of Montreal has recently turned into a musical comedy.

Last week, the Nouveau Theatre St-Catherine held the play *Squeegee Nights* by Alain Mercieca.

With a mere cast of 6 performers, *Squeegee Nights* was a musical roller-coaster ride through the lives of punk Montreal squeegee kids trying to make it by day by day.

The bilingual script and live music from the Bloody Tits lent itself to the energetic actors as they sang, danced, and squeegee-ed the audience into a huge smile the whole night.

The Nouveau Theatre St-Catherine had a very affluent and homely atmosphere, serving alcohol to the audience with comfortable seating and friendly employees to make the night that much more enjoyable.

The play started with the original squeegee crew, doing their normal routine, which consisted of cleaning windshields, talking about how they will be a squeegee for the rest of their lives, and smoking hash joints. These punk teens were decked out in studded vests, leather patched pants and extremely dirty hair, but that never seemed to put a damper on their day. Up until the day the cleaned up, button down shirt, vans wearing 'scen-

ester' mystery man showed up on their turf. According to the squeegee kids, scenesters will suck the life out of you and drink your blood.

The squeegee kids told their story through song and dance, the good experiences and the bad. Life was going as smooth as it possibly could for a squeegee, until one day a member of their squeegee team goes missing. Kidnapped by their Don, the Rat Dragon, the punks dive deep into the tunnels of the metro to find their friend.

The play had many stereotypical jokes about scenesters and squeegee kids, which the whole audience was able to relate to. The fact that the

play was set in the streets of Montreal made it easy to connect to the actors and the story on a much higher level. The hour and a half breezed by. As the play ended with a punk rock song about squeegee-ing, of course, the whole cast was on stage dancing like there was no tomorrow.

It's too bad the viewings of the play are now finished, but now we know not to judge the next squeegee punk on St. Catherine Street trying to wash your windshield for a couple of bucks, and to definitely check out other small Montreal drama groups because you'll never know what you'll get!

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