

Macbettu: A Beautiful Cacophony



Sardegna Teatro's *Macbettu* opens in pitch darkness. A deep rumble begins somewhere in the auditorium and grows so that soon the audience are plunged into what can only be described as an eerie and overwhelming sound bath. Even the Georgian audience (not known for their quiet ways) are shaken to silence in this moment. This is just one of many ways the company create live sound effects, using their versatile stage set of four metal boards. Throughout the piece they are used, among other things, as tables, fortresses, and instruments.

Playing at Tbilisi's Rustaveli Theatre, *Macbettu* is part of this year's Gift Festival Italian Focus, specifically celebrating Sardinian Culture. Performed in Sardinian, a language which UNESCO classifies as endangered, the piece brings elements of traditional sardinian rituals to the medieval scottish play. The Italian and Georgian surtitles meant nothing to me, so it was a blessing that this production was a multi-sensory experience, which I could appreciate without understanding the language. In fact, I did appreciate the language; the tone and the rhythm was a beautiful thing to listen to and fit the piece well.

Darkness pervades the entire piece, with figures appearing and disappearing seemingly from nowhere. Images start out as vague shapes to the audience's eye, and gradually become clearer. The whole thing is at once a magic trick, a playground game and a lucid dream.

The games are played by the witches, frantic-paced little creatures, who fill the space with vocal cacophony. The comedy and playfulness that these characters bring to an otherwise dark 1 hour 45 minutes showcases the performer's mastery of physical timing and discipline.



When watching the piece I experienced so many different physical sensations, it could almost be described as immersive. In a feast scene, the visceral sound of metal scraping on metal made my whole body tense up. I know it's not a pleasant sound for anyone, but for me it is like some kind of torture, and I can't let go of this feeling until I experience some extremely satisfying sound or texture. And director Alessandro Serra provided that: after the torture came the lovely, pleasing sound of crunching dry crispy matze bread under foot. I didn't need any words to understand the emotional context of that scene.

When I read about Sardegna Teatret's production of Macbeth, I wasn't expecting to enjoy it. Firstly, it's Shakespeare (not always my vibe), secondly it's in a foreign language, and thirdly with an all male cast. None of these things were exciting my personal tastes, especially as it's the third show of this week's Gift Festival in a language I don't understand. But yet again, I was pleasantly surprised. This festival is teaching me the power of sitting back, letting go, and basking in the uncertainty of theatre in a foreign language.



By Holly Taylor-Zuntz