

## William Shakespeare's Macbeth

On November 11th 2009 the 3rd, 4th and 5th year students of the Bundeshandelsakademie Hallein went to see a performance of a shortened and modernized version of Macbeth produced by the Vienna English Theatre and organized by its Schooltours branch ([www.schooltours.at](http://www.schooltours.at)). Booklets had been provided before the performance and so students had been preparing the text and discussing the play in class before they went to see it.

After the show they were asked to write letters of feedback to Schooltours.

Here are some examples written by 5th year students (5AK):

Dear School tours

Last week I saw the play Macbeth with my school class. On the whole I liked the play. To choose such a difficult play for school theatre is very brave of you. But I think it is good for students to know such an important play of Shakespeare.

In my opinion it was very difficult to understand the content of the play, although I have read the textbook before. I think this problem is caused by the role changing of the actors. This was very confusing for me. Sometimes during the play I didn't understand what person exactly the actor played at that moment. It would be helpful, if there were only one more actor.

All of the actors did a very good performance. I was especially impressed by the actor of Macbeth. He had very good actions on the stage and he acted very emotionally, so the audience got an impression about the feelings of Macbeth.

The three weird sisters were very funny with their masks. This was very good for the understanding of the play.

In my point of view, the music didn't fit to the play because it was in German. I didn't like the music very much.

In my opinion the stage wasn't so fascinating. But changing the boards was a very good idea for showing a change of the place. The boards were also helpful for you to change your clothes.

All in all you did your job very well and I liked they play.

Best regards

Eva Strubreiter

5 AK

Dear Sir or Madam,

On 11 November 09 I went with my class to the city theatre Hallein to see your play MacBeth. Actually I liked it quite much, but there were some points I disliked.

Besides keeping up with the ambitious content, it was difficult to understand the plot because of the actors switching rolls all the time. In my opinion it would have been enough to put just one more actor into the play. If this is not possible there might be other possibilities to separate each character from the other - for example working with colors or masks, like you did it with the witches.

Another disturbing aspect was the music. I just do not get why you chose a German song for the fighting scenes. The play was supposed to be an English theatre so I think there should also be English music in it.

In the end I also want to mention that the actors did a pretty good job. They played their characters well and so they impressed the audience.

I hope that you will think about my critical letter because the honest feedback of a pupil is what might help you to improve your plays.

Best regards

Karin Praml

Dear Schooltours

Last week Schooltours showed one of their plays for the pupils of several schools in Hallein. As it was my last Schooltours play I watched it even more carefully - and critically. And I have to say that I liked the last six ones more.

We saw an adaption of Shakespeare's "Macbeth". Already several times one of his tragedies has been model for a performance but never has the material been so complicated.

Compared to the staging of "Romeo and Juliet" there were twice as many characters but nevertheless only four actors. For the audience it was therefore quite a challenge to keep the central theme in mind. Without having read the booklet it would have been impossible to understand the plot.

I know that Schooltours English theatres always have four actors but the quality and fluency of the show suffered by that. The actors themselves, I think, had difficulties to cope with the constant changing of clothes and roles. If they had been able to focus on fewer characters they would have shown a better performance. As a result I was only convinced by Macbeth who was as strong and charismatic as I had imagined. Moreover I liked the fact that he had dark skin colour. That gave the tragedy a modern touch.

Talking of modernity I must say that obviously the writers were indecisive if "Macbeth" should take place in

the original century or at present. On the one hand everyone wore modern clothes but on the other hand there were thanes and sword fighting. Personally I would have preferred an up to date story instead of a mixture.

The topic remains timeless and so you could have made so much out of it. For example a feud within a big company and managers corrupting each other.

One thing I have always like of the Schooltours plays are the props. I had never thought boxes and partition walls were that convenient. I admire that multi-functionality. It was a good idea to use colours to show the affiliation of the protagonists but you could have made more out of it. The ribbons were too discrete.

There was something else that disturbed me - the music. It is not appropriate to play a German song in an English theatre! It fit the situation but irritated everyone.

Despite the criticism I am fond of Schooltours work and sure that the productions help pupils to get closer to English language and culture. Probably I will miss to see one at least once a year.

Yours faithfully

Maria Walkner

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Florian Weiß and I attend the commercial school in Hallein (Salzburg).

On Wednesday we went to see your English theatre "Macbeth". I was very positively surprised about the stage design. I had expected a very colourful stage, but it was equipped with only a few items. In my opinion the actors were very talented and had a good charisma, but the roles weren't so clear. An actor had to act two roles and this was sometimes really confusing. Only the scene with the witches was easy to understand, because of the masks and the changes of the voices. A further critical aspect was the music between the fights. I think in an English theatre there shouldn't be played German music.

I have to pay the actor who played "Macbeth" a compliment. He excellently caught the attention with his deep voice and the very impressive appearance. Summing up I think the actors could permute their roles and I'm glad that I have seen the play. My tip for you is to change the music in some parts of the play and to take one more actor into your team.

Yours faithfully

Florian Weiß