

Doomed Couples

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004 AT 12 A.M.

BY STEVEN
MIKULAN

A **A**

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [More shares](#) [0](#)

You know theater has entered its Halloween season when *Macbett*, Eugene Ionesco's late-career take on the Scottish play, opens in black light with a horror-movie score, and as Shakespeare's Highland hellhound is wordlessly welcomed into existence by only two weird sisters who have emerged from a trapdoor. This eerie prologue, in which Macbett, lifelessly seated on a throne, appears more like the dead Christ in a Deposition painting than the vigorous Thane of Glamis, suggests the territory we're to cover tonight — Dark Ages realpolitik dampened by the mists of magic and superstition.

Ionesco's 1972 play is rarely produced professionally (UCLA mounted a technologically elaborate version three years ago) and is not considered one of his more important works. Still, Il Dolce Theater Company and Spirit of Sarajevo are to be complimented for staging this effort at the Globe Playhouse. Director Neno Pervan, editing down Charles Marowitz's translation of the original French, explores the comedy and pretense Ionesco found in Shakespeare's solemn characters, while sometimes reverently quoting from the Bard's original text. In this story, both Macbett (Zoran Radanovich) and his comrade in arms, Banco (Julius Noflin), are made mad with visions of power upon hearing the witches' prophecies. In fact, everyone involved is either after

power or buffoonishly trying to hold on to it. King Duncan (Pervan), seen here as a cowardly bully dressed in a shiny, lime-green Teddy Boy outfit (or is it a zoot suit?), is an obnoxious boor who's constantly shoving the queen off his throne.

**Photo by Milena
Pervan**

Which leads us to one of Ionesco's additions to the script — Lady Duncan (Pamela Clay). She is a cunning, conniving bitch who marries Glamis to become Lady Macbett. Our potential confusion doesn't matter since the two women meld into the same malignant spirit goading Macbett to murder his benefactor and, later, Banco. To Ionesco, Macbett's murder of his king overshadows everything; Lady M's death, Birnan wood, the concluding swordplay are all afterthoughts to the regicidal theme.

In *Macbeth's* brutality, we can discern a cleaving apart of Shakespeare's more enlightened world, as though in the fossil record of pre-Norman Britain stirs a dream of government that serves a common good, as opposed to mere blood sport. This notion runs elsewhere in popular cultures — Eisenstein's film *Aleksandr Nevsky* opens on a brooding landscape whose inhabitants seem nearly primordial, yet ends with Nevsky's appeal to justice and progress. However, in *Macbett*, the Romanian-born Ionesco, looking back in time past the refinement of constitutions and parliaments, is fascinated with the primitive urges that still lie at the heart of virtually all modern conflicts. Pervan, attuned to this, presents a kingdom uneasily lit with flickering candles and governed by a belief in witches. In a sense, he combines

Macbeth with Ceausescu, and Scotland with Transylvania, drawing out of the mad forest of European villainy a narcotic faith in selfish violence.

UPCOMING EVENTS

[King Ten](#) Wed., Jun. 1, 10:30pm

[Federal Offense](#) Thu., Jun. 2, 7:30pm

[Lucha Vavoom Glam Slam!](#) Thu., Jun. 2, 8:00pm

[Retter's Academy Of Dance - Concert Of Love 2016](#)

Fri., Jun. 3, 7:00pm

[First Hand](#) Fri., Jun. 3, 8:00pm

These themes have a track record: Ron Magid's pulpily political history *Dracula Tyrannus* played at this same venue in 1988, and indeed when in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* the Count dismisses modern Continental treaties as "these days of dishonorable peace," he may well be looking nostalgically at Macbeth's Scotland and Nevsky's bloodied Russia. The Globe, with its two-tiered set, balcony and Tudor windows, lends itself to demagogic nightmares. None of this is to suggest that *Macbett* is a gruesome meditation on power politics — if anything, it's more of a *Rocky Horror Show* meets *Ubu Roi*, complete with Ionescoan touches: A grizzled man (Alexander Veadov) sells lemonade from his wheelchair, a little boy (Andrej Pervan) with a butterfly net searches for Macbett. And, for pure nuttiness, Duncan is murdered on Animal Healing Day, an annual holiday on which the king cures the local livestock and pets of their ailments. (A significant change from Ionesco's original scene.)

Director Pervan gets some good performances from his cast, notably Radanovich and Clay, and his production benefits from Slavko Pervan's spartan set that, nevertheless, places a guillotine behind Duncan's chair (talk about your throne of blood), while Mladen Milicevic's cheesy synth-goth score

recalls Euro-horror films of the 1970s. In the end, this is a story about a man who murders another for his coat and crown, while forgetting the woman who made his ascent possible. After Macbett meets death, his corpse is carried and caressed by women to the throne with its awaiting blade — perhaps that is the absurdest touch of all.