

SHAKESPEARE IN THE GROVE



MATTHEW GORRIS | TCC THEATRE DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Ed Palmer plays Macbeth, surrounded by the three witches, from left: Diane Sokolowich, Nicole Steele and Elyse Jolley in the Shakespeare in the Grove production of "Macbeth."

Curses, schmurses; come watch!

By Eric Feber
The Virginian-Pilot

How fitting that for Shakespeare in the Grove's 13th annual production, that TCC Theatre will present what is known as the Bard's "cursed play," full of murder and witchcraft.

The annual outdoor summer production debuts Wednesday with the summer the-

ater series' first production of "Macbeth." Performances take place through Sunday at the Chesapeake campus' outdoor Grove Theater on Cedar Road. It moves indoors, and to downtown Norfolk, when it plays the George & Jeanne Roper Performing Arts Center on Granby Street.

Over the years, it has been deemed bad

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luck by many in the theater to even utter its name, generally referring to it simply as "The Scottish Play."

But for Shakespeare in the Grove founder and director Ed Jacob, the only "curse" has been the annual question always uttered by die-hard fans.

"Ever since our very first production, people have repeatedly asked me when are we going to do 'Macbeth?' We decided to first do all the comedies which lent themselves to a festive outdoor production. We finally did 'Romeo & Juliet.' So

now it's time for 'The Scottish Play.'"

This historic tragedy, Shakespeare's shortest, is considered one of his most famous, and popular.

"Everybody knows Macbeth," he stated. "In fact, some critics believe it to be his best. It's one of his most produced plays. Besides, this is full of cool stuff, it's timeless."

Jacob called the iconic tragedy "a bombastic melodrama that steps outside of the realm of plausible reality" with its use of prophecy and the three witches, who represent darkness, chaos and conflict. Many have considered the terrible trio as both agents and witnesses to the unfolding events that befall the easily corrupted Macbeth and his cold-blooded manipulating wife.

"Elizabethans believed in ghosts, demons and witches, and Shakespeare put them in the play to keep the crowds entertained," he explained. "But they're a catalyst. Are they manifestations of people's desires or beings out to corrupt? But, really, we're dealing with the humanistic elements here, the sense of right and wrong and the consequences of actions. Here it's not only murder, but to kill a king is violating God."

He said the production is a true community project with the cast featuring two 10-year-olds all the way to adults. The

going?

What Shakespeare in the Grove produces "Macbeth," presented by TCC Theater under the direction of Ed Jacob.

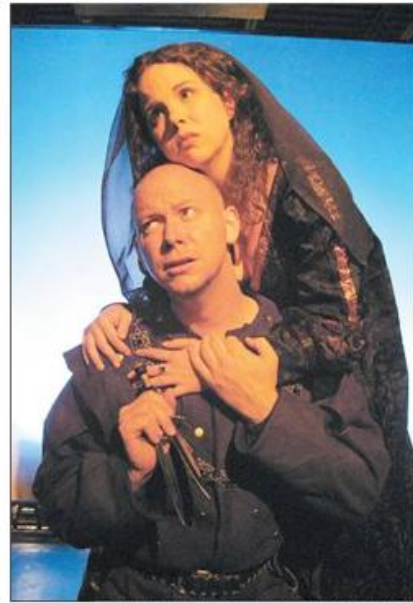
When/where 8 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday at the outdoor Grove Theater next to the Chesapeake TCC campus, 1428 Cedar Road; and 8 p.m. July 2-3 at the Roper Performing Arts Center, 340 Granby St. at the Norfolk TCC campus.

Free The public is urged to bring lawn chairs and blankets for the Chesapeake outdoor production; The Kiwanis Club of Great Bridge will sell concessions. Tickets are not required for the Roper performances.

Call 822-5219 for more info.

group is made up of students representing Indian River, Hickory and Grassfield high schools, plus Tidewater Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University.

And besides the magic of theater, Jacob said there's also magic in experiencing the production outdoors, in spite of the occasional outside noises and the threat of summer storms or humidity. People show up with whole families in tow, carrying in elaborate alfresco dinners, lawn chairs and beach blankets.



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Lady Macbeth (Amber Wood) and Macbeth (Ed Palmer) are the focus for Shakespeare's shortest and one of his most brutal plays. Lady Macbeth plots to have her husband knock off King Duncan.

"It's festive, there's a sense of excitement, and there's that sense of chance, that element of uncontrollability," he said. "We're playing it as Shakespeare intended. We have Grove-goers who haven't missed a production. Some show up as early as 3 in the afternoon to stake their place near the stage."

But be it in the festive feel of the outdoor Grove or the seri-

ous atmosphere of TCC's indoor Roper theater, audiences will be swept up in Shakespeare's timeless tragedy.

"This play is tightly woven together, it moves; one thing leads to another; there's politics, philosophy, insanity, murder, the supernatural," Jacob said. "It's a roller-coaster."

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