

William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus

Presented by Red Phoenix Theatre

Holden Street Theatres until 27 August

Review by Honey B

Titus Andronicus was a hit when it was written around 1593/94 but this blood-thirsty revenge-driven play fell out of favour in the mid-twentieth century due to its high body count.

Of course, these days we are used to the gore thanks to shows like Game of Thrones or The Walking Dead.

Now this wicked, immoral and violent play has been brought to the Adelaide stage for the first time by Red Phoenix Theatres.



Photo by Richard Parkhill

He ignores Tamora's pleas to save her son and he sacrifices her eldest to the bloodthirsty people of Rome, which fuels her hatred of Titus.

Then Titus throws his support behind Saturninus, thus ensuring the weak and slightly mad Saturninus the top position. However, Tamora ends up becoming Saturninus' bride, thus handing her the key to bring her powerful brand of revenge of Titus' family.

The main person in Tamora's sights is Titus' beautiful daughter Lavinia, played superbly by Anna Bampton.

Rachel Burfield as Tamora was deliciously and calculating evil and she showed not the slightest hint of compassion. Teamed with her bloodthirsty, conniving Aaron the Moor and it's no wonder few survive their tsunami of revenge.

Bampton goes blow-for-blow with Burfield and, for mine, came out slightly on top with a riveting portrayal of the young Lavinia who is left brutalised and raped by Tamora's two sons Chiron (Kyron Weetra) and Demetrius (Joshua Mensch).

Not dead, Lavinia has had her tongue cut out and her hands cut off which leaves Bampton unable to speak for the rest of the play, however her performance was riveting as she threw every ounce of her soul into the performance. Kudos.

Eustice in the titular role was also superb with perfect, nuanced speech and his fall from superior warrior to grief-stricken chef was a delight.

Matt Houston as Emperor Saturninus also put in a petulant performance as the self-indulged, mad leader.

An honourable mention must also go to Tracey Walker in the feminised role of Marca (usually Marcus).

This big cast of 17 all put in passionate performances – some need to watch their diction – but there's plenty of heart and soul in this cold, stark, murderous play.

Don't miss this first brilliantly brutal play from Red Phoenix Theatre because it might take another 400 years for Titus to be performed in Adelaide again!

Director Michael Eustice played a straight hand with a stark, minimalist set which let the actors and the script shine. And while the script does have its flaws, this play is driven by revenge.

The play focuses on Roman general, Titus Andronicus played by Brant Eustice, who returns to Rome after defeating the Goths.

He has lost many of his sons throughout his battles and he's come home with his latest captives which includes Tamora, Queen of the Goths, her three sons and her lover and immoral Moor played by Adolphus Waylee.

While Titus would make a fine emperor he makes two decisions which shape the rest of the proceedings.



Photo by Richard Parkhill