

upcoming season indicates, have a penchant for staging plays that have never previously been performed.



Titus Andronicus certainly is one of the most bloodthirsty of Shakespeare's plays and is reputed to be his first. It has a very high body count, with nine on stage and five off stage killings and numerous severing of body limbs to top it off. The loss of limbs bordered on the farcical at times with three hands, two heads and a tongue being lopped off. Add to this an act of cannibalism, a rape or two and a live burial and you have a rollicking good show.

There is also the odd simile atrocity or two. One that compares a sliced loaf of bread and a single slice is a particularly vexatious example. However, the cause of all this mayhem is tied up in the revenge sought by Tamora, Queen of the Goths who along with three of her sons Alarbus, Chiron and Demetrius and a countryman, Aaron, was captured by Titus and brought back to Rome. Tamora pleads for the life of her son Alarbus who killed one of the sons of Titus. But Titus has already lost 21 of his 25 sons in wars over 40 years and will not be appeased. So the execution proceeds to the great disgust of Tamora.

Then, in a complicated twist Tamora ends up as Empress to the new Emperor Saturninus. From her position of power, Tamora secretly seeks her revenge on Titus and his genealogical line. Thus, she schemes with Aaron to frame two of the sons of Titus, Martius and Quintus in the murder of Bassianus, the emperor's brother. In truth, Bassianus is dispatched by Chiron and Demetrius who then rape his wife Lavinia and sever her hands and tongue to prevent the truth being divulged to her father Titus.

Just before the two sons of Titus lose their heads Aaron tricks Titus into severing his own hand in order to stay the execution. This proves fruitless as later the heads of his sons and the hand of Titus are sent back to Titus as a cruel and somewhat humorous derision.

All of these atrocities make it appear as if Titus is losing his sanity. But he eventually discovers the truth and arranges for the murder of Chiron and Demetrius who he then cooks up into a pie which is served to Tamora and Saturninus. During the feast, Titus kills Lavinia because he cannot bear to be reminded of her mistreatment while he, in turn, is killed by Saturninus then he and Tamora are killed by the guards. All is now in a state of calm finality.

The play may not be one of Shakespeare's finest but it was very popular in its day. And, Red Phoenix Theatre finds a way amongst this disturbing tale to produce a well-acted, professionally shaped presentation. In particular, the sophisticated performances of Brant Eustice as Titus and Rachel Burchfield as Tamora were outstanding. Others deserving a special mention among the leading actors are Matt Houston as Saturninus, while Chiron (Kyron Weetra) and Demetrius (Joshua Mensch) played the roles of the evil sons of Tamora with command. Overall this was a very good performance of a play that demands much from its actors.

Reviewed by Mike Harrison for *Global Media Post*

Venue: Holden Street Theatres

Dates: 18-27 August, 2016

Cast (in order of appearance)

Young Lucius	Joseph Salcedo-Storer
Bassianus/ Clown/ Goth Army	Joshua Coldwell
Saturninus	Matt Houston

Marca	Tracey Walker
Aemilius	Tony Simpson
Titus	Brant Eustice
Lucius	Mat Lynch
Mutius/ Publius/ Goth Army	Geoff Dawes
Quntus/ First Goth	Sean Watters
Martius/ Third Goth	Tom Fitzsimons
Alarbus/ Second Goth	Peter Kahlbaum
Tamora	Rachel Burfield
Chiron	Kyron Weetra
Demetrius	Joshua Mensch
Aaron	Adolphus Waylee
Lavinia	Anna Bampton
Nurse/ Goth Army	Lyn Wilson

Directed by Michael Eustice

Assistant Director Libby Drake

and the Production Team

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