

Aurora students pour a dram of Macbeth ? on the rocks



By Brock Weir

Allyson Whitmell has Jeremy Garbe under her thumb.

When she says "jump", he asks "how high"? When she says, "kill," he asks "well, if you have been living under a rock for the last 350 years, you know what Jeremy, as Macbeth, might say to his darling wife, as portrayed by Allyson ? but you probably haven't experienced the Scottish play quite like this.

The two Grade 9 students from Aurora are putting the finishing touches on their leading roles of Macbeth and his Lady in Country Day School's (CDS) upcoming production of "Scots on the Rocks", a parody of Shakespeare's classic play by Richard Nathan.

"Scots on the Rocks" opens at CDS' Performing Arts Centre next Thursday, November 19, and whether you are in for a night of erudite theatre or looking for a few laughs, you'll come away satisfied either way with a production that leaves many of the Bard's dramatic soliloquies intact, but tells the entire first act through the medium of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody.

"This is my first year at the school and I really love acting and drama," says Allyson. "This sounded like a really funny play and Lady Macbeth has been a really, really fun ride and journey. This play takes the characters from the original Macbeth and exaggerates them. Lady Macbeth is still really mean, but in the play it is not as obvious. Here, it is really exaggerated on how mean I have to be. I wouldn't say I'm a really mean person, so when I get to play a completely different role to how I am it is a completely different experience and you really get to dig deeper into another side of yourself!?"

The Lord to her Lady feels the same way.

"The Macbeth in our play is kind of cautious, timid and doesn't seem like he would do anything bad, but he seems to want to please his wife in any way possible so he does whatever she tells him," explains Jeremy. "What makes this a parody is we've added in some crazy jokes completely randomly and it makes it really fun to act in."

Jeremy is no stranger to Shakespeare. With two parents both actively involved in Drama and English, he was exposed to the classics early on.

Fittingly, this production of Scots on the Rocks is directed by his dad, Scott Garbe, a long-time faculty member at CDS.

Macbeth is a play that has always been loved by students, says Mr. Garbe, and when the opportunity presented itself to "have a bit of fun" with a work people know so well, they "teacher and students" jumped at the opportunity.

?When we did Macbeth, we did it because the kids wanted to do it,? says Scott. ?You would think people would be turned off by Shakespeare, it would be so arcane and they wouldn't be into it, but they loved it. The kids loved parody too. They just love making fun of something that is so serious and I think Shakespeare would love it too. There is a lot of Shakespeare that is retained in the piece, including one particular moment where Lady Macbeth loses her mind, which we play straight up. We have this goofy, crazy play and then you have moments of real gravity to it and they kind of anchor the piece.?

Imitation, he adds, is the sincerest form of flattery. If you take the time to parody something, it is showing deep respect for the source material. But, for the two leads, there was never any doubt that Shakespeare ? whether served ?straight up? or ?on the rocks? ? is relevant to today's audiences.

?The entire story in every Shakespeare play is so engaging, even if you don't understand it because you don't really know old English, you can see how deep it is,? says Allyson. ?There is so much action, so much romance, they are such complete stories that kids really get into that and find things to hang onto.?

Scots on the Rocks runs November 19 ? 21. For more information, visit www.cds.on.ca .