



Wildside Festival 2019  
delivers the goods

## Description

# A silent Macbeth contrasts with a wordy Hyena Subpoena

By **Byron Toben**

“Words, words, words”, replied Hamlet to Polonius’s question as to what he was reading.

In the “age and body” of our time, audiences might ask performers what they are speaking.

At the **Centaur Theatre’s** annual January **Wildside Festival**, the answer might range from a torrent of words to none.

An amazing no spoken words presentation was supplied by **La Fille du Laitier** in a piece entitled ***Macbeth Muet***.

What, Shakespeare without the power of iambic pentameter?

Hard to believe, but ably pulled off under the clever direction of **Jon Lachlan Stewart**, who co-created it with **Marie-Hélène Bélanger**. Helped to have fine performances by the two actors, **Jérémie Francoeur** and **Clara Prévost**, who enacted not only King and Lady MacBeth, but the entire cast of Banquo, Duncan, the three witches, Mac Duff and assorted underlings.

Amazing what the human imagination can add to some paper hats, a carton of eggs, a knife and lots of stage blood.

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No spoken words does not mean total silence. Appropriate musical background and occasional grunts and screams punctuated the hour.

Do you have to know well the plot of Macbeth to appreciate this show? Not in general, but it might further enhance some minor points.

This *Scottish play* (a curse on those who mention the full name... OK, I'm now cursed.) has lent itself to many variations since its creation in 1606.

One of the most unique was Orson Welles's 1936 all black "voodoo" Broadway version (afore your time and mine) followed by his 1948 film version. Locally, it inspired a neat essay by [Anton Golikov's Raise The Stakes Theatre reviewed by me in 2016](#).

***Macbeth Muet*** concluded its three-show Wildside run on January 13.



Hyena Subpoena – Image: Tristan Brand

Contrasted with the above, was a cornucopia of insightful words written and wonderfully enunciated by everybody's favourite local performance artist, **Catherine Kidd**, in her show, ***Hyena Subpoena***.

Cat, as she prefers to be called, first developed this show, which I saw in 2011 in St-Henri. It was then a 90-minute piece directed by Allison Darcy. It has since toured the world, gradually evolving into this 55-minute version re-directed by **Paul Van Dyck**. It consists of six poems inspired by a trip to Africa and also invoking her high school days as a misunderstood outsider artistic kid.

The whole is delivered in a Dr Seuss semi-rhyming scheme and plenty of lithe physical motion, a tribute to her years of yoga exercising.

I must admit that I at first questioned the use of a hyena as the touch stone animal in this former biology major's fascination with life forms, ranging from lemurs to iguanas and the little known "Sea Peach", her first major performance poem. I was probably influenced by Al Capp's ugly woman creation of "Lena the Hyena" in his Li'l



Abner comic strip.

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Here, the hyena is summoned as an example of its shifting nature and adaptability to an unfriendly world. A succession of other critters is mentioned such as a dying lioness, a bull elephant and prey animals leading to a pack mentality on the high school soccer green.

All this is related by Cat's stand in narrator, **Mona Morse**.

Collaborator **Jackie Murda** developed the accompanying sound scapes. Projections of some animals appear on tents and other set surfaces.

**Hyena Subpoena** concludes its five-show Wildside run on **January 17** at 7 pm and **January 20** at 3 pm.

Feature image: *Macbeth Muet*, by Sophie Gagnon Bergeron

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**Byron Toben**, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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