

To See or Not to See?

By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog

When my mother invited me to see Alan Cumming in *Macbeth* at Lincoln Center Festival, I thought it might be a great time for my 12-year-old daughter to experience her first real Shakespeare production. She and her 8-year-old brother are in theater camp this summer—she out of interest and he because siblings were half-price. Lines from various Shakespeare plays have been woven into the original play they're performing (along with some choice show tunes). Just so happens that some of my daughter's lines include a passage from *Macbeth's* Weird Sisters.

If *Macbeth* weren't already one of Shakespeare's most murderous and grisly stories, in this modern interpretation, Alan Cumming plays a psychiatric patient who appears to have committed a hideous crime of his own and is destined to play out the *Macbeth* tragedy over and over in the solitary confines of a mental hospital. Cumming masterfully plays all of the roles, having convincing conversations with himself using various props in the room to dramatic advantage. The effect was enthralling and disturbing.

After some hesitation, I decided that my daughter should see the show. In the interest of full disclosure, I'm a Shakespeare fan, so that probably swayed my judgment in the "for" direction over concern about adult themes. My daughter is even named after a character from *The Tempest* (no, not Caliban). And while she was at a little disadvantage seeing *Macbeth* without knowing the plot and characters beforehand, there's something about Shakespeare—the language and themes—that I expected would have positive impact anyway. And it did. Alan Cumming's Scottish accent didn't hurt either (or maybe that was just me).

There were no other kids in the audience that I could spot, but even the absence of peers didn't have me doubting that I had made the right decision to include my daughter in this experience. This in sharp contrast to my feelings after letting my daughter and her friends watch a PG-13 movie at her birthday sleepover last year (yes, at age 11). I'd be none the wiser if the girls themselves hadn't flagged some of the content as inappropriate. Yes, I was that parent who let not just my kids but yours watch something they shouldn't have. And no, no one has let me forget it either. (In my weak defense, I was confused about the ratings and thought that PG-13 meant the movie was milder than PG. Duh.)

The answer? Shakespeare: to see. PG-13: not to see.

<http://www.alancumming.com/>

<http://lincolncenterfestival.org/index.php/2012-macbeth>