



DANNY SANCHEZ

From Jan. 15 to Feb. 17, Two River Theater Company of Red Bank, N.J., is co-producing (with D.C.'s Folger Theatre) a *Macbeth* conceived by Aaron Posner and **TELLER**, of Las Vegas magician duo Penn & Teller. The production's Teller-designed magic aims to restore the play to its rightful place in the horror genre.

Can you sum up your advice about Shakespeare?

Never read a Shakespeare play before you see it. That's as hard as reading an orchestral score without hearing an orchestra play it.

How did you get involved in this project?

I've wanted to do this show—a *Macbeth* that takes the magic seriously—since I was 12. I devised some magic for Aaron Posner's 1997 production of *Midsummer* at the Arden in Philadelphia. We became friends and about five years ago started to talk about realizing my juvenile dream. Two years ago we started saying, "Shakespeare's supernatural horror thriller," and that phrase (and an image of the Weird Sisters as Undead) brought all the ideas together.

Is *Macbeth* Shakespeare's scariest play?

It's the English language's scariest play. Maybe the world's. It taps into the universal dread that the world may just be doing a dark and seductive magic show designed to lure us all straight to hell, and writes these ideas in murders, hallucinations and blood.

What horror movies inspired you for this production?

Psycho, *Dawn of the Dead* and, to a lesser degree, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. I think *Suspiria* is also in there someplace. In addition, I watched every existing film of *Macbeth*. I like Polanski's (he has naked Weird Sisters); *Scotland, PA* (it has Christopher Walken and Frialators); a Brit adaptation with the Weird Sisters as garbage men; and the recent Aussie version starring Sam Worthington, which has the *best* Duncan stabbing ever: It's done through a sheet and just goes on and on.

What's one idea you rejected while preparing this show?

We were going to levitate the "child crowned with a tree in his hand" instead of having him emerge from the boiling cauldron. Then we decided we didn't mind boiling a child.

Who is the most underrated person in the history of magic?

David P. Abbott, a genius inventor from Omaha, who did shows in his living room from 1907 to '34. He baffled everybody, from Kellar to Houdini, with his Talking Teakettle.

What was your first acting role ever?

I played the city boy from the east in a western musical at my English neighbor's Anglican church. The show was called *One Stage West* and I had to fight with a kid named Ikey. He was, as I recall, missing several fingers.

If you'd never become a performer, how would you be earning a living?

I'd probably still be a Latin teacher (as I was for six years). Or maybe a film editor. I love editing.

If you started a club for single-named people, who would you invite to join?

Hannibal.

Where is your favorite place to relax in Vegas?

The house I built has a jagged, rocky courtyard, inhabited by a bronze bear who does card tricks. I'm not making that up.

What's your favorite kitchen appliance?

My double-headed Wells commercial waffle iron.

What advance in technology do you hope will happen in your lifetime?

Triple-headed waffle irons. I like waffle parties.

If someone gave you a thousand bucks with the stipulation you have to spend it today on yourself, what would you do with it?

I'd invite Penn's wife Emily to go shopping with me and ask her to help me pick out opening-night party clothes.

If you could relive one year of your life, which would you pick? And would you do an exact replay or change a few things?

In my 28th year, a set of twins invited me to bed and I turned them down. What could have been going through my head?

You identify politically as a libertarian; what's the biggest misconception about libertarians?

That they can help you find a book in the stacks.

After *Macbeth*, what's your next big project?

If the Writers Guild strike continues, I was thinking of washing the car.

