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## "Titus Adronicus Jr" violent and hilarity at the Hollywood Fringe

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Cast members Thomas Chrastka and Ken Haley  
*Photo used with permission from Richard Brusky*

"Titus Adronicus," considered Shakespeare's bloodiest play, makes an appearance at the Fringe as a revamped comical [horror](#) "Titus Adronicus Jr." put on by students of Dawson Middle School from Las Vegas, Nevada. Directed by Troy Heard, this production is revamped as a play with in a play. Thomas Chrastka plays Mr Benjamin an art professor dealing with personal crisis while trying to put on a school play with his student. His personal world crashes into the world of the play he is trying to help present, reducing him to being outdone by his students in what is right and what is wrong.

The play opens with Mr Benjamin telling his life story and informing the audience he is a failed artist who has done everything for his wife who is now leaving him. As Mr. Benjamin's life spins downward, so does the violence of Shakespeare's first revenge play increase.

Titus is the story of Titus Adronicus (Ken Haley), a roman general, and the quest for power and revenge with the Goths ruled by Queen Tamora (Noa Agatstein) and her secret lover Aaron (the moor) (Maxwell Claydon). The audience is reminded this is a school production with limited resources and there will be warnings if the content gets too graphic. These points of violence seem out of a bad horror film with obvious special effects reminiscent of the Scream horror films or Little Shop of Horror. They increase the hilarity of the show as does potty humor and the kids being kids.

Titus is the brother of the recently killed king of Rome and he is offered the throne by his brother Marcus (Jashua Smithline) but abdicates to the King's son Saturninus (Gary Easton). Many of the aspects of the original play are intact within this production, Saturninus claims he will wed Titus' daughter Lavinia (Joelie Mountain) only to have his brother Bassianus (Cash Freeman) claim her. Tamora's sons Demetrius (Ashlee Grubbs) and Chiron (Will Haley) wreak havoc. In the original there is a third son but he has been cut from this version. Lavina loses her hands and tongue demonstrated by very fake blood. Saturninus marries Tamora. Much fun happens over the pronunciation of the names in this story. Titus kills his son by accident Mutius(Ashlee Grubbs) and his other two sons Quintus (Cash Freeman) and Lucius (Will Haley) are accused of murder. There are some aspects of the story left out probably for brevity and violence, again this was Shakespeare's most violent play and eventually frowned on by Elizabethan society.

While this inner play is happening the good or bad Mr. Benjamin spirals from the voice of responsibility to a disturbed child, taking on a role in the play and reacting violently to his off stage life. In the end however, the children remind the audience that this is a play from the 1500s just as violent as what they may see on television and is an illusion of their making. These kids have a future in Horror.

This play ended this past weekend at the [Hollywood fringe](#) but for more information see [Table 8 Productions](#).

## SUGGESTED LINKS

- ["Shrew'd" one woman's view of Shakespeare's "Taming of" at the Hollywood Fringe](#)
- ['Taming of the Show' musical prehistoric Shakespeare at the Hollywood Fringe](#)
- [Shakespeare's 'MacDeth' political commentary as farce at Hollywood Fringe](#)
- ['Winter is Coming' the musical adaptation of 'Game of Thrones' Hollywood Fringe](#)
- [Shakespeare four hundred plays at the Hollywood Fringe](#)

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