

'MacBird'--A New Low in Taste

By JACK GAVER

NEW YORK — (UPI) — A new writer named Barbara Garson reveals in "MacBird" that she doesn't like anything or anyone on the current political scene.

"MacBird," presented Wednesday at the Village Gate, is a sophomoric, heavy-handed parody of "Macbeth" that strikes a new low in theatrical taste. Brilliant wit in the parodizing might have given it some excuse for being, but this is lacking.

The production, directed by Roy Levine, has been staged in a campy manner calling for extravagant antics by the players, bits of vaudeville, grotesque cos-



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tumes employed almost in the spirit of sight gags and weird makeup.

Miss Garson's king, or president, is called John Ken O'Dunc, and he has two brothers, Robert and Ted. For the sake of unity, O'Dunc gives second play on the ticket to MacBird, a hearty, you-all rancher who is leader of the Senate and has his eye

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Who Was--and Wasn't-- At Play's Opening Night

Chicago Daily News

NEW YORK — The first night audience for "MacBird" was "not the typical opening night crowd," a press agent confided.

Actor Sir John Gielgud, in a tan corduroy jacket, and poet Robert Lowell, were there. A number of long-haired young men, some with "Dump Johnson" buttons, others in unzipped sweatshirts and jeans, mingled with chic, carefully-coiffed women in mink and long gowns and their escorts in tuxedos and black tie.

"It went wonderfully," poet Lowell told playwright Barbara Garson afterwards. "The acting comes up to all your inspiration."

Mrs. Garson, her long, wavy hair pulled back into a ponytail with a plastic barrette, wore an \$18 orange crepe dress to the opening, despite the considerable financial success of the play.

In four weeks of previews, it has grossed more

than half the \$30,000 it cost to produce. Paperback sales have already passed the \$100,000 mark.

Mrs. Garson, 25, is a former leader of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California in Berkeley.

There was a noticeable absence of political faces at the opening. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy didn't answer his invitation. Gov. Nelson Rockefeller sent his regrets. Mayor John Lindsay said he'd come another night. Sen. Jacob Javits ducked out at the last minute and sent his wife and son.

on the top job. The two brothers do not trust him.

After the election, O'Dunc pays a visit to MacBird's own part of the country and is fatally shot while on public exhibition. The actual killer is dispatched. MacBird takes power.

Robert and Ted and other suspicious elements begin plotting MacBird's doom and eventually bring it off. MacBird dies in a confrontation with Robert, who promises to bring to light the plotters who caused the downfall of MacBird, "our brilliant leader." Robert then takes over the country, with Ted counting off the years until it will be his turn.

To give you a further idea of the tenor of the play, other characters include Lady MacBird, Egg of Head, Earl of Warren and Wayne of Morse. Two men and a woman make up the three "weird sisters" of Shakespeare's "Macbeth" who predict MacBird's rise and fall.

Miss Garson tosses into the pot the war in "Viet Land" and segregation as

disturbing elements plaguing MacBird's reign.

Stacy Keach has a roaring and busy evening in the role of MacBird, and William Devane is the revengeful Robert. Others in the cast include Jennifer Darling, Cleavon Little, Tony Capodilupo, Paul Hecht, David Spielberg, Rue McClanahan, John Clark and Dalton Dearborn.

Julia Curtis and David Productions presented the play.

The packed first-night audience was a friendly one, frequently breaking into applause during the scenes. The Village Gate, by the way, is not a regular theater.

It might be called a theater-cafe, with patrons sitting at tables. Of all the uncomfortable off-Broadway show places in which I have been, this is the champion. It is awful. Probably, on second thought, just the place for "MacBird."

(The Committee Theater will present a San Francisco production of "MacBird" next month.)

Capsule comments of other critics:

James Davis, Daily News: "The chief problem seems to be that it is more nasty than funny."

Walter Kerr, the New York Times: "Our ears rebel. They rebel not out of political sensitivity, not out of sentimental loyalty to a man. They rebel because the coarse syntax is untypical, unrepresentative, offhand, random. Nothing is truly being satirized, the coarseness is entirely gratuitous."