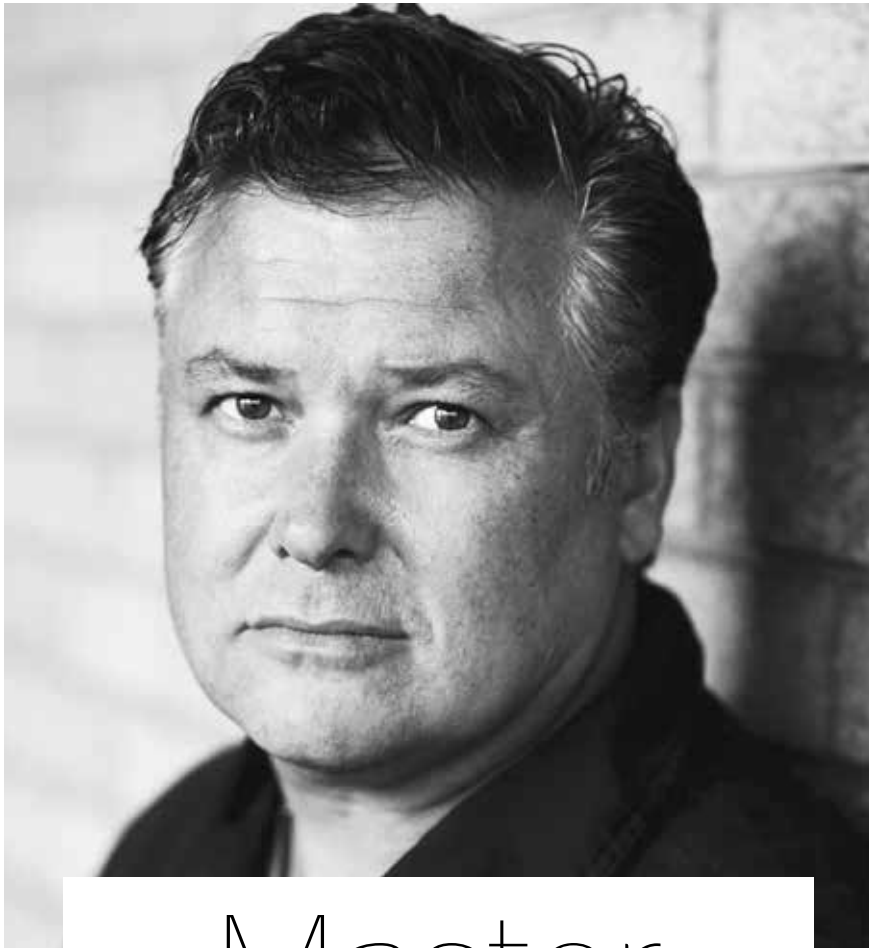


STAGE



Master of Macbeth

Berkeley Rep takes on
Shakespeare, with TV star Conleth Hill.

BY LEEANNE JONES



In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the main character travels a murderous path to the Scottish throne. The Berkeley Rep role won't be too much of a stretch for Conleth Hill, who has spent the last six years as Varys, the master of whisperers, on HBO's similarly crown-scheming *Game of Thrones*. We caught up with Hill to chat about Shakespeare, his Academy Award-winning *Macbeth* co-star Frances McDormand, and how this king might survive the Seven Kingdoms.

Q: Are there any similarities between Varys and Macbeth?

A: No, I think they're polar opposites—or, well, they appear to be polar opposites. One appears to be working for the good of everyone [Varys], and one is pretty single-mindedly egotistical [Macbeth]. One hates magic, and one absolutely loves it and goes back for a second dose.

Q: How do you think Macbeth would fare in Westeros?

A: It depends whom he aligned himself with, I suppose. I don't think he's political enough to last in court. He doesn't seem to listen to much counsel or work well with others. He'd probably be a good warrior and do well in the joust.

Q: Macbeth is so good but so very dark.

A: Yeah, but I mean, that's what Shakespeare does: He shows the heights of the human condition and the depths as well. That's why he's so brilliant.

Q: Is this your first time working with Frances McDormand and Tony Award-winning director Daniel Sullivan?

A: Yes. I've been a fan of both for a long time. They are outstanding in their chosen careers. Hopefully, I won't gush too much—but I can't promise anything.

Q: What is unique about Berkeley Rep's production?

A: I think it's obvious: It's Frances McDormand playing Lady Macbeth. It's going to be so enjoyable, and I think people will be most interested in seeing the brilliant things she does with the role.

Macbeth runs February 19 to April 10. For tickets and information, visit berkeleyrep.org.