

THE LYCEUM

Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh

MACBETH

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A co-production with Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company

**“Foul whisperings are abroad, unnatural
deeds do breed unnatural troubles.”**

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**Nottingham
Playhouse**

**EDUCATION
RESOURCE PACK**

MACBETH

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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PLOT SYNOPSIS

Confronted by three witches as he returns from battle, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, is given a tantalising vision of the future – he will acquire great power in his homeland, first as Thane of Cawdor and then as King of Scotland.

Intrigued by this prophecy his personal ambitions are aroused and when word arrives that his valour in the King's service has indeed been rewarded with the title of Cawdor, his thirst for power begins to control him.

Obsessed with the prophecy, he and his scheming wife set their sights on achieving this ultimate honour and authority. And when King Duncan comes to stay at his trusted nobleman's home, the scene is set for bloody murder, a power grab, and a dark period of tyranny and fear in Scotland. As Macbeth's powerlust, paranoia and guilt grow stronger by the day, the bodies begin to mount up, and he finds himself haunted by the past and tormented by the fear of losing his new kingdom.

**“By the pricking of my thumbs,
something wicked this way comes.”**

ACT AND SCENE LOCATION

- Act 1, Scene 1:** A desert place.
- Act 1, Scene 2:** A camp near Forres.
- Act 1, Scene 3:** A heath near Forres.
- Act 1, Scene 4:** Forres. The palace.
- Act 1, Scene 5:** Inverness.
Macbeth's castle.
- Act 1, Scene 6:** Before Macbeth's castle.
- Act 1, Scene 7:** Macbeth's castle.
- Act 2, Scene 1:** Court of Macbeth's castle.
- Act 2, Scene 2:** The same.
- Act 2, Scene 3:** The same.
- Act 2, Scene 4:** Outside Macbeth's castle.
- Act 3, Scene 1:** Forres. The palace.
- Act 3, Scene 2:** The palace.
- Act 3, Scene 3:** A park near the palace.
- Act 3, Scene 4:** The same.
Hall in the palace.
- Act 3, Scene 5:** A heath.
- Act 3, Scene 6:** Forres. The palace.
- Act 4, Scene 1:** A cavern.
- Act 4, Scene 2:** Fife. Macduff's castle.
- Act 4, Scene 3:** England.
Before the King's palace.
- Act 5, Scene 1:** Dunsinane.
Ante-room in the castle.
- Act 5, Scene 2:** The country near Dunsinane.
- Act 5, Scene 3:** Dunsinane.
A room in the castle.
- Act 5, Scene 4:** Country near Birnan wood.
- Act 5, Scene 5:** Dunsinane.
Within the castle.
- Act 5, Scene 6:** Dunsinane.
Before the castle.
- Act 5, Scene 7:** Another part of the field.
- Act 5, Scene 8:** Another part of the field.

PAULINE LYNCH (WITCH, GENTLEWOMAN AND FLEANCE) DESCRIBES HER FAVOURITE SCENE, ACT 2 SCENE 2:

The suspense has been built up so well from the previous scene and we feel we're waiting with Lady Macbeth while the murder is happening nearby. When Macbeth appears, the rhythm of the language becomes so disjointed that we see immediately how the murder has made them both paranoid and we know it won't sit easily on them.

For me, this scene sums up the struggles of the whole play. It's all downhill for the Macbeths from here!

DONALD PIRIE (ROSS) DESCRIBES HIS FAVOURITE SCENE, ACT 4 SCENE 2:

After the mayhem, there is a lovely peaceful moment of normality with Lady Macduff and her son. This is broken by a visit from the murderers!

Further Study Question:

In this production of *Macbeth*, some of the scenes listed to the left have been cut.

In groups of five, imagine you are a theatre company and you need to cut five scenes out of the play. Which scenes would you cut and why? Think about the story of *Macbeth*, which scenes NEED to stay in? What effect does cutting scenes out have on the story?

FORM, STRUCTURE AND PLOT

Macbeth is organised into five acts. Each act contains several scenes. The play starts with a prologue scene given by the three witches, who occasionally appear between major scenes to foreshadow or comment on events. Shakespeare has some offstage action in several points in the story. He uses offstage action for Duncan's murder and Lady Macbeth's death. The single plot is chronological and easy to follow. There are no flashbacks but there are some dream scenes, for example Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. The attention is generally paid to Macbeth as the focus follows him through the play.

EXPOSITION

The exposition is very vague, as the characters are introduced throughout the first part of the play. It can be considered that the entire first act is the exposition.

INITIAL INCIDENT

The three witches start the play off with a prophecy that Macbeth will become king and that Banquo's children will become kings after Macbeth.

RISING ACTION

The rising action is when some of the prophecies are coming true and Lady Macbeth is trying to convince Macbeth to kill Duncan.

CRISIS/CLIMAX

The climax is the actual murder of Duncan.

FALLING ACTION

The falling action is all the events occurring after the murder where Macbeth tries to hide his crime and cement his position as king by killing other would-be kings. Lady Macbeth goes insane.

DENOUEMENT/RESOLUTION

Lady Macbeth dies and Macbeth is killed. Malcolm becomes the King.

SAM HEUGHAN (MALCOLM AND MURDERER) DESCRIBES HIS FAVOURITE SCENE, ACT 3 SCENE 1:

The writing is terrific, Macbeth is calculating, powerful and dangerous. He could easily command the murderers to do his bidding but is scheming enough to convince/entice them to want to do his will.

Watch how he manipulates them...!

CLAIRE BROWN (LADY MACDUFF) DESCRIBES HER FAVOURITE SCENE, ACT 5 SCENE 8:

I love the end when Macduff announces that he was born through caesarean section! It's so chilling and absolutely means that the game's up for Macbeth. The riddle finally unravels itself.

CAST AND COMPANY

Macbeth	Liam Brennan
Banquo	Martin Ledwith
Duncan/Seyward/Doctor/Porter	Jimmy Chisholm
Macduff/Captain/Murderer	Christopher Brand
Malcolm/Soldier/Murderer	Sam Heughan
Ross/Young Seyward	Donald Pirie
Lennox/Murderer of Lady Macduff	Stuart Nicoll
Lady Macbeth	Allison Mckenzie
Witch/Lady Macduff/Messenger/Soldier	Claire Brown
Witch/Macduff's Son/Servant/Soldier	Joanne Cummins
Witch/Gentlewoman/Fleance/Soldier	Pauline Lynch
Director	Lucy Pitman-Wallace
Designer	Lucy Osborne
Lighting Designer	Jenny Kagan
Composer/Musical Director	Philip Pinsky
Choreographer	Sue Nash
Voice Coach	Ros Steen
Deputy Stage Manager on the book	Claire Williamson

CHARACTERS

MACBETH



Macbeth's complex character changes considerably throughout the play. At the beginning Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, is a powerful man, a brave soldier and war hero. He is popular with all the important people of the time and well liked. He is also a loving husband to Lady Macbeth.

As a tragic hero, Macbeth's fatal flaw is his greed, fuelled by his ambition and power-lust. When the three witches prophesy that he will become Thane of Cawdor and it comes true he is spurred on to pursue more power. The prophecies and Lady Macbeth's persuasion push Macbeth into committing murder to fulfil his ambitions and he becomes King of Scotland.

Macbeth makes a unique Shakespearean villain because he is not entirely comfortable in his role as a criminal; the honour and pride evident at the beginning of the play manifest themselves in feelings of guilt that develop into paranoia and obsession. Ultimately, Macbeth becomes a miserable tyrant full of despair until he is killed in revenge by Macduff.

LADY MACBETH



Macbeth's wife is probably Shakespeare's most iconic female character. She is a strong ambitious woman and very much in love with her husband. Like Macbeth, her character develops greatly throughout the script. At the beginning her strong personality is evident along with her obvious love for her husband. She very quickly gets caught up in ambition and lust for power for herself as well as on behalf of her husband. She is the one that urges Macbeth to kill

Duncan and claim the throne for himself, showing that she is more ruthless than Macbeth at the beginning.

There is something 'other worldly' about Lady Macbeth and she is often closely linked with the world of the three witches and magic, often referring to spirits, she predicts the arrival of Duncan and suffers terrible hallucinations.

As the play progresses, Lady Macbeth feels increasingly guilty and these feelings develop into madness. As her madness consumes her, and she feels rejection from her husband, she eventually cannot live with what they have done together and commits suicide.

CHARACTERS *CONT.*

THE THREE WITCHES



The “Weird Sisters” control the actions of Macbeth and other characters in the play. They are entirely supernatural and predict all of the action in the play in the form of prophecy. In this production of Macbeth,

the witches ‘own’ the stage space as if all of the action is taking place for them. They are driven by a thirst for blood and death, with their main ambition being to cause as much death as possible. They prey on Macbeth in particular, possibly seeing him as the most corruptible character, but also the most likely to succeed in doing their work. They are always present in this production, lurking in the shadows of the stage, watching their prophecies come true.

PAULINE LYNCH PLAYS ONE OF THE WITCHES AND DESCRIBES HER CHARACTER’S AMBITION: Bloody havoc, destruction and despair.

DUNCAN



King of Scotland at the beginning of the play, Duncan is portrayed as a virtuous and wise king. Macbeth murders him in order to take his place.

MALCOLM



Duncan’s eldest son and rightful heir to the throne. After his father’s murder, Malcolm flees to England, resulting in Macbeth being crowned king. Macduff and Malcolm later invade Scotland and attack Macbeth.

SAM HEUGHAN PLAYS MALCOLM AND DESCRIBES HIS CHARACTER’S AMBITION: He wants to be ‘his father’s son’ and to unify Scotland and comfort/lead by example.

CHARACTERS *CONT.*

PORTER



A servant in Macbeth's castle.

CAPTAIN



Wounded in battle, he gives an account of the war at the beginning of the play.

MURDERERS



Macbeth hires the murderers to kill Banquo, Fleance and Lady Macduff and her children.

SAM HEUGHAN AND STUART NICOLL PLAY MURDERERS AND DESCRIBE THEIR CHARACTERS' AMBITIONS:

Money, power and reward.

BANQUO



Banquo is a friend of Macbeth. Banquo is the only person who heard the witches' prophecy with Macbeth, so Macbeth has him killed to protect his position.

FLEANCE



Fleance is Banquo's son. He escapes Macbeth's attempts to murder him and by the end of the play his whereabouts are unknown. It could be that he eventually goes on to rule Scotland and fulfil another of the witches' predictions.

PAULINE LYNCH PLAYS FLEANCE AND DESCRIBES HER CHARACTER'S AMBITION:

He wants to be a man, like Daddy.

CHARACTERS *CONT.*

MACDUFF



Macduff is weary of Macbeth and shuns the banquet. As punishment, Macbeth has his family killed. Macduff travels to England and meets up with Malcolm. Together, they raise an army and attack Macbeth. As predicted by the witches, Macduff kills Macbeth. It turns out that Macduff was “from his mother’s womb/Untimely ripped” (V, viii) fulfilling the witches’ prophecy that “none from woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth” (IV, i)

LADY MACDUFF



Wife of Macduff, murdered with her children, to punish her husband.

CLAIRE BROWN PLAYS LADY MACDUFF AND DESCRIBES HER CHARACTER’S AMBITION:

To have my family safe together.

ROSS



A Thane of Scotland. The character of Ross is used to move the action on in the text.

DONALD PIRIE PLAYS ROSS AND DESCRIBES HIS CHARACTER’S AMBITION:

Peace, stability, honour, safety (then eventually) revenge.

SEYWARD, YOUNG SEYWARD, GENTLEWOMAN



Seyward: Earl of Northumberland, part of Malcolm’s army.

Young Seyward: His son, killed by Macbeth

Gentlewoman: A concerned attendant to Lady Macbeth.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MACBETH: LIAM BRENNAN



HOW ARE YOU APPROACHING THE CHALLENGE OF PLAYING SUCH AN ICONIC CHARACTER?

I think it's important not to be afraid and put the iconic part to one side. You'll never please everyone in the audience with your interpretation of the character anyway. I try to approach it my own way and not copy any other versions I may have seen, to see it fresh. At the end of the day I am an actor telling a story, just a cog in a wheel.

What I like about the character is the fact that although Macbeth becomes a monster he keeps talking to the audience about his decisions. He shares with the audience his secrets; his paranoia is intriguing. We should be appalled by his actions yet interested in how he articulates these to us.

YOU HAVE PLAYED THE ROLE OF MACBETH IN A PREVIOUS PRODUCTION. HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN OF PLAYING THE CHARACTER AGAIN WITH A DIFFERENT DIRECTOR?

I've played Macbeth in two previous productions and other characters in the play before as well. But I've not played him for ten years now so I'm a more mature version of the character this time. I think Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are among only a few of Shakespeare's characters that do work well played at a range of ages. Ambition makes sense in younger or older characters, either starting out in their careers or the frustration of nearing the end. I've never before been in a traditional 'swords and kilts' style production, my previous Macbeths have been more of the 'war-torn Bosnia, machine guns' style. I think that once you have worked through the truth and understanding of a scene it is the same in any style to a certain extent. It's strange how a traditional approach to the script is now more unusual. You can only really play *your* Macbeth at the end of the day, *your* understanding of the character.

HOW ARE YOU APPROACHING THE ICONIC DAGGER SOLILOQUY?

It is such a famous speech that when you perform it you can almost hear the audience saying it with you. It's written so well that it's actually not that difficult to perform. The question is what does the dagger mean to Macbeth and you have to decide in your mind your answer to that. He certainly believes that he sees it. I see all soliloquies in the play as a conversation with the audience. Possibly not with the first line though – that could be just in Macbeth's head. But he does choose to say it aloud to the audience, thus exciting them. He is plucking up courage in this speech to go ahead and kill Duncan; his mind is in a strange place. It is up to the audience, depending on how they read the interpretation of the witches as to who is controlling it. I know my truth but it's fine if the audience see it another way.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MACBETH: **LIAM BRENNAN** *CONT.*

HOW DO YOU VIEW MACBETH'S ABILITY TO MURDER HIS WAY TO THE TOP? IS AMBITION HIS EXCUSE FOR EVILNESS?

I think that any evilness comes from the supernatural element. After the first time Macbeth meets the witches Macbeth states, 'If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me' (Act 1, Scene 3). The first thought is there but he decides to leave it as a thought at that point. Only later does the thought get under his skin. Then his wife moves the ambition forwards. Macbeth is a soldier; he does kill on the battlefield. With Duncan though it is different, more sacrilegious.

Once he has fulfilled his ambition he becomes paranoid about losing it and is haunted by the witches. He is scared his position is going to be wrenched from him.

I see Macbeth as ambitious but capable of darkness. The witches saw something in him, they picked the right person. Witches plus Macbeth equals evil. Was evil there before though, I'm not sure you can say. Is anyone evil without input from others?

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR: **LUCY PITMAN-WALLACE**



WHY CHOOSE TO TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE OF DIRECTING SUCH A WELL KNOWN AND LOVED SHAKESPEARE PLAY?

I love working on Shakespeare texts, they have such depth, so many different layers. It's like jumping into an ocean of language. It is a fantastic play with a great action packed and thrilling story. It is less complicated than some Shakespeares as it tells more of a direct story. There is a driving power behind it.

I have always loved the play; I did it for O Level many years ago, so I have known it for a long time. It is a fantastic opportunity to direct in conjunction with The Lyceum, the 'Scottish play' performed in Scotland couldn't be a greater opportunity.

WHAT WILL BE FRESH AND NEW ABOUT YOUR PRODUCTION AND HOW WILL IT BE RELEVANT TO TODAY'S AUDIENCE?

I like to let the play do all the talking. The play is the thing. When approaching *Macbeth* I see it in a traditional way. We are creating our own version of medieval Scotland and accepting what the play has given us.

In rehearsals today we have been discussing current parallels with David Milliband and what is happening between him and Gordon Brown. Not that I'm suggesting he will attempt murder! The power struggle to be leader is always a current one whether it is a civilised one or not.

Macbeth becomes distant and removed from himself and there are parallels with President Mugabe. We have been looking at photos of how he is currently looking, almost as if he is wearing a mask, unconnected with himself. The nature of power is how you get it and how you then use it when you have it. Macbeth is a hero at the beginning of the play and a tyrant at the end.

WHAT WERE YOUR EARLY EXPERIENCES OF SHAKESPEARE, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU STUDIED IT AT SCHOOL?

I was very fortunate as I was an only child and my parents took me to see shows at Stratford from the age of eight or nine, as it was cheaper than childcare! My Mum always used to tell me the story of the play on the way up. I had an early access to Shakespeare being brought to life on the stage, coupled with strong teaching of it in the classroom.

Seeing Shakespeare is so important. It is great to study it as a fine example of literature with beautiful poetry, but I see Shakespeare as a working playwright, handing out scripts to his actors and directing them.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR: **LUCY PITMAN-WALLACE** *CONT.*

WHAT SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY SCHOOL GROUPS, LOOK OUT FOR WHEN COMING TO SEE THIS PRODUCTION?

The stage should be seen as the witches' space with Macbeth stepping into their territory rather than the other way round. Man's attempts have been to control nature, to build a castle on their space, but man still cannot control it. Our designer has created a space where people can appear and disappear easily. We are featuring all the natural elements – smoke, wind and fire – penetrating the man-made world and gradually destroying it.

The witches are very central to this version of the play. They are interested in death. They see Macbeth as a killing machine. The witches will become involved with the bodies on the stage. The gauzes at the back of the stage will be similar to the witches' dresses and the blankets which cover the dead soldiers.

Also, look out for the relationship between Banquo and Macbeth. One dismisses the witches and chooses the right path and the other doesn't. Macbeth's addictive personality means he can't say no to the thing that terrifies him. There are many crossroads moments where Macbeth has choices, he could choose the right path but doesn't. It could be paralleled with drug taking where two friends are offered a substance and one declines while one just can't help but accept it.

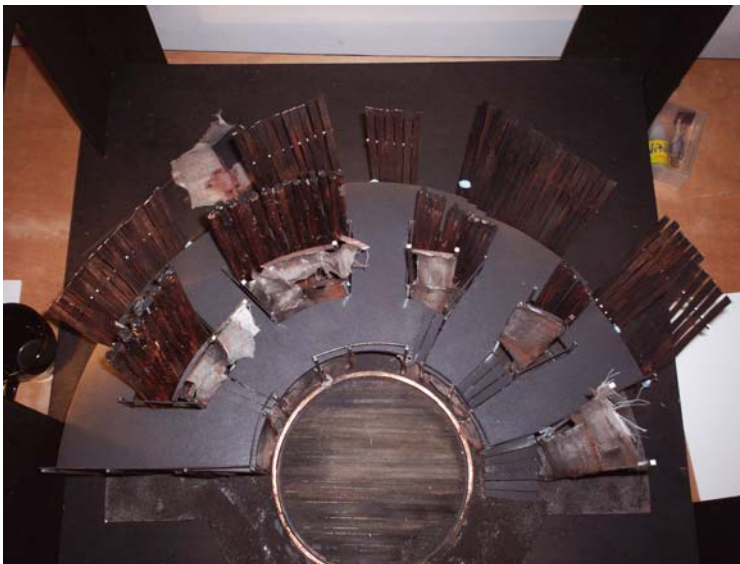
MEDIEVAL *MACBETH* – PRODUCTION AND COSTUME DESIGN

THE SET HAS BEEN DESIGNED BY LUCY OSBORNE AND IS VERY SYMBOLIC OF THE PLAY'S THEMES.

On one hand, the set represents rustic Scotland, with wooden poles around the back to represent trees. The structured layout of the set is to show the human need to build and cultivate, almost as if a clearing in the wood had been found and improved to make a liveable space for people.

The circular space in the middle of the stage represents the crown, with the copper edge to represent power and an 'electric heat' symbolic of the heat of the action taking place.

The witches are very much in charge of the space, lurking in the shadows and at the front of the stage. Therefore, death is ever present, represented by the banners hanging up around the stage; each banner is a mantle hung up in memory of a soldier who has lost his life in battle.



COSTUME DESIGNED BY LUCY OSBORNE

MEN

The male characters wear a mantle or large blanket over their clothes. This is an artistic interpretation of the kind of clothes that would have been worn in medieval Scotland. The men would keep their mantles with them during battle and would sit on them and sleep under them at night. The colour of the mantle would depend on the dye their wives would have used and would have been a lot duller in colour than the colours used in the production. It is possible that the colour of the mantle is an 'ancestor' of tartan as families would have tended to wear the same colour.



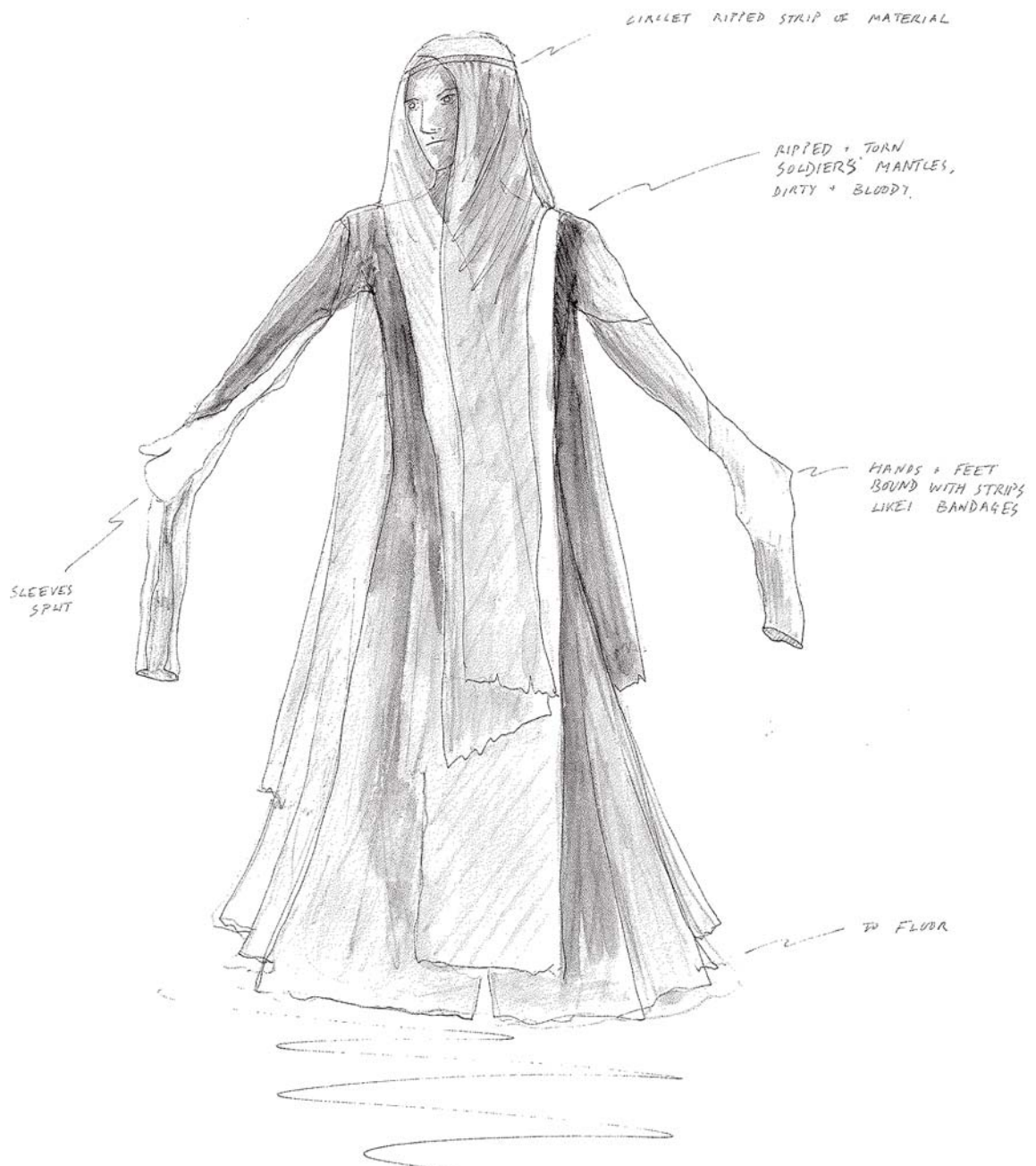
WOMEN

The women wear very similar clothes to the men, although more fitted and a longer dress. The most well-off characters wear the brightest colours. In medieval Scotland it would have been very difficult to find bright blue and purple dyes as these do not readily occur in nature; greens and yellow would have been easier to make. Often clothes were dyed using horse urine.



WITCHES

The witches' human forms are hidden by their costumes. Although they most definitely have a human shape, their hands and feet are bound and heads covered, this is to make it appear as if there is something supernatural about them. Their costumes match the earthiness of the set design as if they have come from the earth and control the area.



THEMES OF *MACBETH*

THE SUPERNATURAL

AMBITION

JEALOUSY

ATMOSPHERE

GUILT

PARTNERSHIP

CRIME LED BY LOVE

POWER AND GREED

TRUST AND BETRAYAL

DISORDER

FEAR

EXCUSES

VISIONS

DESPERATION

GOOD AND EVIL



SYMBOLISM USED IN *MACBETH*

BLOOD

Shakespeare uses the word 'blood' over 40 times in *Macbeth*. Blood is also referenced without actually being mentioned. For example, the witches refer to 'killing swine'. Also, 'out damned spot' could also be a reference to Lady Macbeth trying to wash the blood from her hands.

Meaning: treason, guilt, murder, death, bravery (bloody man = compliment), life, guilt.

SLEEP AND DREAMS

A powerful symbol referenced approximately 35 times in this production. Macbeth murders the innocent Duncan in his sleep when he is at his most vulnerable. Lady Macbeth has terrible dreams and sleepwalks as she is consumed with guilt.

Meaning: The meaning of this symbol changes through the play, starting out as representative of innocence and peace and evolving to represent discomfort and fear.

ROYALTY AND CROWNS

Over 40 references to royalty and crowns makes sure that the audience understand exactly what Macbeth is focussed on gaining through his murders. The number of times royalty is mentioned in one form or another heightens the importance of power-lust and Macbeth's need to become king as an overall theme of the play.

Meaning: Power, drive, ambition, power-lust.

BIRDS

Shakespeare often uses birds throughout his plays. He uses the poetic characteristics of birds to describe and represent some of the characters and situations in *Macbeth*.

References and meanings include:

Vulture – hunger, death (the presence of a vulture means there has been a death), voracity, feeding on the death of others.

Owl – eerie, night time, wise.

Wren – small but fiercely protective.

Raven – evil, bewitching, dark, predatory.

Martlet – A fictional bird similar to a house martin, swallow or swift. It has no legs and is often pictured on shields or on coat-of-arms.

Represents wealth, salubrity, royalty.

Read Through Exercise:

During a read through of *Macbeth*, nominate four people. One person is to stand up whenever there is a reference to blood, one person should stand when a bird is mentioned, one for references to sleep or dreams and one whenever anything royal is mentioned. Another person could keep a tally of how many times each person stands up.

Exercise:

There are more recurring motifs and symbols used throughout *Macbeth*, including:

The weather
Prophecy
Hallucination

What more can you find and what does each one mean? How do these references enhance the drama of the play?

FAMOUS LADY MACBETHS: THE STRONG ICONIC CHARACTER THROUGH THE AGES



Edna Thomas in 1936 New Lafayette Theatre production, directed by Orson Wells. *'Voodoo' Macbeth*.

Phyllis Neilson-Terry in the 1938 RSC production, directed by B. Iden Payne.



Vivien Leigh in the 1955 RSC production, directed by Glen Byam Shaw.

Colleen Dewhurst in 1957 Public Theatre production, directed by Stuart Vaughan.

Judith Anderson in the 1960 production, directed by George Schaefer.



Francesca Annis in the 1971 film adaptation, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* directed by Roman Polanski



Judi Dench in the 1976 RSC production, directed by Trevor Nunn.

Cheryl Campbell in the 1993 RSC production, directed by Adrian Noble.

Brid Brennan in the 1996 RSC production, directed by Tim Albery.

Laila Robins in the 2004 New Jersey's production, directed by Bonnie J, Monte.

AN INTERVIEW WITH LADY MACBETH: **ALLISON MCKENZIE**



WHO IS LADY MACBETH?

Who Lady Macbeth is is a huge question. I think first and foremost she's a wife, she's a homemaker, she's a very, very intelligent woman. I think that the audience have to have an affection for this woman to be able to see how far she and her husband fall.

I think she's a very strong woman who's the backbone, the crutch of Macbeth. In their marriage she's been the backbone of him and... yeah, a very shrewd customer!

IS THERE A PRESSURE OF EXPECTATION IN PLAYING SUCH A FAMOUS CHARACTER?

Funnily enough I hadn't read *Macbeth* until I was asked to do this, so I had no preconceptions whatsoever about this part or this play – I know all the dames have played it. I think it's really good for me to go into it with just innocence and wide open eyes because I don't have any preconceptions; and approaching it completely with a heart of stone and MY heart of stone, nobody else's, and how I will approach it is just my own thoughts on it. I tend to do that in other plays, if it's such an iconic part I will not watch the film, I will not look at it, because even subconsciously it informs you. So I have no preconceptions and just want to hit the ground running and hope that people like my interpretation of it, and get it, and don't turn off.

HAS YOUR CONCEPTION OF WHAT THE PLAY IS CHANGED, NOW THAT YOU ARE REHEARSING IT?

Well, we are very early in rehearsals but I think *Macbeth* is basically what it says on the tin. It's very straightforward, the language is not too convoluted, it's blood, it's gore, it's power and strength and greed and all that kind of stuff. A lot of testosterone on that stage... and in rehearsals, yes a lot of testosterone!

A lot of people have studied it at school and whether they had a good teacher or a bad teacher really influences their love of Shakespeare. People do have a love/hate relationship at school – if you have a bad teacher then maybe you didn't get it, didn't understand it and didn't like it. Whereas, if you have a good teacher, with a love of the language and how fabulous a play it is, it opens up. So that's what we're trying to do here – it's a very bold production we're doing, but deeply understandable.

YOU'VE WORKED WITH LIAM BEFORE, WHAT WILL HE BRING TO THE ROLE OF MACBETH AND THE ONSTAGE DYNAMIC BETWEEN YOUR CHARACTERS?

Liam and I have worked together before – he was Hamlet to my Ophelia so another two major iconic parts! The great thing is that we just work so well together and I'm not scared by him and he's not scared by me, so the first day of rehearsal there was snogging, there was throwing each other around the room, we're very free with each other. Liam's just such a fabulous actor to play Macbeth. He has played him before and I think he's kind of grown into the part now. It's great to be in the rehearsal room with him because we've just such an electricity and there is such a passion.

FURTHER STUDY QUESTIONS

Here are some questions to help students analyse this production of *Macbeth*.

How was the stage used to create the atmosphere of *Macbeth*?

How did the set on the stage compare with the design pictures and description in this resource pack?

How did the actors make use of the different areas of the set?

Describe an actor's appearance. Why do you think this actor was cast in this role? What did their physical appearance tell us about their character?

Describe the physical appearance of the Three Witches. How did they use their body to tell us about their characters? Did anything they did physically help to tell the story?

What kind of music and sound effects were used? Where did the sound come from? What different kinds of atmosphere did the sound produce?

Did you notice any special lighting effects? What kind of atmosphere did these produce?

Choose two characters who had a relationship on stage, for example, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. What was their relationship like? Did it change? What did the actors do to show this?

These questions are to help with further study of the play text.

Macbeth can be described as a tragic hero. What is a tragic hero and how does Macbeth fit that role?

Who do you think controls the action in the play? Who is the main protagonist and why?

Compare Lady Macbeth to another strong Shakespearean woman.

What do you think is the significance of the Porter? In what way does Shakespeare use this character?

PRACTICAL EXPLORATION: DRAMA EXERCISES

Practical drama activity is a great way to look further at some of the characters, text and themes of the play. These exercises can be done in the classroom and need no previous experience of drama.

Act I Scene 5 – the letter

In pairs, one person plays Lady Macbeth, the other Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth reads the letter from her husband out loud.

Now try Macbeth reading the letter, off stage, while we see Lady Macbeth's reaction to the words. If the person playing Lady Macbeth thinks any of the words to be important, she could speak them out loud after Macbeth has said them.

Next try swapping over, so that Lady Macbeth reads the letter and reacts to the words but Macbeth echoes some of the most important words out loud.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS

What effect does this technique have on the action? Which felt the most dramatic? Which made the most sense of the letter? What does this letter tell the audience about the Macbeths' relationship?

Verse

Pick a section of text that is written in verse, about six lines will do.

Mark the lines to show where the heavy syllables are (see box below for help).

Practise speaking the lines keeping the rhythm of Blank Verse.

Now try speaking them without the rhythm, pausing where there is punctuation and running sentences on across lines.

Deliver the lines to the class in the two different styles.

What is the difference between speaking the two?

What is the difference between listening to the two?

VERSE: The most important/upper class characters, such as Macbeth, speak in verse in Iambic Pentameter (lyrical sounding verse with 5 beats to each line).

E.g. De-**dum**, de-**dum**, de-**dum**, de-**dum**, de-**dum** or

“Good **things** of **day** **begin** to **droop** and **drowse**;
While **night's** black **agents** to their **preys** do **rouse**.
Thou **marvell'st** **at** my **words**: but **hold** thee **still**;
Things **bad** **begun** make **strong** themselves by **ill**.”
(*Macbeth* Act III scene ii)

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