

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
Timothy Vernon

**PACIFIC  
Opera  
VICTORIA**

Patrick Corrigan  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**MACBETH**  
VERDI



**Music by Giuseppe Verdi**  
**Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave with additions by Andrea Maffei**  
**based on William Shakespeare's *Macbeth***

**First Performance March 14, 1847, Teatro della Pergola, Florence**

**First Performance of the Revised version April 21, 1865,  
Théâtre Lyrique, Paris**

**Study Guide and Student Activity Guide  
for Pacific Opera Victoria's Production  
October, 2012**

**PRODUCTION PATRON: Lydia Wingate**

SEASON UNDERWRITERS



RBC Royal Bank®



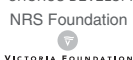
SURTITLES SPONSOR



PUBLIC FUNDING



CHORUS DEVELOPMENT



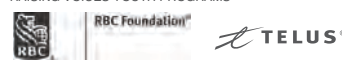
ARTIST TRAINING



EDUCATION PROGRAMS



RAISING VOICES YOUTH PROGRAMS



Pacific Opera Victoria  
500 – 1815 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8T 5A4  
Phone: 250.382.1641  
Box Office: 250.385.0222  
[www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca)

# Macbeth

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave with additions by Andrea Maffei

First Performance March 14, 1847, Teatro della Pergola, Florence

First Performance of the Revised Version April 21, 1865, Théâtre Lyrique, Paris

Dress Rehearsal, October 2, 2012, 7 pm

Performances October 4, 6, 10, 12, 2012, at 8 pm. Matinée October 14 at 2:30 pm

At the Royal Theatre

In Italian with English Surtitles

The performance is approximately 2 hours 40 minutes, including one intermission.

## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Cast in order of vocal appearance

Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, a general in King Duncan's army .....	Gregory Dahl
Banquo, a general in King Duncan's army .....	Alain Coulombe
Lady Macbeth .....	Lyne Fortin
Macbeth's Servant .....	Stephen Barradell
Macduff, Thane of Fife .....	Robert Clark
Assassin.....	Dale Friesen
First Apparition .....	Andy Erasmus
Second Apparition .....	Mary-Ellen Rayner
Third Apparition .....	Natalie Marcaccini
Malcolm, son of King Duncan .....	Matthew Johnson
Doctor .....	Jon-Paul Décosse
Lady in waiting to Lady Macbeth .....	Rebecca Hass
Duncan, King of Scotland .....	Keith Lylock
Fleance, Banquo's son .....	Ajay Parikh-Friese
Chorus of Witches, messengers, nobles, attendants, refugees	
Conductor.....	Timothy Vernon
Director / Choreographer .....	Morris Panych
Set Designer .....	Ken MacDonald
Costume Designer.....	Dana Osborne
Lighting Designer .....	Alan Brodie
Projection Designer.....	Jamie Nesbitt
Movement Coach .....	Wendy Gorling
Fight Director.....	Jacques Lemay
Stage Manager .....	Sara Robb
Assistant Stage Managers .....	Sandy Halliday, Peter Jotkus,
Apprentice Stage Manager.....	Maddie Pauling
Principal Coach.....	Robert Holliston
Chorus Master & Assistant Conductor .....	Giuseppe Pietraroia
Assistant Accompanist.....	Kim Cousineau

With the Victoria Symphony and the POV Chorus

PRODUCTION  
SPONSORS

  
WINCHESTER GALLERIES

  
Luxe  
REAL ESTATE

  
Sotheby's  
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Canada

  
Butler

## Introduction

*You are an ambitious soul, Macbeth. You long for greatness, but will you be wicked enough?  
Ambizioso spirito Tu sei Macbetto. Alla grandezza aneli, Ma sarai tu malvagio?*

*Lady Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 5 (Verdi's opera)*

*Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness To catch the nearest way:  
thou wouldst be great, Art not without ambition, but without The illness should attend it.*

*Lady Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 5 (Shakespeare's play)*

*Macbeth* is a magnificent distillation of Shakespeare's epic drama of tyranny and dark magic. Spurred on by witches' prophecies and driven by ruthless ambition, Macbeth and his wife – the archetypal power couple – kill and kill again in order to gain and keep the throne of Scotland. But as conscience prowls around the edges of sanity and impossible omens come true, their hold on power unravels.

Every moment of this opera balances on the knife edge between reality and hallucination, earth and hell. From the first foreboding notes of the overture, through spine-tingling arias, macabre choruses of witches and murderers, and the Scottish people's outpouring of grief, Verdi's music pulls us with headlong momentum into the heart of evil. *Macbeth* is an opera of chilling beauty.

## Synopsis

**Act 1:** Macbeth and Banquo encounter a coven of witches who prophesy that Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis, will become Thane of Cawdor; that he will be crowned King of Scotland; and that his fellow general, Banquo, will be the father of kings.

Almost immediately, the first prophecy comes true: the Thane of Cawdor has been executed for treason, and King Duncan has given the title to Macbeth. Macbeth's thoughts instantly turn to the second prophecy, though he tells himself he will do nothing to snatch the crown for himself.

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband, telling of his new rank and of the witches' promises. She worries that although Macbeth is ambitious, he may not be wicked enough to seize the throne. When a servant tells her that King Duncan is expected for a visit that evening, she exults in the opportunity to kill the king.

Macbeth returns home, and in just a few intense words, he and his wife agree that the murder must be carried out that night. Sprightly martial music announces the arrival of the king, and the Macbeths go to greet him.

Later as night falls, Macbeth hallucinates that he sees a dagger. With rising intensity and trepidation, he steels himself to carry out the murder. He goes into the king's chamber, while Lady Macbeth waits. He returns to tell her the deed is done. In an intense, panicky exchange between the couple, Macbeth voices his horror at the crime he has committed. Lady Macbeth tells him to return the dagger to the king's room and smear blood on the sleeping guards to incriminate them. When Macbeth cannot bring himself to do this, she takes the dagger and does it herself. Macbeth looks at his bloody hands, saying the ocean could not wash them clean. His wife returns, saying a splash of water is enough to clean her hands. She drags her husband off, urging him to pull himself together.

The next morning, Macduff, a Scottish nobleman, goes to wake the king and discovers the murder. All, including the Macbeths, express horror at the crime.

**Act 2:** Macbeth and his lady have got away with the murder. Duncan's son Malcolm has been blamed and has fled to England. But although the throne is his, Macbeth broods over the witches' prophecy that Banquo will father kings. The couple agree that Banquo and his young son must die. As Macbeth leaves to make the arrangements, Lady Macbeth urges him not to waver. Left alone, Lady Macbeth reflects that the deed must be done and revels in her bloodthirsty craving for the throne.

Night falls, and outside the castle, a gang of assassins attack Banquo and his son Fleance. Inside, the Macbeths host a lavish banquet. As Lady Macbeth toasts her guests, an assassin arrives and reports to Macbeth that Banquo is dead but his son has escaped. Pomp and celebration turn into dismay, embarrassment, and horror as Macbeth hallucinates seeing the bloody ghost of Banquo, and Lady Macbeth desperately tries to salvage her party.

### **Intermission**

**Act 3:** Macbeth returns to the witches, intent on learning his destiny. They call up a series of apparitions. The first tells Macbeth to beware of Macduff. The second proclaims that no man born of woman will harm him. The third promises he will be invincible until he sees Birnam Wood come marching toward him. Finally he is shown a vision of a line of kings – the future rulers of Scotland, Banquo's descendants.

Macbeth and his lady vow the destruction of all their enemies, beginning with Macduff's wife and children. They instigate a reign of terror as they strive to wipe out every threat to their power.

**Act 4:** Scotland is in ruins. On the English border refugees lament. Macduff, grieving for his murdered wife and children, is joined by Malcolm and the English army. Malcolm orders the soldiers to use branches from the trees in Birnam Wood as camouflage for their attack on Macbeth.

Meanwhile, Macbeth's wife has begun walking in her sleep, reliving the murders, trying obsessively to clean her hands of blood.

Although Macbeth still has confidence in his invincibility, he senses that his legacy will be curses rather than compassion, honour, or love. When he is told his wife is dead, he can only reflect on the utter futility of life.

Finally, as Birnam Wood appears to march toward his castle, and the English army arrives, Macbeth meets Macduff, who discloses that he was not born naturally but ripped from his mother's womb. He kills Macbeth and proclaims Malcolm king of Scotland.

## Something Wicked This Way Comes

*Macbeth* is one wicked opera.

Giuseppe Verdi took Shakespeare's roiling brew of dark magic, murder, and madness and shape shifted it into something even more intense – an exploration of tyranny and a mind-bending operatic trip into the disintegration of the human soul.

### Shakespeare's Play

The opera follows the play quite closely. Written around 1606, *Macbeth* is absolutely central to our literary heritage – shorthand for savage ambition, guilt, and twisted prophecy. The poetry is so deeply entangled in popular culture that it is practically part of our DNA. We all know bits of it –

- The malign glee of the witches:  
*Double, double toil and trouble,  
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.*
- Their announcement of Macbeth's arrival:  
*By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes.*
- Macbeth's hallucinatory trajectory to murder:  
*Is this a dagger which I see before me?*
- His lady, unhinged by the horror of what she has done, her ruthless clarity of purpose turned inside out:  
*Out, damned spot! Out, I say! ... who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.*

We can marvel at this creation – but let's spare a moment to pity the real Macbeth, who should be languishing in comfortable obscurity as just another medieval Scottish king. Instead, his reputation (along with that of his wife) was trashed for posterity by a playwright who prized dramatic excitement above historic accuracy.

Shakespeare also used *Macbeth* to curry favour with a royal patron. That royal patron was James I of England, aka James VI of Scotland (we met his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, in POV's last operatic outing, *Maria Stuarda*). King James loved the arts and one of his first acts on ascending the English throne in 1603 was to grant a royal patent to Shakespeare's acting troupe, thereby increasing the social status, income, and job security of the players. Shakespeare was happy to return the favour with a little flattery.

The witches were sure to go over well with King James: as Garry Wills commented in his book *Verdi's Shakespeare*, "Shakespeare could count on his audience's absolute belief in witches. His government was still hanging them, and King James had personally interrogated witches, passed laws against them, and written a treatise on them (*Daemonologie*)."

The story of Macbeth (witches and all) came from one of Shakespeare's favourite sources, a massive history of Great Britain called *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, (commonly known as



**Above: Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth (1889).** This oil painting by John Singer Sargent depicts the actress Ellen Terry as she looked in an 1888 performance of *Macbeth* at the Lyceum Theatre, London.

Her gown is perhaps the perfect costume for Lady M, for it is decorated with 1000 iridescent wings from the green jewel beetle, *Sternocera aequisignata*. Over the years the wings kept falling off, but the costume has recently been painstakingly restored. Learn more at <http://www.pasthorizons.com/index.php/archives/03/2011/the-archaeology-of-a-dress>



Above: Macbeth and Banquo encountering the witches, a woodcut from the Holinshed Chronicles

*Holinshed's Chronicles*), published in 1587, and itself based on *Scotorum Historiae* (1526–7) by Hector Boece.

Both Boece and Holinshed portray Banquo as an accomplice in Macbeth's murder of King Duncan. Scholars today believe Banquo was invented by Boece, but at the time he was considered the founder of the Stuart dynasty. Since King James fancied himself a direct descendant of Banquo, it would never do for

Banquo to be shown as an assassin. Shakespeare therefore made him a voice of nobility and conscience. He even had the witches show Macbeth a vision of Banquo's descendants—a line of eight kings that

culminated in a ruler with "twofold balls and treble scepters" – a reference to King James who was crowned twice – as King of Scotland and then as King of England (there are two scepters for the English crown). Verdi did not feel the need to keep this little detail in the opera.

The play tinkered with history in other respects. Shakespeare's wise old King Duncan was actually killed in battle in 1040 at the age of 39, after a mere six years of apparently incompetent rule. The real Macbeth was Duncan's first cousin; both were grandsons of King Malcolm II, and both had reasonable claims to the throne. By defeating Duncan and seizing power, Macbeth was following established tradition; he was no more and no less brutal than any other ruler of the time.

The real Macbeth was not such a bad king either. He was apparently a wise, strong, successful king, presiding over a land that was surprisingly prosperous and peaceful for that bloodthirsty era. He even had the time and money to leave his kingdom for a pilgrimage to Rome — sure sign, say historians, of a stable country and effective leadership.

Macbeth ruled Scotland from 1040 to 1057. The action that in the play hurtles through a span of weeks or months in reality covered 17 years between Macbeth's accession and his defeat.

But historical inaccuracy rarely fazes playwrights – or opera composers. A byword for ruthless ambition, Macbeth and his Lady between them are among Shakespeare's most notorious villains – right up there with Richard III, who was similarly maligned by the Bard.

Now, a millennium after Macbeth's death, his fictional doppelgänger still holds sway – and nothing is likely to wash this stain from his reputation!



The "Chandos" portrait, believed to be of William Shakespeare and to have been painted circa 1610 (shortly after Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*). The painting may be by John Taylor. It was named after its former owners, the Dukes of Chandos and was the first picture to enter the collection of London's National Portrait Gallery when it was established in 1856.

## Verdi's Opera

In 1846, when Verdi received a commission for an opera at Florence's Teatro della Pergola, he contemplated three subjects: Grillparzer's *Die Anfrau* and Schiller's *Die Räuber*, both of which would require a fine tenor, and *Macbeth*, which would need a great baritone. The decision to go with *Macbeth* came down to the availability of a specific baritone – Felice Varesi, for whom Verdi later composed the role of Rigoletto.

These were still the days when operas were composed for the voices at hand and the fluke of a singer's schedule could determine what was written for the stage. Not a note of *Macbeth* was composed until after the singers were engaged (and clearly, in Verdi's mind, *Macbeth* HAD to be a baritone; tenors need not apply).

Generally speaking, singing a line takes three times as long as speaking it. So although *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, it had to be condensed even more for the opera stage.

The librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, set to verse Verdi's own prose synopsis of the play – and put up with endless harangues from the composer. Verdi's letters to Piave went on at great length about the need to keep the work concise: *I beg you to keep your verses short; the shorter they are, the more effective they will be ... there must not be a single superfluous word ... Brevity and sublimity! ... FEW WORDS ... FEW WORDS ... FEW BUT SIGNIFICANT ... CONCISE STYLE! ... FEW WORDS! Understood?*

Shakespeare's already concise play was distilled, boiled down to its essence. Verdi ruthlessly cut out entire scenes and characters. He reduced King Duncan's part to a walk-on.

And when *Macbeth* is told of his wife's death, his great *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow* speech was stripped to its last desolate lines: *Life ... is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*

Even with so much of Shakespeare's addictive poetry cut out, the impact is riveting. For Verdi, the drama was paramount. He was leaving *bel canto* behind, working toward something gritty, dark, even grotesque.

A control freak about every element of the opera, he coached his singers exhaustively, rehearsed and conducted the performances, and oversaw the lighting, costumes, and scenic effects.

He sent detailed stage and music directions to Varesi, admonishing him, *Study the dramatic situation and the words well; the music will come by itself. In a word, I'd rather you served the poet better than you serve the composer.*

In her memoirs, Marianna Barbieri-Nini, the first Lady *Macbeth*, recalls Verdi's obsessive rehearsals of the magnificent duet that takes place just after the murder of Duncan.

*You might think that I exaggerate, but it was rehearsed more than 150 times: to ensure, the Maestro said, that it was closer to speech than to singing ... On the evening of the dress rehearsal ... there we were, ready, in costume, the orchestra in the pit, the chorus on stage – when Verdi beckoned to Varesi and me, called us into the wings and asked us, as a favour ... to rehearse that damned duet again at the piano ...*



Felice Varesi, who created the roles of *Macbeth* and Rigoletto.

*Verdi had this fantastic idea of how to condense a drama, how to get to the essence of a drama, how to make an already short play (because *Macbeth* is the shortest of the tragedies) as swift – it's like an already bloody knife flying through the darkness and hitting you in the chest! That should be the effect of a good performance.*

Timothy Vernon

Varesi, fed up with this extraordinary request, tried raising his voice a little, saying: "For God's sake, we've already rehearsed it 150 times!"

"In half an hour it'll be 151."

We were forced to obey the tyrant. I still remember the threatening looks Varesi shot at him; clenching the hilt of his sword, he seemed about to murder Verdi, as he would later murder Duncan. However, he yielded, resigning himself to his fate. The 151st rehearsal took place while the audience clamoured impatiently in the theatre.

Verdi's perfectionism carried on long past the opera's 1847 première. He campaigned unsuccessfully to replace Eugenia Tadolini for the 1848 Naples première because she looked and sounded too beautiful: *Tadolini has a beautiful and attractive appearance; I would like Lady Macbeth to be ugly and evil. Tadolini sings to perfection; I would like the Lady not to sing. Tadolini has a stupendous voice, clear, limpid, powerful; I would like the Lady to have a harsh, stifled, and hollow voice. Tadolini's voice has an angelic quality; I would like the Lady's voice to be diabolical.*

This does not mean Verdi rejected musical beauty (there is plenty in *Macbeth*). But the dramatic truth behind the couple's emotional journey trumped the niceties of an elegant bel canto line.

Later, in 1865, Verdi prepared a revised version of the opera for Paris (the version usually performed today). Among other changes, he added Lady M's show-stopping aria *La luce langue* and the couple's duet at the end of act 3 and revised the profoundly moving *Patria Oppressa* chorus for the Scottish refugees. And he continued to insist on dramatic integrity. When the Paris theatre, trying to give an expensive tenor more to do, proposed letting Macduff sing a stanza of Lady M's Brindisi, Verdi said, no way, insisting: *There are three roles in this opera, and three is all there can be: Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, and the chorus of witches.* (He was overruled for the Paris performance!).

What is most astounding in the opera is the psychological journey of the couple. Macbeth, at first the weaker of the two, embarks on a killing spree and instigates a reign of terror that gains terrible momentum.

His lady early in the opera is already a kind of half demon, allied with darkness and hell, goading her husband to kill and then to man up and stop falling apart. With each crime she tells him, *it is done ... it cannot be undone .. it will be forgotten ... the dead cannot return.* But as she relives it all in her final sleepwalking scene and cries, *What's done cannot be undone*, the words are no longer a cue to move on with life, but the ultimate hellish realization that she is alone in terrible isolation with her guilt, destroyed by the implacable, unchangeable horror of what she has done.

As for Macbeth, even as he clings to the belief that victory is possible, before he learns his wife is dead, before he goes through the motions of his final battle, he says *I feel the life drying up in my veins*, sensing already that his legacy will be curses, not compassion, honour, or love.



Marianna Barbieri-Nini, the first Lady Macbeth



Eugenia Tadolini, whom Verdi considered too beautiful to be Lady Macbeth



## Musical Excerpts from Macbeth

Follow the links below to hear the excerpts on Youtube, or visit POV's web pages on *Macbeth* to listen to all the excerpts, along with video footage about POV's production. <http://www.pov.bc.ca/macbeth.html>

### Act 1. Scena *Nel di della vittoria*. Cavatina *Vieni t'affretta!* Cabaletta *Or tutti sorgete*

<http://youtu.be/Wt4GgHbgrZ0>

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband, telling of his encounter with a group of witches who have made three prophecies: that Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, will become Thane of Cawdor; that he will be crowned King of Scotland; and that his fellow general, Banquo, will be the father of kings.

The first prophecy has come true: the Thane of Cawdor has been executed for treason, and King Duncan has given the title to Macbeth. Lady Macbeth reflects on the intoxicating promise of the second prophecy, but worries that Macbeth may not be ruthless enough to seize the throne.

*Ambizioso spirito Tu sei Macbetto*

*You are an ambitious soul, Macbeth. You long for greatness,  
but will you be wicked enough?*

*The road to power is filled with crimes...*

Determined to incite Macbeth into fulfilling the witches' prophecy, she launches into her great double aria, beginning with the cavatina *Vieni t'affretta!*

*Come! Hurry! I wish to light a fire in your cold heart!*

*I shall give you the courage to carry out this bold undertaking.*

*The prophetesses promise you the throne of Scotland.*

*Why delay? Accept the gift, mount the throne and reign.*

When a servant tells her that both Macbeth and King Duncan are expected that very night, she exults in the opportunity to kill the king.

*Or tutti sorgete*

*Arise, all you agents of hell that rouse mortals to bloody acts!*

*Night, wrap us in motionless darkness.*

*Do not let the knife see The breast which it strikes.*

Bulgarian soprano **Ghena Dimitrova** brings astounding power to this gripping scene. One commentator said of her performance *Gawd - she had the voice of Godzilla! Absolutely perfect for Lady Macbeth.*

This recalls Verdi's own expressed preference: *I want Lady Macbeth to be ugly and evil ... the Lady's voice to be raw, choked, and hollow ... diabolical.* This does not mean the composer rejected sumptuous musical beauty (and there is plenty in *Macbeth*). But for Verdi, psychological and dramatic truth trumped the niceties of an elegant bel canto line.

---

### Act 1: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth – the murder of King Duncan

<http://youtu.be/mjIZdHEdNdY>

Macbeth returns home, greeting his lady (*Oh donna mia!*). In just a few lines of intense recitative, they agree that the murder must be carried out that night. Sprightly martial music announces the arrival of the king, and the Macbeths go to greet him.

Later as night falls, Macbeth hallucinates that he sees a dagger – *Mi si affaccia un pugnale! / Is this a dagger I see before me?* With rising intensity and trepidation, he steels himself to carry out the murder.

*A me precorri sul confuso cammin*

*You run ahead of me along the unclear path which my mind intended to follow!*

*Horrid sight! The blade is streaked with blood!*

*... It is decided. That bell invites me! Do not hear it, Duncan.*

*It is a knell That summons you to heaven or to hell.*

Macbeth goes into the king's chamber, while Lady Macbeth waits. He returns to tell her it is finished. The gripping duet *Fatal mia donna (My fated lady)* begins with an intense, panicky exchange between the couple. Macbeth is horrified at the blood on his hands and haunted by the ghastly crime he has committed.

*O vista, o vista orribile! ... Nel sonno udii che oravano.*

*O what a horrible sight! ... I heard the courtiers praying in their sleep.*

*God be with us always, they said.*

*I wanted to say Amen but the rebellious word froze on my lips ...*

*Then I heard a voice within me saying:*

*O Macbeth, you will have only thorns for a pillow.*

*Glamis, you have murdered sleep for ever ...*

*I shall hear Duncan's holy virtues*

*thunder vengeance at me like angels of wrath.*

Lady Macbeth tells him to return the dagger to the king's room and smear blood on the sleeping guards to incriminate them. When Macbeth cannot bring himself to do this, she takes the dagger and does it herself. Macbeth looks at his bloody hands, saying the ocean could not wash them clean. His wife returns, saying a splash of water is enough to clean her hands. The duet moves into a cabaletta *Vieni altrove! ogni sospetto / Come away! We must remove all suspicion* as Lady Macbeth drags her husband off, urging him to pull himself together. But he laments

*Oh, if only I could wipe my crime from my mind!*

*O murdered King, if only I could rouse you from your deep sleep.*

Piero Cappuccilli (Macbeth) and Shirley Verrett (Lady Macbeth) perform this electrifying scene in the historic 1975 production from La Scala, staged by Giorgio Strehler and conducted by Claudio Abbado.

---

## **Act 2. Perché mi sfuggi – La luce langue**

<http://youtu.be/RRRRXqx-Uss>

Lady Macbeth asks her husband why he is brooding. They've got away with the murder of King Duncan, and the throne is his. But he recalls the witches' prophecy that Banquo would father kings. In a few short words, they agree that Banquo too must die. As Macbeth leaves, Lady Macbeth urges him not to waver in his intent.

Left alone, Lady Macbeth sings the aria *La luce langue (The light is fading)*. It begins with a soft, ominous lyricism that belies her murderous intent. By the end she clearly revels in her bloodthirsty craving for the throne.

*The light is fading, the beacon*

*that eternally crosses the wide sky has gone out...*

*A new crime! It must be so! The fatal deed must be done.*

*Power means nothing to the dead;  
for them a requiem and eternity.  
Oh, desire of the throne!  
Oh, sceptre, at last you are mine!*

Kostas Paskalis is Macbeth and Josephine Barstow is Lady Macbeth in this 1972 Glyndebourne production.

---

### **Act 2. *Si colmi il calice / Fill the cup***

<http://youtu.be/FLV5bGPgsSQ>

At a lavish banquet, Lady M toasts her guests and sings a *Brindisi* or drinking song.

*Si colmi il calice Di vino eletto;  
Fill the cup with choicest wine.  
Give life to pleasure and death to sorrow.  
Let hate and scorn fly from us  
and let love alone reign here.  
Let us savour the balm for every wound  
which gives new life to the heart.  
Let us empty our glasses to illustrious Banquo!  
The flower of warriors, The pride of Scotland.*

An assassin enters and reports to Macbeth that Banquo is dead but his son has escaped. Pomp and celebration turn into dismay, embarrassment, and horror as Macbeth hallucinates seeing the bloody ghost of Banquo, and Lady M desperately tries to salvage her party.

Zeljko Lucic is Macbeth, Maria Guleghina is Lady Macbeth, and John Relyea is Banquo in this 2008 Metropolitan Opera production.

---

### **Act 3. Macbeth's second encounter with the witches**

<http://youtu.be/Kv9JbnQCguk>

Macbeth returns to the witches to learn more about his destiny. They call up a series of apparitions. The first tells Macbeth to beware of Macduff, the second proclaims that no man of woman born will harm him. The third promises he will be invincible until he sees Birnam Wood moving towards him. But he is still obsessed by the fear that Banquo's descendants will gain the throne.

Macbeth's belief in the prophecies will give him an excuse for vengeance and propel him into a reign of terror as he strives to wipe out every threat to his power.

Kostas Paskalis is Macbeth in this 1972 Glyndebourne production.

---

## The Librettist: Francesco Maria Piave

Verdi first worked with the librettist Francesco Maria Piave in the 1844 opera *Ernani*, and together they collaborated on ten more operas over the next 18 years: *I due Foscari*, *Attila*, *Macbeth*, *Il corsaro*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aroldo*, and *La forza del destino*.

Piave was not only a librettist, but a journalist and translator. He was resident poet and stage manager at La Fenice in Venice and later at La Scala in Milan. His expertise as a stage manager and tact as a negotiator served Verdi well over the years, although Verdi bullied him mercilessly. During the efforts to have *Rigoletto* approved by the censors, the brunt of which fell to Piave, Verdi wrote to him, making it clear who would be blamed if the negotiations fell through: *If I were the poet, I would give [this matter] a great deal of attention, all the more so in that you will be largely responsible if it happens (and let's hope to God it doesn't) that this drama is not permitted.*



Nevertheless Verdi and Piave were friends as well as collaborators, and after Piave suffered a stroke in 1867, which left him paralyzed and unable to speak, Verdi helped to support his wife and daughter and paid for his funeral when he died nine years later.

## The Composer: Giuseppe Verdi

1813 was a fine year for opera lovers as two giants of the operatic world were born: the German Richard Wagner and the Italian Giuseppe Verdi.

Giuseppe Verdi dominated Italian opera for half a century with 28 operas that include some of the best known in the repertoire, among them *Nabucco*, *Macbeth*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *A Masked Ball (Un Ballo in Maschera)*, *Don Carlos*, *Aïda*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*.

Verdi was not only a very popular and successful composer, but an astute businessman and producer, an active and committed farmer, a hero of the Italian nationalist movement, a member of the first Italian Parliament, and a generous philanthropist.

Verdi's operas remain as popular today as when they first appeared and form the core of today's standard repertoire. Many of the tunes from his operas are familiar even to people who know nothing of opera.

### Youth

Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was born in October 1813 in the small village of Roncole, about 65 miles southeast of Milan in the province of Parma in Italy. At the time, Italy was made up of several small states, most ruled by foreign powers. Parma was occupied by Napoleon's army, and Verdi's original birth certificate is French, with his name registered as Joseph Fortunin François.

The area around Roncole was farming country. Verdi's parents ran a tavern and a grocery store and leased land and houses which they sublet to tenant farmers.

Young Verdi showed an early interest in music and was encouraged by his father, who bought an old spinet piano and sent him to the church organist for lessons. Soon Giuseppe was substituting as organist at the town church.

He was also an altar boy. Once when he was about seven, his attention wandered during Mass, and the priest knocked him down. The child responded by cursing the priest, "May God strike you with lightning." Eight years later, the priest was killed when lightning struck a nearby church, killing four priests, two laymen, and two dogs. Verdi delighted in retelling this story. Perhaps it shaped his fascination with the power of Monterone's curse in *Rigoletto*, an opera that Verdi originally titled *La Maledizione (The Curse)*.

When Verdi was ten, his father sent him to the nearby city of Busseto for further musical training. He stayed in the home of Antonio Barezzi, a local merchant and music enthusiast and gave singing and piano lessons to Barezzi's daughter Margherita, whom he would later marry. He also studied composition with Ferdinando Provesi, the local organist, choirmaster, teacher at the music school, and leader of the amateur Philharmonic Society orchestra. Verdi became Provesi's protégé and assistant, playing organ, composing, arranging and copying music and conducting rehearsals.

At the age of 18, with financial support from Barezzi, Verdi went to Milan to apply to the Conservatory. Although Milan is now part of Italy, at the time, it was under Austrian occupation, and a passport was needed for travel between Busseto and Milan. Although he was rejected by the Conservatory, Verdi stayed in Milan to study counterpoint with Vincenzo Lavigna, an opera composer who had played for many years at La Scala, Milan's renowned opera house.

In 1836, having returned to Busseto, Verdi married Margherita Barezzi, accepted the position of maestro of the Busseto Philharmonic, and composed his first opera, *Roccester*, which he later renamed *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*.

The Verdis' daughter Virginia was born in 1837, but died the following year. In 1839 Giuseppe and Margherita moved back to Milan with their little son, Icilio Romano, who died shortly after.

Verdi had tried without success to have *Oberto* performed in either Parma or Milan, but in 1839, thanks to the recommendation of the soprano Giuseppina Strepponi, Bartolomeo Merelli, the impresario at La Scala, finally agreed to present *Oberto*. The opera was successful enough to persuade Merelli to offer Verdi a contract to write more operas.

While Verdi was working on his next opera, a comedy called *Un Giorno di Regno*, his wife died. The deaths of his entire young family within such a short time left him devastated. Although he completed *Un Giorno di Regno*, it was a failure, and Verdi resolved never to compose again.

## **Early operas**

It took two years for Merelli to persuade Verdi to compose another opera. The biblical story of the Israelites' captivity in Babylon eventually captured Verdi's imagination, and in 1842 *Nabucco* made its triumphant premiere with Giuseppina Strepponi in the lead role of Abigaille. Verdi became a celebrity overnight, not least because the Italian audience identified with the Israelites, another people who were subjugated by foreign powers. The opera's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, "Va pensiero" was sung in the streets of Milan and became an unofficial Italian national anthem.

Verdi was suddenly an inspirational figure in the Risorgimento, the movement toward a free, united Italy.

He was also now in demand as an opera composer and began what he called his “years as a galley slave,” cranking out opera after opera, feeding the insatiable operatic appetites of theatres and audiences throughout Italy and in Paris and London.

Between 1843 and 1850 he composed and often directed productions of 13 new operas, including *Ernani*, *Macbeth*, and *Luisa Miller*.

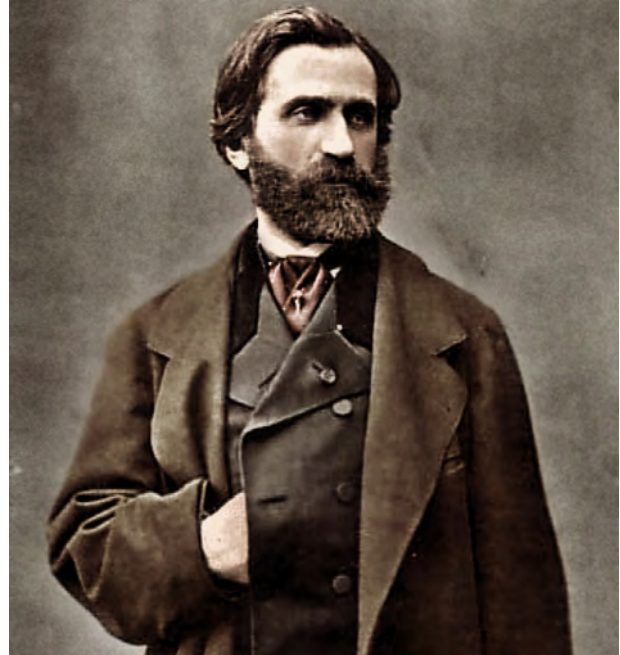
By 1850, Verdi was the leading composer of opera in Italy and one of the most successful in all of Europe. His works, tuneful, highly dramatic, often with political overtones, captivated audiences. They also brought prosperity to Verdi, to his Italian publisher Giovanni Ricordi, (and to succeeding generations of the Ricordi family, including son Tito and grandson Giulio) and to numerous impresarios and agents.

During this time Verdi had kept in touch with Giuseppina Strepponi, the soprano who had recommended Verdi’s first opera and starred in his second. By 1846, ill health had forced Strepponi to retire from singing. She and Verdi began working closely together in Paris in 1847, and Strepponi, with her inside knowledge of the theatrical and musical world, became Verdi’s devoted and able collaborator. Over the next 50 years, until her death in 1897, she helped him in business and musical matters and handled negotiations and disputes with agents, impresarios, censors, and colleagues.

She also became his mistress. This relationship caused a scandal among Verdi’s family and friends, who were appalled by her reputation – she had several illegitimate children – and by the fact that she and Verdi lived openly together for several years before finally marrying in 1859.

The high point of Verdi’s “galley years” came with his “big three” – “RigTrovTrav”, the three operas that are his most popular. *Rigoletto* premiered in 1851 in Venice; *Il trovatore* was launched in Rome in 1853, followed six weeks later by *La traviata* in Venice. While both *Rigoletto* and *Il trovatore* were immediate hits, *La traviata* was at first less of a success.

Verdi called the premiere of *La traviata* a fiasco; it wasn’t actually an abject failure – it did well enough at the box office, and Verdi had to take several bows during Act 1. But he was disappointed that censors had insisted on unceremoniously forcing his cutting-edge contemporary work to time-travel a century and a half into the past. He was also none too pleased with the singers. The soprano, Fanny Salvini-Donatelli, sang well, but was plump enough to elicit laughter as she portrayed a frail consumptive in Act 3. The tenor, Lodovico Graziani, went hoarse in the second act, and the baritone, Felice Varesi, put little heart into his performance, grumpily complaining about both the subject matter (*the main character is a kept woman or rather a common whore*) and the smallness of his own role (as the first Rigoletto and the first Macbeth, he felt that Germont was a step down).



Giuseppe Verdi

## Dealing with Censorship

Despite Verdi's popularity and the rapidity with which he churned out hit after hit, writing and producing the operas was anything but a smooth process. In particular, Verdi had constant battles with censors.

Each opera was commissioned for a particular opera house, and each libretto had to be approved by the appropriate authorities, who, given Italy's fractured state, varied from city to city, and could include church authorities as well as Austrian and French officials. Opera was a popular and prominent entertainment, and censors were at pains to make sure that operas were morally and politically inoffensive. What would satisfy the censors in one jurisdiction would not pass in another.

Both *Rigoletto* and *La traviata* premiered at the Teatro La Fenice, which was in Austrian-controlled Venice. (Austria ruled much of northern Italy during the mid-19th century).

A libretto in Venice required approval from the theatre management, the mayor of the city, and the Austrian Department of Public Order.

The opening of *Rigoletto* had to be delayed while Verdi and his librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, battled with the Venetian censors. The play on which *Rigoletto* had been based, *Le roi s'amuse* (*The King Amuses Himself*) by Victor Hugo, had opened in Paris two decades previously, in 1832, played for one night, and been promptly banned as obscene and politically subversive. The play was based on the life of the French King Francis I, who had been safely dead since 1547. However, Hugo's King Francis was a little too much like the current King, Louis-Phillipe, who had survived an assassination attempt just before the play opened. The censors were not amused and shut the play down. Despite a lawsuit by the furious playwright, the ban on performances remained in place for fifty years, even though the printed version of the play was available. It was not until November 22, 1882, that *Le roi s'amuse* could finally be seen again in Paris – a quarter century after Verdi's *Rigoletto* first played Paris.

*Rigoletto* was finally staged once Verdi and his librettist Francesco Maria Piave moved the action from France to Mantua and changed the title from *La Maledizione* (*The Curse*) to *Rigoletto* (these changes were much more minor than some that had been proposed, including getting rid of Rigoletto's hump and the sack in which Gilda's body was placed).

*La traviata* too had to be altered to please the censors. Fresh from the epic battle with the Venetian censors over *Rigoletto*, Verdi and Piave could not have been surprised that their sympathetic portrayal of a prostitute would again raise hackles. Verdi managed to get *La traviata* approved, but only after the setting was moved back 150 years to the Paris of Louis XIV, thus avoiding the uncomfortable realities of Verdi's contemporary setting. The censors wanted it safely dated in the past. They also insisted that Verdi change his title from *Amore e Morte* – *Love and Death* – to the more judgemental *La traviata*, meaning *The Woman Who Strayed* or *The Fallen Woman*.

In the case of Verdi's 1859 opera *Un ballo in maschera* (*A Masked Ball*), no compromise could be reached with the censors in Naples. The opera's plot was based on the 1789 assassination of the Swedish King Gustavus III in Stockholm. In the face of the censors' adamant refusal to allow the assassination of a king to be shown on stage, Verdi withdrew the opera and offered it to Rome. The papal censor was satisfied once Verdi had changed the setting to 17th-century Boston and transformed the King of Sweden into the Count of Warwick.

## Italian Politics

Given the times and Italy's political situation, the inflexibility of the Austrian censors in Naples was understandable. There had been an attempt on the life of Napoleon III in Paris in 1858, and an opera on the assassination of a ruler might give the populace ideas. Revolt was in the air. The Risorgimento, the movement to unite Italy, was in full swing, and war between the nationalists and Austria was imminent.

Verdi himself was a popular figure among the nationalists. Not only did his operas appeal to patriots, but his very name was an acronym for the revolution. The slogan "Viva VERDI" became code for "Vittorio Emanuele, Re D'Italia" (Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy).

Victor Emmanuel was the king of Piedmont and a prime candidate to be leader of a united Italy. Piedmont, which had remained independent of Austria during the 19th century, allied with France and went to war against Austria in 1859, conquering some, but not all the provinces of Italy. Over the next decade, in a series of campaigns, bits and pieces were added on to Italy, but as early as 1861, unification was sufficiently underway that the first Italian parliament was established. Verdi himself was elected to this parliament, and Victor Emmanuel was proclaimed King of Italy. In 1866, when Italian government forces allied with Prussia against Austria to conquer the last remaining territories under Austrian control, Verdi contributed money and guns for the troops. In 1874, King Victor Emmanuel decreed him a lifetime Senator. Truth be told, Verdi was not a particularly active statesman. He showed up at the Senate to take his oath and worked on getting government subsidies for the theatre.

## The Later Operas

During these intensely political times, Verdi was also intensely creative; between 1851 and 1871 he wrote some of his greatest operas, beginning with the "RigTrovTrav" big three, along with *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), *Un ballo in maschera* (1859), *La forza del destino* (1862), and *Don Carlos* (1867), and culminating with the spectacular *Aïda* (1871), the grandest of grand operas, notorious for being the Opera With Elephants.

As part of the celebrations surrounding the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Khedive (a Turkish Viceroy who ruled Egypt) Ismail Pasha built a new opera house in Cairo. The inaugural performance in the opera house was Verdi's *Rigoletto*. The Khedive also commissioned Verdi to write an opera with an Egyptian theme specifically for the new Cairo Opera House. This was to be *Aïda*, which premiered spectacularly in 1871 and has dazzled the world ever since.

At the premiere, there were 300 people on stage, and the audience of dignitaries and Egyptophiles included the khedive and his harem. The conductor was Giovanni Bottesini, also a composer and a double bass virtuoso. In his enthusiasm for the opera, Bottesini went beyond the call of duty and financed a menagerie of animals for the Triumphal March in the second act, including 12 elephants, 15 camels, and assorted zebras, giraffes, lions, ostriches, jackals, baboons, and rodents. Only the elephants and camels were trained well enough to perform; the other animals died of neglect, apparently because Bottesini forgot about them.

After the success of *Aïda*, Verdi decided to retire from writing operas. He was already well off, and his fee and royalties for *Aïda* made him quite wealthy. At the age of 58, he was happy to devote himself to his farm in Sant'Agata while occasionally composing or revising and producing some of his earlier works.

Verdi had bought the farm at Sant'Agata in 1848 and moved there with Strepponi in 1851. Over the years it had been a sanctuary and a workplace, not only for composing, but for farming. He remodeled the house and expanded the farm, participating actively in the farm work along with his tenant farmers.



Although Verdi is best known as an opera composer, he did write other music, most notably the monumental *Requiem* of 1874. After the death of the eminent opera composer Gioacchino Rossini in 1868, Verdi had proposed that Italian composers each contribute a section to a Requiem Mass in Rossini's honour. This was done, but the complete mass was not performed during Verdi's lifetime. Several years later, in 1873, Alessandro Manzoni, an Italian novelist and poet, died, and Verdi decided to use his "Libera me" as the starting point for a Requiem Mass honouring Manzoni. Verdi's complete *Requiem* was performed at the cathedral in Milan, on the first anniversary of Manzoni's death.

Some critics charged that the *Requiem* was too operatic and not sacred enough. The German conductor and composer Hans von Bülow called it "Verdi's latest opera, though in ecclesiastical robes." But composer Johannes Brahms called it a work of genius. Certainly it is a stunningly dramatic, profoundly emotional work; in particular the section called Dies Irae (Day of Wrath) captures the horror and terror of Judgement Day.

### **Verdi's Final Years**

Sixteen years after his "retirement", the 74-year-old Verdi premiered his next opera, *Otello*, based on Shakespeare's play. Verdi had a profound admiration for Shakespeare, and his publisher Giulio Ricordi and composer-poet Arrigo Boito, with Giuseppina Strepponi's support, were able to persuade Verdi to take on this project. It was followed by another opera inspired by Shakespeare, the comedy *Falstaff* (1893). Both were acclaimed, and many consider them Verdi's finest operas.

Verdi also worked during his so-called retirement on philanthropic projects, founding a hospital and establishing the Casa di Riposo, a home for retired musicians in Milan. Verdi purchased land for the Casa di Riposo in 1889 and began construction of the house in 1896. He saw the Casa di Riposo as a way to provide for musicians less fortunate than himself. In his will, Verdi left the building and grounds and all the royalties from his compositions to the Casa di Riposo, which still exists, serving as a home for singers, dancers, and other musicians, as well as visiting music students.

Giuseppina died in 1897. Verdi then lived at the Grand Hotel in Milan, finding companionship with retired soprano Teresa Stolz, whom he had known for some 30 years. Rumours were that they had long been lovers; Stolz had also performed much of Verdi's music and sang *Aida* in the 1872 Milan premiere.

Verdi suffered a stroke on January 21, 1901 and died six days later. He was buried in Milan at the Casa di Riposo. His funeral was a national event, and thousands lined the streets, singing "Va, pensiero," the famous chorus from *Nabucco*. Among the mourners were such great composers as Rossini, Donizetti, and Puccini.

## University of Victoria Resources

### Learn more about *Macbeth*, Shakespeare, and Music

After the success of last year's *The World of Mary's Wedding: Reminiscences of World War I* (<http://worldofmaryswedding.library.uvic.ca/>), the University of Victoria Libraries is excited to continue the collaboration with Pacific Opera Victoria. This year, we're mounting a smaller **exhibit of selected scores, editions, and adaptations of *Macbeth***.

*Macbeth* has a long history of incidental music and operatic adaptations, beginning with Sir William Davenant's 1664 Restoration staging with dances, musical numbers, and flying witches. The organist and composer Matthew Locke is thought to have written the witches' songs, which continued to be performed and printed well into the nineteenth century. We draw on the resources of the Rare Book collection, the Shakespeare Music Project funds, the UVic Archives, and the private collections of faculty and friends to showcase the textual and performance history of *Macbeth* and its music.

**The exhibit opens October 4 and runs until mid-November.  
In the Special Collections and Archives Reading Room  
at the UVic Libraries (Room A005, Mearns Centre for Learning)  
Hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.**

**To learn more about *Macbeth* in performance, we invite you to visit the Internet Shakespeare Editions.** The University of Victoria Libraries has recently entered into a partnership with the ISE, an on-line library of the best digital editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems. Michael Best, Coordinating Editor and Professor Emeritus in the Department of English, launched this internationally recognized digital Shakespeare project on the web in 1996. An early adopter of humanities computing technologies, Michael recognized the potential of the internet as a virtual library, archive, publishing platform, and teaching tool.

From the ***Macbeth* splash page** at <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays/Mac.html>, you can embark on a journey through old books, performances, and history. Click on the links under "Facsimiles" to experience *Macbeth* in its seventeenth-century printed form. We have digitized the first four folios of Shakespeare's works, from 1623, 1632, 1664, and 1685 respectively. Under "Texts of this edition," you'll find an old-spelling transcription of the First Folio; you can read by page, scene, or complete work. Click on any of the items under "Performances" to go to the catalogue entry for one of the 145 different productions of *Macbeth* currently listed in our ever-expanding Performance Database. Once you are in this database, clicking on names and titles will allow you to explore by actor, company, role, and country. Under "Performance Materials," you can browse posters, programs, prompt books, photographs, costume designs, and other artefacts that we have collected in our virtual archive. Search by keyword in the "Life and Times" to find contextual information on the witches, on husbandry, and on Shakespeare's sources for *Macbeth's* story.

Although we don't yet have a modern edition of *Macbeth* on our site, we do have modern editions of *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, *1 Henry IV*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, and a number of other plays. All of the plays are being edited by the best Shakespeare scholars in the world. We aim to provide the best in critical commentary and helpful annotations.

Our site is open source (i.e., access is free) and works well on mobile devices. We're really proud of the fact that community members and students from around the world can read Shakespeare's words – and scholarship about Shakespeare's words and world. All you need is an internet connection.

So if you want to brush up on Verdi's source material before you head to the Royal Theatre, fire up your web browser. You could even check a Shakespeare line during intermission. You'll have your phone off during the show, of course!

*Janelle Jenstad, Associate Professor, Dept. of English  
Assistant Coordinating Editor, Internet Shakespeare Editions*



Above: This early 19th-century sheet music attests to the longevity of Matthew Locke's Restoration additions to *Macbeth*. Sir William Davenant radically revised *Macbeth* for a 1664 staging, turning the play into a lavish musical spectacular with flying, dancing, singing witches. The Witches' songs are attributed to Matthew Locke.

In the song shown, the witches comment on the death of King Duncan and anticipate more murders to come.

*1st Witch: Speak, sister, speak; is the deed done ?*

*2nd Witch: Long ago, long ago, Above twelve glasses since have run,  
Ill deeds are seldom slow or single but following crimes, on horror wait,  
The worst of creatures fastest propagate.*

*1st Witch: Many more murders must this one ensue,  
Dread horrors still abound in ev'ry place around  
As if in death were found Propagation too.  
He must, he will, he shall spill much more blood.*

Photo credit: John Frederick. Courtesy University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections

## Resources and Links

### Macbeth: Verdi's Opera

- <http://www.operafolio.com/libretto.asp?n=Macbeth&translation=UK>  
**Libretto of the Opera:** In Italian with English translation
- [http://erato.uvt.nl/files/imglnks/usimg/8/82/IMSLP122264-PMLP55443-Verdi -  
\\_Macbeth\\_vocal\\_score\\_.pdf](http://erato.uvt.nl/files/imglnks/usimg/8/82/IMSLP122264-PMLP55443-Verdi_-_Macbeth_vocal_score_.pdf)  
**Vocal Score of the Opera** (1865 revised version)
- [http://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/2623546/Albright\\_Witches.pdf](http://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/2623546/Albright_Witches.pdf)  
**The Witches and the Witch: Verdi's Macbeth** (PDF). A superbly readable exploration of the witches and the Lady. Any essay that starts by saying, *Part of the power of Shakespeare's tragedies lies in their goofiness*, demands that you read on.  
*Abstract: The witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth equivocate between the demons of random malevolence and ordinary (if exceptionally nasty) old women; and both King James I, whose book on witchcraft may have influenced Shakespeare, and A. W. Schlegel, whose essay on Macbeth certainly influenced Verdi, also stress this ambiguity. In his treatment of Lady Macbeth, Verdi uses certain musical patterns associated with the witches; and like the witches, who sound sometimes tame and frivolous, sometimes like incarnations of supernatural evil, Lady Macbeth hovers insecurely between roles: she is a hybrid of ambitious wife and agent of hell.*  
By Daniel Albright. Cambridge Opera Journal, 2005.
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macbeth\\_%28opera%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macbeth_%28opera%29)  
**Introduction to the Opera** from Wikipedia
- <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/about/education/educatorguides/content.aspx?id=5032>  
**Macbeth Educator Guide** from the Metropolitan Opera. Intended to prepare students for the broadcast of a Met production of Macbeth, this guide is also a useful introduction to the opera and its musical highlights for anyone preparing to see a live performance.

### Macbeth: Shakespeare's Play

- <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays/Mac.html>  
**Internet Shakespeare Editions.** The University of Victoria's Internet Shakespeare Editions website is the perfect starting place for a wide-ranging exploration of *Macbeth* and of all of Shakespeare's works. Journey through old books and view 17th century facsimiles of *Macbeth*, as well as the first four folios of Shakespeare's works. Explore *Macbeth* in the ever-expanding Performance Database; browse performance materials, such as programmes, posters, prompt books, photographs, and costume designs. Then move on to discover a world of information on Shakespeare's life and times and to explore this online library of the best digital editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems.
- <http://theshakespeareproject.com/macbeth/macbeth-1-1.html>  
**The Shakespeare Project: Annotated Text of Macbeth:** The complete play, with excellent explanations of words and expressions
- <http://www.shakespeare-navigators.com/macbeth/Holinshed/index.html>  
**Selections from Holinshed's Chronicles used by Shakespeare in writing Macbeth:** *Holinshed's Chronicles*, also known as *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, is a collaborative work published in several volumes and two editions (1577 and 1587). Shakespeare used the revised second edition of the *Chronicles* (published in 1587) as the source for most of his history plays, the plot of *Macbeth*, and for portions of *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*.

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glamis\\_Castle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glamis_Castle)

**Glamis Castle:** Macbeth may be Thane of Glamis in Shakespeare's play, but his historic counterpart had no connection to Glamis, King Malcolm II (grandfather of both the real King Duncan and the real Macbeth) died in a royal hunting lodge at Glamis in 1034 – some say of battle injuries; others believe he was murdered. Malcolm named Duncan as his successor, but Macbeth killed Duncan in battle in 1040 and took over the throne, ruling for 17 years.

The castle itself wasn't built until the late 14th century, and the various wings and towers and turrets were added in later years. Glamis Castle is the historic seat of the Bowes-Lyons Family; the Queen Mother was born at Glamis and gave birth to Princess Margaret there.

Despite its shaky historic connection with Macbeth, Glamis Castle does trade on its connection with the Scottish Play. Below is a still from a new VisitScotland TV ad featuring just such a performance. Note the eerie shadows of the witches on the castle walls.



- <http://video.pbs.org/video/1604122998/>

**Rupert Goold's film adaptation of Macbeth, starring Sir Patrick Stewart:** This acclaimed version of the play *Macbeth* was originally produced in 2007 for the Chichester Festival and later moved to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, followed by an eight-week run on Broadway. Director Rupert Goold's stage production was filmed for television at the end of 2009 with Patrick Stewart in his Tony-nominated performance as the ambitious general, and Tony-nominated Kate Fleetwood as his scheming wife. Filmed at Welbeck Abbey in the United Kingdom, the play is moved to the 1950's Cold War era, transforming Scotland into something resembling Stalinist Russia. The witches are nurses in a combat hospital.

The film was aired on the PBS Program *Great Performances*.

**Note:** Like the play, this film has violent scenes. The film is rated TV-14, V. Parents are urged to exercise care in monitoring this program due to violent content and are cautioned against letting children under 14 watch unattended.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa9Mjfr5foY>

**The Voodoo Macbeth.** This is the only known video footage of the Federal Theatre Project's 1936 New York production of *Macbeth*, featuring an all-African American cast directed by Orson Welles. Known as the Voodoo Macbeth, the production relocated the setting of the play from Scotland to a fictional Caribbean island based on Haiti.

The production is regarded as a landmark theatrical event for several reasons: its innovative interpretation of the play, its success in promoting African-American theatre, and its role in securing the reputation of its 20-year old director. The Federal Theatre Project was a program of The Works Project Administration, an attempt at economic stimulus during the Great Depression.

*While watching the video, you can access in-depth background information: just activate captions by clicking on the speech bubble button in the bottom right hand corner of the screen.*

Also of interest is a collection of archival documents from the production, including photos, a production notebook, and the playscript, from the Federal Theatre Project Collection at the Library of Congress. These can be viewed at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fedtp/ftmb1.html>.

Below: A still photo from the Voodoo Macbeth, showing the Caribbean costumes and skeleton imagery in the set decor.



- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english\\_literature/dramamacbeth/macbethplotact.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/dramamacbeth/macbethplotact.shtml)

**BBC's Bitesize Macbeth:** an irreverent video summary of the play. Click on "back to Macbeth Index" for more enjoyable resources, including discussion and videos on Themes and Characters. While this discussion is about the play, most of it is relevant to the opera as well.

## Shakespeare's Patron: King James VI of Scotland / James I of England

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_VI\\_and\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_VI_and_I)

**Biography of King James:** Shakespeare's royal patron was James I of England, who was also James VI of Scotland. Here is Wikipedia's article on the King.

It may be surprising to see how many books King James wrote: here are links to the text of just a few.

[http://www.stoics.com/basilikon\\_doron.html](http://www.stoics.com/basilikon_doron.html)

***Basilikon Doron***, a treatise on government and how to be a good king, was published in 1599. It brims with advice for his son on religion, the economy, choosing a wife (*Marriage is the greatest earthly felicitie or miserie, that can come to a man*), personal grooming (*And make not a foole of yourselfe in disguising or wearing long haire or nailes*), and habits (he recommends physical exercise and games, but bans *all rough and violent exercises, as the footeball; meeter for laming, then making able the vsers thereof*).



<http://archive.org/details/daemonologie25929gut>

***Daemonologie***, published in 1597, is a treatise on the menace of witches and witchcraft, King James outlines his belief that witches are allied with the devil and represent a clear and present danger.

<http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/james1.html>

***A Counter-Blaste to Tobacco (1604)***. James does not mince his words in this polemic. He fulminates against the filthiness of the habit, as well as the stench and the dangers of second-hand smoke.

*A custome lothsome to the eye, hatefull to the Nose, harmefull to the braine, dangerous to the Lungs, and in the blacke stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stigian smoke of the pit that is bottomlesse.*

Not much has changed in four centuries!

[http://www.jorge.cc/jl\\_pages/school/tobacco.html](http://www.jorge.cc/jl_pages/school/tobacco.html)

**The Fume of an Idle Braine: James I and A Counter-blaste to Tobacco:** This essay by Jorge Luis González provides interesting background on the history of tobacco use in England and on what (besides the smell) got James I so riled up about tobacco. There were political and economic ramifications, and in fact, the same year James published the *Counter-Blaste*, he set a precedent followed by cash-hungry governments ever since: raising tobacco taxes. He increased the duty on tobacco by 4,000 percent. When tobacco started to become a lucrative cash crop for the English colony of Virginia, the taxes and duties went a long way to softening the monarch's attitude to tobacco.

<http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>

**The King James Bible:** No, King James did not write this, but he is that very King James who, in 1604, authorized a new English translation of the Bible, which was published in 1611. The King James Bible is still considered a cultural, religious, and literary monument. You can read both the newer 1769 Authorized Version (Pure Cambridge edition) and the original 1611 King James Bible with its more archaic spelling.

The translation was done by 47 scholars, all of whom were members of the Church of England. Here's what they said in their preface to the reader:

*Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water.*

The impact, the importance, the poetic beauty of this 400-year-old translation of the Bible is astounding.

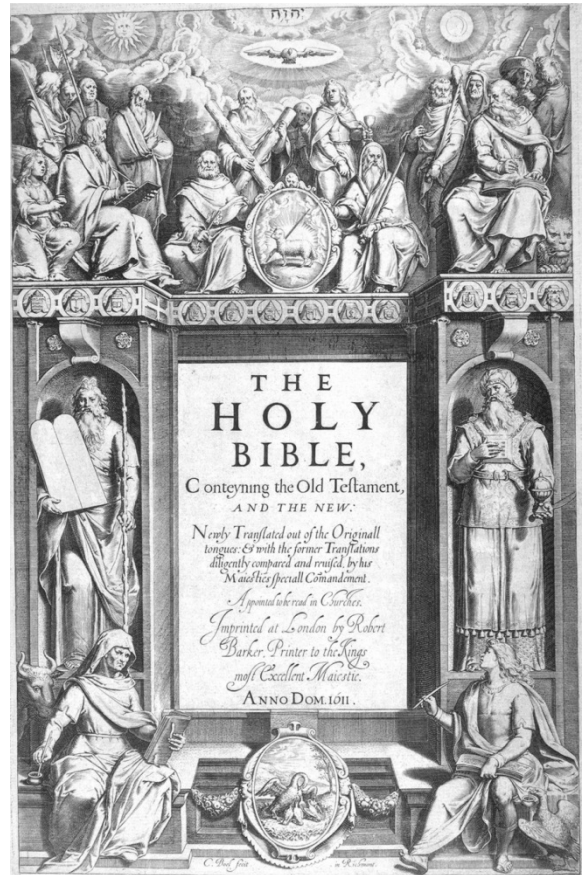
*Why all the fuss about an old translation of an ancient book? There are two reasons: first, it is the founding text of the British Empire (including breakaway colonies such as the United States), and was carried to every corner of the English-speaking world by migrants and missionaries; second, it matters now, both as a religious text and as the finest embodiment of English prose...*

*Is it a good translation? The answer is yes and no. On the affirmative side, it is certainly the most scrupulous of all translations, in part because the scholarly fire-power of the original translators could not be matched in our less educated age. Where could one now find fifty translators with competence in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, Ethiopic and Arabic (the languages of the English polyglot Bible of the period) and a command of patristic, rabbinical and Reformation commentaries? Another reason for its scholarly probity is the scrupulous process through which the KJV was produced. The time lavished on the translation by the learned translators was secured by relieving them of other duties; no modern publisher would buy out fifty scholars for several years in order that they might devote their full attention to a translation of the Bible ...*

*The KJV was, as its title-page pronounces, 'appointed to be read in churches': it was a translation intended to be read aloud and understood ... Its prose has a pulse that makes it easy to read aloud and easy to memorize. When Adam ungallantly blames Eve for the fall, he says (in the KJV) 'she gave me of the fruit and I did eat' (Genesis 3: 12); he uses ten simple monosyllabic words arranged in a line of iambic pentameter, which was the verse form used by Shakespeare. This is prose with the qualities of poetry, and it would be hard to think of any modern translation of which that can be said. Other translations may reflect more recent scholarship or satisfy particular doctrinal requirements, but the KJV is the best loved of all translations, and rightly so.*

Gordon Campbell

Professor of Renaissance Studies, University of Leicester.  
Author of *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011*



Above, the frontispiece to the King James Bible, 1611, shows the Twelve Apostles at the top. Moses and Aaron flank the central text. In the four corners sit Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, authors of the four gospels, with their symbolic animals. At the top is the Holy Spirit in a form of a dove.

The title page text reads:

THE HOLY BIBLE,  
Conteyning the Old Testament,  
AND THE NEW:

*Newly Translated out of the Originall  
tongues: & with the former Translations  
diligently compared and reuifed, by his  
Maiesties speciall Comandement.  
Appointed to be read in Churches.  
Imprinted at London by Robert  
Barker, Printer to the Kings  
moft Excellent Maiestie.  
ANNO DOM. 1611 .*



**A note on reading Early Modern English (16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century):** In works such as Shakespeare's plays and the 1611 King James Bible, the spelling and vocabulary take some getting used to. Annotated versions of Shakespeare's plays can help you understand what's being said. But do try to read the original to capture the poetry of the language. Try reading aloud, and take it slow. It will get easier.

Here are a few tips for deciphering some of the strangely spelled words that you will come across:

- The letter **s** had two distinct lowercase forms: **s** and **f** (a "long s", which looks a little like an f). The short **s** was used at the end of a word, and the long **s** everywhere else.
- **u** and **v** were considered different forms of the same letter, with **v** used at the start of a word and **u** elsewhere; So *unmoved* will be spelled *vnmoued*.
- **w** may be written as **w** or as **vv** (*sword* / *svword*)
- **i** and **j** were also considered the same letter, so you may see *ioy* for *joy* and *iust* for *just*.
- A silent **e** was often added to the end of words, and the last consonant was sometimes doubled. You may see, for example, *fpeake*, (*speak*) *cowarde*, *manne* (*man*), *runne*.

Remember that these were the days when people could spell as they liked. Nothing was standard. Shakespeare and his contemporaries even played fast and loose with the spelling of the Bard's name. It is seen variously as Shaksper, Shakspere, Shakspeare, Shakespere, Shakespeare, Shakespear, Shackspeare, Shake-speare, Shak-spear, Shakefpeare, Shakefpere, and Shakfpeare.

### **Witches and Witchcraft**

<http://www.witchcraftandwitches.com>

**Witchcraft: A guide to the misunderstood and the maligned:** This comprehensive web site explores the history of witchcraft from ancient times to today. It discusses the Witch Trials of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, a period called the Burning Times, when some 60,000 suspected witches, mostly women, were executed in Europe. James VI of Scotland took a personal interest in the North Berwick Witch Trials from 1590 to 1592. His obsession with witches began in 1589 when storms at sea interfered with his wedding plans. When his fiancée, Anne of Denmark, sailed for Scotland for the wedding, the ship had to take refuge in Norway. The storm was blamed on witchcraft, and six Danish women were tried and executed as witches. Meanwhile, James sailed for Oslo to marry Anne. When he returned to Scotland with his bride, the crossing was again very stormy; this time Scottish witches were blamed. James became obsessed with rooting out witches, who had, in his view, tried to kill him. Over the next century, some 4000 people were accused of witchcraft in Scotland; it is estimated that about half were executed.

<http://www.shc.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/index.html>

**The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft**, by the School of History and Classics, at the University of Edinburgh. This electronic resource for the history of witchcraft and witch-hunting in Scotland contains an interactive database listing all people known to have been accused of witchcraft in early modern Scotland—nearly 4,000 of them – along with links to additional scholarly resources. The database includes information on where and when the suspected witches were accused, how they were tried, and what their fate was. Readers can search the database to find, for instance, all known cases involving neighbourhood quarrels or demonic possession, or they can create graphs or maps showing how witchcraft cases were distributed.

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/brief-salem.html>

**A Brief History of the Salem Witch Trials: One town's strange journey from paranoia to pardon**, by Jess Blumberg, Smithsonian.com, October 24, 2007. Perhaps the best known of all witch trials, the Salem Witch Trials took place in 1692, after the heyday of persecution in Europe had begun to abate. Nineteen people were convicted and hanged.

## Student Activities

### Party Planning

Lady Macbeth's last party was a disaster. She'd like you to organize her next party! Make an invitation outlining the party details: the time, the place, the theme (is this a party fit for a queen? A Hallowe'en party?). Decide who to invite, and who not to invite, and how your guests can RSVP. You could design and attach a menu for the party! Perhaps you could include some Scottish food!

You could also write a song for Lady Macbeth to sing at the party.

**Party Time!** Pretend you are one of the guests at Lady Macbeth's party. Write a diary entry about what you wore to the party, the sorts of people you met there, and what the party was for. Don't forget to talk about the food! Did anything interesting happen at the party?

### Superstition

Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* is said to bring bad luck if you say the name of the play or its main characters while in the theatre. Some actors even believe it's bad luck to quote lines from the play, especially the witches' incantations, which might (so it is sometimes said) be actual evil spells!

If an actor slips up and says the name Macbeth anywhere in the theatre, he or she should *immediately leave the room, turn around three times, spit, knock on the door and ask permission to re-enter*. Actors will often call it *the Scottish play* or *Mackers* and refer to its main characters as *M* and *Lady M*—except, of course, when actually rehearsing and performing.

Some people believe the play brings ill luck to cast and crew; productions of *Macbeth* have been plagued with disasters, such as the performance in 1948, in which Diana Wynyard played the sleepwalking scene with her eyes closed and fell 15 feet (she was able to carry on). The fight scenes and daggers in the play (and flying witches in some productions), probably increase the odds of an accident.

Opinions are split as to whether the curse also applies to Verdi's opera *Macbeth*. The play has been around for about 240 years longer than the opera and so has had time to accrue a few runs of bad luck.

Some people at the opera house may hedge their bets by calling it *The Scottish Opera* or *Mackers*.

However, other operas, such as Puccini's *Tosca* and Verdi's *La forza del destino* have more of a reputation for being unlucky.

Another theatre superstition is that it is bad luck to wish an actor good luck. Instead, a performer is told *Break a Leg*. But opera singers say *toi toi toi!* Why do people say such strange things?

**Activity:** All of the following have superstitions associated with them: black cats, mirrors, umbrellas, clover, salt, wedding clothes, ladders. Investigate some of these superstitions. What bad things will happen? How did the superstition originate?

### Exploring Plot and Character

Have students create (on their own or in a group) a character sketch for one of the main characters (for example, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, one of the witches). Questions they might ask about the character include:

What can be assumed about this person?

What is the character's relationship with the other characters?

Why does the character make the choices he or she does?

Remind students to include evidence from the opera to support their claim. Remind students of the music sung by their character. Do the emotions conveyed through the music fit the character sketches?

## Explore a Scene in Theatre and Opera

Compare a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with the same moment in Verdi's opera.

Find a scene that takes place in both works. Look for what is the same and what is different.

Start by downloading the libretto of Verdi's opera

<http://www.operafolio.com/libretto.asp?n=Macbeth&translation=UK>

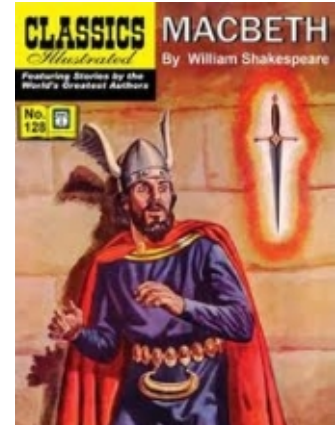
and the text of Shakespeare's play

<http://theshakespeareproject.com/macbeth/macbeth-1-1.html>

Choose a scene and examine it side by side. What differences do you see? What similarities?

What do you think will change when you experience this scene in the theatre rather than reading it? Why?

Revisit the scene after you've seen the opera and compare the two versions again.



Cover of the Classics Illustrated Comic Book of *Macbeth*. Issue #128, published in 1955

## After the Opera

**Draw a picture of your favourite scene in the opera.**

What is happening in this scene?

What characters are depicted?

**Create your own Macbeth comic book or graphic novel.**

Tell the story in pictures and words.

**Create an opera design.**

Design and draw a stage set for a scene in *Macbeth*.

Design and draw costumes for the characters in the scene.

**Write a review of the opera.**

What did you think about the sets, props and costumes?

Would you have done something differently? Why?

What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?

Talk about the singers. Describe their characters. Describe their voices.

Who was your favourite character?

What was your favourite visual moment in the opera?

What was your favourite musical moment in the opera?



Macbeth is now a Graphic Novel published by Classic Comics in 3 text formats: The full, unabridged Original Text; The full text "translated" into modern English; and Quick Text (same artwork, much fewer words).

<http://www.classicalcomics.com/books/macbeth.html>

Study guide by Maureen Woodall  
Pacific Opera Victoria