



GUTHRIE
THEATER

PLAY GUIDE



by
WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE

directed by
JOE
DOWLING

January 30 - April 3, 2010 • Wurtele Thrust Stage

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**GUTHRIE
THEATER**

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PLOT SYNOPSIS, CHARACTERS AND PLAY'S ORIGINS

SYNOPSIS

Scotland is victorious over foreign invaders and civil rebels, in no small part because of the action of the brave and noble soldier Macbeth. On his way to greet his king, Macbeth encounters three Weïrd Sisters, who prophesy his path to greatness, ending with “All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter!” When their predictions begin to come true, Macbeth and his ambitious wife decide to do whatever is necessary to ensure their rise to power. When they hatch a plot to kill the king, Duncan, and take his place, all goes according to plan: the bloodstained guards are blamed and dispatched, the king’s sons flee the country and Macbeth himself is crowned king.

But Macbeth becomes convinced that this single murder is not enough to secure his throne, so he hires men to kill his friend Banquo, whose descendents the Weïrd Sisters claim will sit on the throne. When Banquo’s bloodstained ghost shows up uninvited to a dinner party, Macbeth’s paranoia sends him into a hysterical fit. Desperate for answers, he seeks out the Weïrd Sisters, who tell him no man born of woman will harm him nor will he be vanquished until the woods rise up to the castle, but he must beware Macduff.

The remaining action of the play descends into darkness and even more blood as Macbeth becomes more desperate and the Scottish nobility realize something must be done to reclaim their country from this tyrant. The effects of their actions are not felt by only outsiders: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth themselves find their early strength and unity is tested by their bloody course and each feels the weight of responsibility differently. The play ends with an inevitable final battle between Macbeth and Macduff, with the country’s future hanging on the outcome.

In this tale of treachery and ambition, Macbeth’s quest for glory, foreseen in dark prophesy and achieved through any bloody means necessary, investigates the politics of power: institutional power of the crown and sexual power within the Macbeth marriage. *Macbeth* is Shakespeare’s shortest tragedy, and as the mystery of Macbeth unfolds, the action moves with the rapid pace of the murder thriller it is.

Macbeth is William Shakespeare as pure storyteller.

ORIGINS OF THE PLAY

James Charles Stuart assumed the Scottish throne at the age of 13 months. His father had been recently assassinated, and his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, forced to abdicate her throne from prison, was later famously executed at the command of Elizabeth I. As James VI, king of Scotland, he took pride in his ancestry, which supposedly traced back to the historical Scottish figure Banquo. A talented scholar, James published works on the theory of the divine rights of kings and on his particular interest of witchcraft and the occult.

Following Elizabeth’s death in 1603, James assumed the English throne (as James I), becoming England’s first Scottish king. Though his accession was relatively smooth, James entered upon a contentious political arena. The English were violently divided on such issues as

CHARACTERS

Duncan, *king of Scotland*
Malcolm, *his older son and named successor to the crown*
Donalbain, *his younger son*
Macbeth, *thane of Glamis and captain in Duncan’s army*
Lady Macbeth, *his wife*
Banquo, *captain in Duncan’s army, friend of Macbeth*
Fleance, *his son*
Macduff, *thane of Fife*
Lady Macduff, *his wife*
Macduff’s son
Macduff’s daughter
Lennox, *nobleman of Scotland*
Ross, *nobleman of Scotland*
Angus, *nobleman of Scotland*
Menteth, *nobleman of Scotland*
Caihnness, *nobleman of Scotland*
Sergeant, *in Duncan’s army*
Porter, *in the Macbeth household*
Seyton, *Macbeth’s armorer*
Gentlewoman, *attendant to Lady Macbeth*
Doctor
 Three **Weïrd Sisters**
Soldiers, Servants, Attendants and Messengers

religion and the legitimacy of the royal bloodline, and James, already a nervous and superstitious man, was justifiably uneasy.

Fears for the king’s safety were exacerbated when, on November 5, 1605, British soldier Guy Fawkes was discovered in the cellar of the House of Lords guarding barrels of gunpowder, intending to blow up Parliament, including the king and his family, the following day. This so-called Gunpowder Plot created an atmosphere of panic in London. Conspirators such as Henry Garnet attempted to use the doctrine of equivocation in court, giving ambiguous or misleading testimony, but to no avail; the trials and subsequent executions of those implicated in the plot led to a rush of anti-Catholic sentiment in London, as well as fierce loyalty to the crown.

Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, written circa 1606, was performed for James during the height of this raw political environment. Though regicide was nothing new to the stage, it surely held a special significance for James, and it was a daring move to bring such a bloody play as *Macbeth* before the king. However, in glorifying James’ Scottish ancestry, Shakespeare also comments on the legitimacy of his rule, and James proved to become a loyal patron to Shakespeare. As under Elizabeth, the arts, particularly literature and drama, thrived under James’ reign.

– Kayla Skarbakka

The author recently completed a dramaturgy internship at the Guthrie.

COMMENTS ABOUT THE PLAY

Whoever thinks that Shakespeare's theater has a moral effect, and that the sight of Macbeth irresistibly repels one from the evil of ambition, is in error: and he is again in error if he thinks Shakespeare himself felt as he feels. He who is really possessed by raging ambition beholds this its image with joy; and if the hero perishes by his passion this precisely is the sharpest spice in the hot draught of this joy. Can the poet have felt otherwise? How royally, and not at all like a rogue, does his ambitious man pursue his course from the moment of his great crime! Only from then on does he exercise 'demonic' attraction and excite similar natures to emulation - demonic means here: in defiance against life and advantage for the sake of a drive and idea. Do you suppose that Tristan and Isolde are preaching against adultery when they both perish by it? This would be to stand the poets on their head: they, and especially Shakespeare, are enamoured of the passions as such and not least of their death-welcoming moods - those moods in which the heart adheres to life no more firmly than does a drop of water to a glass.

Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the morality of the stage," *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, 1881

Macbeth is not a monster ... though in the catalogue he might go for one because of the blackness of his deeds. But at the outset his deeds are only the wishes and fears of the average undistinguished man translated into half-hearted action. Pure evil is a kind of transcendence that he does not aspire to. He only wants to be a king and sleep the sleep of the just, undisturbed. ... Macbeth does not fall; if anything he somewhat improves as the result of his career of crime. He throws off his dependency and thus achieves the "greatness" he mistakenly sought in the crown and scepter. He swells to vast proportions, having supped full with horrors.

Mary McCarthy, *The Writing on the Wall and Other Literary Essays*, 1962

In *Macbeth* history, as well as crime, is shown through personal experience. It is a matter of decision, choice, and compulsion. Crime is committed on personal responsibility and has to be executed with one's own hands. Macbeth murders Duncan himself.

History in *Macbeth* is confused the way nightmares are; and, as in a nightmare, everyone is enveloped by it. Once the mechanism has been put in motion, one is apt to be crushed by it. ...

Ambition in this play means the intention and planning of murder. Terror means the memory of murders that have been committed and fear of new crimes that are inevitable. The great and true murder, with which history begins, is the murder of a king. Then the killing has to go on, until the killer is himself killed. The new king will be the man who has killed a king. This is the pattern of *Richard III* and other "royal dramas," as well as of *Macbeth*. The huge steam-roller of history has been put in motion and crushes everybody in turn. In *Macbeth*,

however, this murder-cycle does not possess the logic of the mechanism, but suggest rather a frighteningly growing nightmare. ...

Macbeth is aware of the nightmare. In the world upon which murder is being imposed as fate, compulsion and inner necessity, there is only one dream: of a murder that will break the murder cycle, will be the way out of nightmare, and will mean liberation.

Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 1964

Usually in a tragedy a good person is made to suffer through a flaw in his goodness. In *Macbeth* this pattern is reversed: it is the streak of goodness that causes pathos and suffering. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth attempt to be murderers without malice. ... What Macbeth does can only be done without suffering if it is entirely malicious. Richard III finally breaks down, but in most murders there is no remorse, because the murderer is full of malice. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth never show direct malice. They would act as devils without becoming so, and that destroys them.

W.H. Auden, "Macbeth," March 19, 1947 in *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Princeton University Press, 2000

If we are compelled to identify with Macbeth, and he appalls us (and himself), then we ourselves must be fearsome also. Working against the Aristotelian formula for tragedy, Shakespeare deluges us with fear and pity, not to purge us but for a sort of purposiveness without purpose that no interpretation wholly comprehends. The sublimity of Macbeth and of Lady Macbeth is overwhelming: they are persuasive and valuable personalities, profoundly in love with each other. Indeed, with surpassing irony Shakespeare presents them as the happiest married couple in all his work. And they are anything but two fiends, despite their dreadful crimes and deserved catastrophes. So rapid and foreshortened is their play (about half the length of *Hamlet*) that we are given no leisure to confront their descent into hell as it happens. Something vital in us is bewildered by the evanescence of their better natures, though Shakespeare gives us emblems enough of the way down and out.

Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, New York: Riverhead Books 1998

If you want to know the truth about Lady Macbeth's character, she hasn't one. There never was no such person. She says things that will set people's imagination to work if she says them in the right way: that is all. I know: I do it myself. You ought to know: you set people's imagination to work, don't you? though you know very well that what they imagine is not there, and that when they believe you are thinking ineffable things you are only wondering whether it would be considered vulgar to have shrimps for tea, or whether you could seduce me into ruining my next play by giving you a part in it.

G.B. Shaw, in a January 13, 1921 letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was playing Lady Macbeth in a production in London. Reprinted in *Shaw on Shakespeare*, 1961

Macbeth is subjected to a temptation which, like those undergone by Christ, exactly reflects what the powers of evil know to be the desires of the mind. It is not inhuman or even extraordinary to undergo such a temptation, but to succumb to it is precisely to give one's eternal jewel to the common enemy of man. ...

The role of the Weird Sisters is, then to represent that equivocal evil in the nature of things which helps deceive the human will. But they are not mere allegories or the abstractions they might be in a modern play. ... They are real – Banquo sees them; and Banquo's ghost is also, for all we can know, real. Shakespeare seems here, and with the apparition of the dagger, to be inviting reflections as to whether the imagination can produce real effects; but dramatically they are undoubtedly real. The evils within and without Macbeth's mind are subtly twinned.

James knew all about this, and he knew also that the Sisters had no direct power over Macbeth's soul (he had told his witch-tormentor Bothwell the same thing years before). The Weird Sisters, knowing of his ambitions, could persuade Macbeth to evil, but they could not compel him to it; by an equivocal representation of a foreseen future they could tempt him to choose an apparent before a real good. Thus they subjected him to the temptations he was least able to withstand, but had no direct power over his free will. It is in this sense that Macbeth is an Everyman; and for him as for all habitual sinners the guilt that is at first a matter of choice becomes, as his will atrophies, a matter of fate.

Frank Kermode, introduction to *Macbeth, The Riverside Shakespeare*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974

Like *Richard II*, *Macbeth* has a chiasmic, or X-shaped, structure, charting at once the upward and downward trajectories of its two protagonists. As Macbeth moves downward toward inhumanity and loss of affect, Lady Macbeth moves upward, toward feeling and horror. At the beginning of the play it is Macbeth who hears voices, sees visions: the dagger before him, coated with blood; the voice that cries "Sleep no more"; the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth sees and hears nothing. Like Iago, she has no interior dimension in which to feel this emotional tug-of-war, this battle of the soul. But by the play's close it is Lady Macbeth who has the most terrible vision, presented to us like a play-within-the-play: the vision of a bloody hand that cannot be cleansed. And this exchange of qualities takes place between Macbeth and his wife, two characters whom Freud would use as case studies for "disunited parts of a single psychical individuality" in "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytical Work." Yet in the opening scenes we see in Lady Macbeth none of this frailty. We see instead rigidity, resolution, and the rejection of a restricted notion of a woman's place. Lady Macbeth is the strongest character in the play. From the first moment we see her she is resolute, apparently without moral reservation, and devastatingly scornful of her husband's inner struggles, which she equates with unmanliness. ...

Like darkness, which sometimes needed to be invoked by language – or props, such as onstage candles and lanterns – in the middle of an outdoor afternoon performance, gender difference, femaleness, was an achieved effect rather than a mirror of reality. And this is very germane to the question of Macbeth's manliness, which his wife so regularly challenges. Neither manliness nor womanliness can be taken for granted in a world, and on a stage, where gender is by definition an act.

Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, New York: Anchor Books, 2004

To pitch upon an informing epithet, *Macbeth* is the starkest of the great tragedies. It is the least discursive, even less so than *Othello*. With *Othello* it is the most forthright in its action; and this we should expect, for it is the tragedy of unchecked will, even as *Hamlet* is the tragedy of indecision. It is cold and harsh and unrelenting. If Shakespeare's mind was ever plagued by the doctrine of hell hereafter, this play might well be his comment on it. He puts hell here. Macbeth the man is a study in self-damnation. "Hell is murky," says the wretched woman in her sleep, and she may have further yet to go on to find it. But he ends as a soulless man, a beast, chained to a stake and slaughtered like a beast. ...

The play, in the light of its story, falls into three parts. Acts I and II form the first and stand for the achievement of Macbeth's ambition. Act III, with the two first scenes of Act IV, form a second, which shows his wielding of power. From thence to the end we see the process of retribution.

Harley Granville-Barker, "Preface to The Tragedy of Macbeth," 1923, reprinted in *More Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974

EXCERPTS FROM THE PLAY

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.
Weird Sisters, 1.1

**But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of Darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence. -**

Banquo, 1.3

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good: -
If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings.
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man,
That function is smother'd in surmise,
And nothing is, but what is not.
Macbeth, 1.3

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face.
Duncan, 1.4

**Come, you Spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse;
That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th'effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on Nature's mischief! Come, thick Night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!'**

Lady Macbeth, 1.5

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if th'assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all - here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. - But in these cases,
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th'inventor: this even-handed Justice
Commends th'ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.

Macbeth, 1.7

**Away, and mock the time with
fairest show:
False face must hide what the
false heart doth know.**

Macbeth, 1.7

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee: -
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling, as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use. -
Mine eyes are made the fools o'th'other senses,
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;
And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. - There's no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

Macbeth, 2.1

The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i'th'air; strange screams of death,
And prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion and confused events
New hatch'd to th'woeful time: the obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

Lenox, 2.3

Therefore, much drink may be said to be an equivocator
with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes
him off; it persuades him, and disheartens him; makes him stand to,
and not stand to: in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and,
giving him the lie, leaves him.

Porter, 2.3

**How now, my Lord? why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts, which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard: what's done is done.**

Lady Macbeth, 3.2

The time has been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools.

Macbeth, 3.4

It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood.

Macbeth, 3.4

O nation miserable!
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,
Since that the truest issue of thy throne
By his own interdiction stands accus'd,
And does blaspheme his breed?

Macduff, 4.3

**To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.**

Macbeth, 5.5

Out, damned spot! out, I say! – One: two: why, then 'tis time to do't. –
Hell is murky.

– Fie, my Lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? – What need we fear who
knows it, when
none can call our power to account? – Yet who would have thought the
old man to
have had so much blood in him. ... The Thane of Fife had a wife: where
is she now?
– What, will these hands ne'er be clean? – No more o'that, my Lord, no
more o'that:
you mar all with this starting.

Lady Macbeth, 5.1

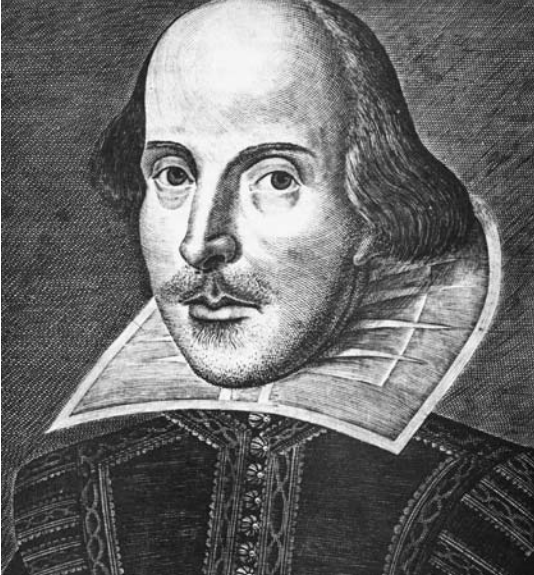
Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd my better part of man:
And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope.

Macbeth, 5.8

**I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young
Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Though Birnam wood be come to
Dunsinane,
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman
born,
Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on,
Macduff;
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold,
enough!'**

Macbeth, 5.8

THE PLAYWRIGHT



William Shakespeare was born in 1564 and raised in the market town of Stratford-upon-Avon, in England's West Country. As the son of an up-and-coming town merchant, Shakespeare would have attended the village grammar school. In this school, the first educational step for boys (girls were generally not allowed any kind of education) would have been to learn to read and write not only English, but also in Latin and Greek.

In 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, and the couple would have three children. Shakespeare was in London by 1592 and was beginning to make a name for himself as a playwright. Though the few years before he came to London are unaccounted for in historical record, it's thought that he worked as an actor with traveling theater companies. He stayed in London for about 20 years, becoming more and more successful in his work as an actor, writer and shareholder in his acting company. He then retired to Stratford to lead the life of a country gentleman. Shakespeare died there – on what is thought to be his birthday, April 23, in 1616. He is buried in the parish church, where his grave can be seen to this day. His known body of work includes 37 plays, 100 long poems and 154 sonnets.

Shakespeare has two sides to him: one is the historical side, where he's one of a group of dramatists working in Elizabethan London and writing for an audience living in that London at that time; the other is the poet who speaks to us today with so powerfully contemporary a voice. If we study only the historical, or 1564-1616 Shakespeare, we take away all his relevance to our own time and shirk trying to look into the greatest mystery of literature, the mystery of how someone can communicate with times and spaces and cultures so far removed from his own.

Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye On Shakespeare*, 1986

It has often been noted that Shakespeare used more words than any other poet, and used them with more sensuous accuracy. But what matters is that the twenty thousand words at his reach give us an all but total rendering of the Elizabethan world. Scarcely any sphere of action or thought is left out; scarcely anything was too remote or specialized. ... As Newton and Leibnitz were among the last to apprehend the entire spectrum of the natural sciences, to experience knowledge as a complex unity, so Shakespeare appears to have been the last to enclose in poetic speech a total view of human action, a *summa mundi*.

George Steiner, *Language and Silence*, 1967

[Shakespeare] was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the Images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the great commendation; he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.

John Dryden, *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, 1668

We do not understand Shakespeare from a single reading, and certainly not from a single play. There is a relation between the various plays of Shakespeare, taken in order; and it is work of years to venture even one individual interpretation of the pattern in Shakespeare's carpet.

T.S. Eliot, *Dante*, 1929

In Shakespeare the birds sing, the rushes are clothed with green, hearts love, souls suffer, the cloud wanders, it is hot, it is cold, night falls, time passes, forests and multitudes speak, the vast eternal dream hovers over all. Sap and blood, all forms of the multiple reality, actions and ideas, man and humanity, the living and the life, solitudes, cities, religions, diamonds and pearls, dunghills and charnel houses, the ebb and flow of beings, the steps of comers and goers, all, all are of Shakespeare and in Shakespeare; and, this genius being the earth, the dead emerge from it.

Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, 1864

What points of morals, of manners, of economy, of philosophy, of religion, of taste, of our conduct of life, has he not settled? What mystery has he not signified his knowledge of? What office or function, or district of man's work, has he not remembered? What maiden has not found him finer than her delicacy? What sage has he not outseen?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*, 1850

A SELECTED CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

YEAR	WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	WORLD HISTORY
1564	William Shakespeare is born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden of Stratford-upon-Avon, their third child and first son. (Traditionally, Shakespeare's Day is celebrated on April 23.)	Galileo Galilei is born. Playwright Christopher Marlowe is born. Voyages of exploration, trade and colonization are undertaken throughout the "New World," primarily by England, Spain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands.
1576		James Burbage opens The Theatre, London's first playhouse used by professional actors. The dining hall of Blackfriars monastery is converted to a theater for private performances given by a company of boy actors. It remains open until 1584.
1577		Holinshed publishes the <i>Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland</i> , a primary source for Shakespeare's history plays.
1578	Shakespeare's family finds itself in serious debt and mortgages Mary's house in Wilmcote to raise cash.	Interest in Roman and Greek antiquities leads to the discovery of the catacombs in Rome.
1580	John Shakespeare is involved in lawsuits regarding several mortgaged family properties.	The English folksong "Greensleeves" is popular.
1582	A marriage license is issued to William Shakespeare and Agnes (Anne) Hathaway in November. She is eight years his senior, and pregnant at the time of their marriage. The following May their first daughter, Susanna, is born.	The Gregorian calendar is adopted in Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. (England does not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752.)
1585	Twins, Hamnet and Judith, are born in February to William and Anne Shakespeare.	Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes writes the pastoral novel <i>Galatea</i> .
1585-91	No records document Shakespeare's life during these "lost years." At some point, he must have made his way to London without his family, after having joined perhaps a troupe of traveling actors.	
1586		Mary, Queen of Scots, is accused of plotting the murder of Queen Elizabeth. A number of other conspirators are put on trial and executed. Mary is executed the following year.
1588		The Spanish Armada attempts to invade England but fails, due to bad weather at sea and the ability of smaller English ships to out-manuever the attackers in the English Channel. The event establishes England as a major naval power.
1592	Shakespeare is listed as an actor with the Lord Chamberlain's Men in London. Writer and dramatist Robert Greene scathingly lashes out at "an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers" at the time when Shakespeare's first known play, <i>King Henry VI, Part One</i> , is successfully performed.	15,000 people die of the plague in London. Theaters close temporarily to prevent the spread of the epidemic.
1593-94	During the course of the plague, it appears that Shakespeare has written several plays (their dates of composition have not been established with certainty in all cases): <i>King Henry VI, Parts Two and Three</i> , <i>Titus Andronicus</i> , <i>Richard III</i> , and the comedies <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> , <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> , <i>The Comedy of Errors</i> , <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , as well as the poems "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece."	Christopher Marlowe is killed in a tavern brawl (1593). His tragedy <i>Edward II</i> is published the following year. London's theaters reopen in 1594 when the threat of the plague has abated.
1595	Approximate year of composition for <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , <i>King John</i> , <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>Richard II</i> , and <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> .	Sir Philip Sidney's <i>An Apology for Poetry</i> is published posthumously.

YEAR	WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	WORLD HISTORY
1596	John Shakespeare, the dramatist's father, is granted a coat of arms. Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, dies at the age of eleven.	The Blackfriars Playhouse, later to become the winter theater for Shakespeare's company, opens in London.
1597-98	Shakespeare's sonnets circulate unpublished. The two parts of <i>King Henry IV</i> , <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> , <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> are written. He purchases the New Place, one of the largest estates in Stratford. He is listed as a player in a production of Ben Jonson's <i>Every Man in His Humor</i> .	A second armada of Spanish ships en route to attack England is dispersed by storms. Sir Francis Bacon's <i>Essays, Civil and Moral</i> , published. The English Parliament passes an Act prescribing that convicted criminals be sentenced to deportation to distant colonies.
1599	The Globe Playhouse opens. Shakespeare is part owner by virtue of the shares divided between the Burbage family of actors (half) and five others, including the dramatist. Approximate year of composition for <i>King Henry V</i> , <i>Julius Caesar</i> , and <i>As You Like It</i> .	The Earl of Essex is sent to command English forces in Ireland. He fails to secure peace and returns to England against the orders of Queen Elizabeth I.
1600	Shakespeare's poem, "The Phoenix and the Turtle" and his plays, <i>Twelfth Night</i> , <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> , <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> date approximately from this period (1600-02).	The international trading corporation, the English East India Company, is founded. (The Dutch East India Company is founded in 1602.)
1601	Shakespeare's father dies.	Ben Jonson, offended by a satirical portrayal of himself in a play, returns the insult, sparking a series of plays known as the War of the Theaters in which playwrights ridicule each other from the stage.
1603	Approximate year of composition for <i>Orhelo</i> and <i>Measure for Measure</i> . James I is crowned King of England, and the acting company known as Lord Chamberlain's Men, with which Shakespeare is affiliated, becomes The King's Men. They will perform twelve plays per year for the court of James I.	Elizabeth I dies. She is succeeded by her cousin, James I. (The era of his reign is called the Jacobean period.) Sir Walter Raleigh, arrested as suspect in a plot to dethrone James I, is tried for treason & imprisoned. A new outbreak of the plague in London.
1605	Shakespeare's name is included among England's greatest writers in <i>Remaines of a Greater Worke Concerning Britaine</i> , published by the antiquarian William Camden. <i>King Lear</i> appears.	The Gunpowder Plot – a plan to blow up the House of Lords during an address by James I – is foiled in November. Guy Fawkes and other conspirators are arrested and eventually executed the following year.
1606	Macbeth appears.	
1607	Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, marries Dr. John Hill; they make their home in Stratford. <i>Anthony and Cleopatra</i> , <i>Pericles</i> and <i>Timon of Athens</i> are written.	English colonists in America, led by John Smith, establish the city of Jamestown, Virginia.
1608	Shakespeare's acting company signs a lease for the use of the Blackfriars Playhouse. <i>Coriolanus</i> appears. Shakespeare's mother dies.	Galileo Galilei uses a design by Dutch scientist Johan Lippershey to construct his own telescope.
1609-10	Shakespeare's <i>Sonnets</i> are published. His late plays <i>The Winter's Tale</i> , <i>Cymbeline</i> , and <i>The Tempest</i> belong to this period.	
1612	Records show that, by this time, Shakespeare "of Stratford-upon-Avon, gentleman" has returned to live in his birthplace.	John Webster's tragedy <i>The White Devil</i> is staged and published.
1613	Two plays, <i>King Henry VIII</i> and <i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i> , are attributed to both Shakespeare and John Fletcher.	The Globe Playhouse burns down during the first performance of <i>King Henry VIII</i> .
1616	Shakespeare's daughter Judith is married. Shakespeare dies on April 23 and is buried in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church.	The Catholic Church prohibits Galileo from further scientific work.
1623	Heminge and Condell of The King's Men compile Shakespeare's complete dramatic works in the <i>First Folio</i> . Anne, William Shakespeare's widow, dies.	John Webster's <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> is published. Dutch colonists settle in New Amsterdam (in 1664, seized by the English it will be renamed New York).

COMMENTS ON THE LEGACY OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORK

His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who only gather his works and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that read him.

John Heminge and Henry Condell, Address "To the Great Variety of Readers," prefixed to the First Folio, 1623

Shakespeare's language and versification are like the rest of him. He has a magic power over words: they come winged at his bidding; and seem to know their places. They are struck out in a heat, on the spur of the occasion, and have all the truth and vividness which arise from an actual impression of the objects. His epithets and single phrases are like sparkles, thrown off from an imagination, fired by the whirling rapidity of its own motion. His language is hieroglyphical. It translates thoughts into visible images. It abounds in sudden transitions and elliptical expressions.

William Hazlitt, *Lecture on the English Poets*, 1818

Only one thing seems strangely certain: that no other writer will surpass Shakespeare. To say that Shakespeare is not only the greatest writer who has ever lived, but who will ever live, is a perfectly rational statement. But it is, in the deepest sense, a shocking statement. It outrages the instinctive forward motion of human expectation. It sets a defiant limit to the hopes of any poet, any [one] who seeks to master and render life on the written page. It insinuates into the study and criticism of literature a constant backward glance. There is a mustard-seed of truth in the slogan of the surrealists that if poetry is to be made new, if we are to grow innocent again before the magic of speech, the works of Shakespeare must be burned. We do him honor, also, if we recognize how heavy is the burden of his glory.

George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman*, 1967

If you cannot understand my argument, and declare "It's Greek to me," you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act more in sorrow than in anger, if your wish is father to the thought, if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, danced attendance (on your lord and master), laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool's paradise – why, be that as it may, the more fool you, for it is a foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare; if you think it is early

days and clear out bag and baggage, if you think it is high time and that that is the long and short of it, if you believe that the game is up and that truth will out even if it involves your own flesh and blood, if you lie low till the crack of doom because you suspect foul play, if you have your teeth set on edge (at one fell swoop) without rhyme or reason, then – to give the devil his due – if the truth were known (for surely you have a tongue in your head) you are quoting Shakespeare; even if you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I was dead as a doornail, if you think I am an eye-sore, a laughing stock, the devil incarnate, a stonyhearted villain, bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then – by Jove! O Lord! Tut, tut! For goodness sake! What the dickens! But me no buts – it is all one to me, for you are quoting Shakespeare.

Bernard Levin, *Enthusiasms*, 1983

As my old office mate used to say, Shakespeare is like God, that is he seems to know everything, be everywhere and be able to do everything. Just as every person remakes God for himself or herself, so every artist remakes Shakespeare for himself or herself. Shakespeare can set the agenda for the modern era – himself half medieval, half modern, all Renaissance, he brought up every issue that the world has had to deal with from family relationships to political power to colonialism, not to mention good and evil. As the modern era ends, we can't go ahead to whatever is coming next without consulting the Bard and shaking him until he gives up some answers. He is the wise one, or at least the wisest one we've got. We need to know if he's coming with us into the future or not.

Jane Smiley, *The New York Times*, December 2, 1996

THE WEIRD SISTERS: THAT PALTER IN A DOUBLE SENSE

What are these,
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth,
And yet are on't?

Banquo, 1.3

One needn't have read *Macbeth*, or studied the plot, language or themes of the play, to be fairly well acquainted with the witches, particularly the famous cauldron scene. They are such a part of our cultural inheritance that many of us can, no doubt, list several of the potion's ingredients by heart, and repeat the memorable charm: "Double, double toil and trouble:/Fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble." Such is our familiarity with these women, their magic and, most of all, their iconic status that it is dangerously easy to take them for granted. Their role in Macbeth's downfall, however, is a central crux of the story, and how we interpret their power cuts to the very heart of the tragedy.

Though frequently written off as witches, these mysterious women are almost never addressed as such in the play itself. They call themselves the Weird Sisters, a term derived from Old English word *wyrd*, relating to fate. Does this mean, then, that they are the authors of Macbeth's fate? Did they, perhaps, possess Macbeth and his wife during the murder of Duncan, or was the unlucky couple simply destined to perform their terrible crime?

Besides their prophesies to Macbeth and Banquo, the Weird Sisters describe several of their other activities for us. One sister admits to killing swine and, indeed, in Shakespeare's day it was not uncommon to blame witchcraft for the death of livestock and domestic animals. Another sister, out for revenge against a ship captain's wife, promises to pursue the husband by sailing "in a sieve" – another power frequently attributed to witches. We do not see these deeds in action, which could make us wonder whether, indeed, the women possess these abilities at all, or whether the magic is less in the actual performance than in the speaking of it, the charm and power of their rhythmic language. Furthermore, this sister continues, "Though his bark cannot be lost,/ Yet it shall be tempest-tost." She seeks to cause mischief and terror, but not utter destruction. Whether this is a choice on her part or indicates a limit to her powers is open to interpretation, but it seems doubtful that these women, no matter how wicked their intentions, could be seriously charged with anything so crucial as the murder of a king.

Nowhere in the play do the Weird Sisters suggest this murder to Macbeth. Not once, indeed, do they suggest any course of action whatsoever. Their power, such as we see it, is limited entirely to the realm of prophecy. "All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be King hereafter." And the Macbeths, who possess their own dark intentions, contrive the means to achieve this end. The sisters do not call upon fate so much as

upon the inevitability of the Macbeth's own psychological weaknesses, their own hungry desires that color their interpretations and allow them to sow the seeds of their destruction. The sisters plant these seeds; that is the limit of their metaphysical aid. The Macbeths, overcome with "vaulting ambition," bear the responsibility of their actions. They are the creators of their own tragedy.

Kayla Skarbakka

The author recently completed a literary internship at the Guthrie.

The dominant philosophy of the Elizabethan age was precisely the occult philosophy, with its magic, its melancholy, its aim of penetrating into profound spheres of knowledge and experience, scientific and spiritual, its fear of the dangers of such a quest, and of the fierce opposition which it encountered. ... The world of Macbeth and his wife is a school of night indeed, where witches incite to murder.

Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 1979

[F]or the actual text of the witches' scenes, Shakespeare would not have had to go further than his own memories of his boyhood in Warwickshire. Witchcraft was a very vital force in Tudor England. Shakespeare grew up in a countryside where the people lived and practiced, where they believed in witches and their powers, where they were ducked in ponds, tortured, humiliated, and killed in dreadful, unspeakable ways. He would certainly have known some in the Warwickshire villages where he lived and played. He would have heard of their spells and incantations, these being the living tradition of country life in which he grew up. In his natural and praiseworthy desire for authenticity, he went a little too far, for the witches' brew in [Act Four] Scene Three whose repulsive ingredients make up the potion. ...

It is taken from an actual black-magic incantation which he would certainly have known about during those years in which he lived in Stratford.

Richard Huggett, *Supernatural on Stage: Ghost and Superstitions of the Theatre*, New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1975

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED TERMS

Editor's note: This glossary was compiled using the Arden Shakespeare edition of the play and may not reflect all cuts made to the script for the Guthrie production. This is a selected rather than comprehensive glossary, containing terms and phrases that may be of particular value for those interested in further understanding the play.

SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHY

Angus

an area of east central Scotland. Shakespeare's use is anachronistic.

Birnam wood

forested region between the towns of Perth and Birnam in east central Scotland.

Cawdor

a town in northern Scotland near Inverness to the east.

Cumberland

a northern English county under Scottish control until 1092.

Dunsinane hill

1,000-foot peak in the Sidlaw Hills between Perth and Dundee in east-central Scotland, a few miles from Birnam wood.

Fife

an area of east central Scotland, south of Angus, just north of Edinburgh.

Forres

a town in northern Scotland east of Cawdor and north of Fife.

Glamis

a town in Angus county in east central Scotland, just north of Fife.

Inverness

a town in northern Scotland on the shores of Loch Ness, about 50 miles west of Forres

Northumberland

a northern English county bordering Cumberland and Scotland.

Rosse

a section of northern Scotland opposite the Hebrides. Shakespeare's use is anachronistic.

Saint Colm's Inch

island off the south coast of Fife, now called Inchcolm; named after St. Columba.

Scone

town in Fife, southwest of Glamis and north of Edinburgh, the traditional place for crowning Scottish kings.

western isles

The Hebrides, islands off the northwestern coast of Scotland, under Viking control at the time of the historical Duncan.

GLOSSARY

ague

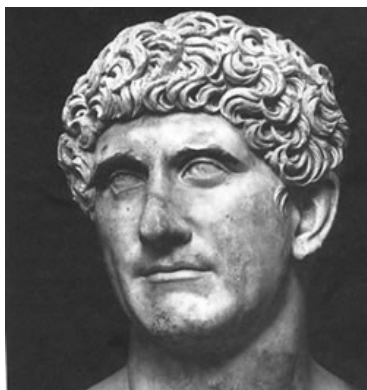
a fever marked by paroxysms of chills, fever, and sweating that recur at regular intervals
"...here let them lie,/Till famine and the ague eat them up." (Macbeth, 5.5)

alarum'd

roused to action, warned
"...and wither'd Murther,/Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf..." (Macbeth, 2.1)

Aleppo

a trading city in northern Syria, part of the Turkish empire
"Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th' Tiger" (First Witch, 1.3)



Antony ... Caesar

Roman general Mark Antony was defeated by Octavius Caesar in civil wars that eventually led to the end of the republic and establishment of the empire.
"...as, it is said,/Mark Antony's was by Caesar." (Macbeth, 3.1)

aroynt thee

begone
"Aroynt thee, witch!" (First Witch, 1.3.6)

Bellona

the Roman goddess of war, sometimes said to be married to Mars, the Roman god of war.
"Till that Bellona's bridegroom, Brave Macbeth..." (Rosse, 1.2)

beguile the time

deceive the world
"To beguile the time,/Look like the time..."
 (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

bellman

night watchman
"It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman/Which gives the stern'st good-night."
 (Lady Macbeth, 2.2)

cast the water

diagnose the condition (from the medical practice of reading urine)
"If thou couldst, Doctor, cast/The water of my land, find her disease," (Macbeth, 5.3)

chamberlains

servants who wait on a king in his bedchamber
"...his two chamberlains..."
 (Lady Macbeth, 1.7)

charnel-houses

houses or vaults where dead bodies are piled
*"If charnel-houses and our graves must send/
 Those we bury, back..."* (Macbeth, 3.4)

choppy

chapped
*"By each at once her choppy finger laying/Upon
 her skinny lips..."* (Banquo, 1.3)

cousin

historically Macbeth and Duncan were both grandsons of King Malcolm, but the term can be applied to any member of the extended family
"O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!"
 (Duncan, 1.2)

dudgeon

hilt
"...on thy blade, and dudgeon..."
 (Macbeth, 2.1)

Earls

historically Malcolm Anglicized Scotland, influenced in part by his exile in England
*"My Thanes and kinsmen,/Henceforth be
 Earls; ..."* (Malcolm, 5.9)



Edward

Edward the Confessor, king of England from 1042-1066; like Malcolm, spent years in exile after his father's murder
*"Lives in the English court; and is receiv'd/Of
 the most pious Edward..."* (Rosse, 3.6)

effect and it

her purpose and its consequences
*"Shake my fell purpose, nor keep
 peace between/Th'effect and it!"*
 (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

egg, fry

child; infant
"What, you egg!/Young fry of treachery!"
 (Murderer, 4.2)

epicures

people devoted to sensual pleasure
*"Then fly, false Thanes,/And mingle with the
 English epicures..."* (Macbeth, 5.3)

establish our estate

grant succession rights
*"We will establish our estate upon/Our eldest,
 Malcolm..."* (Duncan, 1.4)

eternal jewel

immortal soul
*"...and mine eternal jewel/Given to the
 common Enemy of man..."* (Macbeth, 3.1)

Father

honorary title for an elderly man
"Ha, good Father,/Thou seest the heavens,..."
 (Rosse, 2.4)

gall

bitterness; bile
*"Come to my woman's breasts,/And take my
 milk for gall..."* (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

Gallowglasses

heavy-armed Irish horsemen
*"... Of Kernes and Gallowglasses is
 supplied..."* (Sergeant, 1.2)

golden round

crown; kingship
*"All that impedes thee from the golden
 round..."* (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

Golgotha

"place of the skull," the place where Jesus was crucified, and therefore a site of infamy
"Or memorize another Golgotha..."
 (Sergeant, 1.2)



Gorgon

monster of Greek myth whose look turned the beholder to stone
*"Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight/
 With a new Gorgon."* (Macduff, 2.3)

gouts

large drops or splashes
"...gouts of blood..." (Macbeth, 2.1)



Hecate

goddess in Greek mythology who presided over witchcraft and magical rites; she was originally a moon goddess
*"Witchcraft celebrates/Pale Hecate's
 offrings..."* (Macbeth, 2.1)

Hie

hurry, hasten
*"Hie thee hither,/That I may pour my spirits in
 thine ear..."* (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

highly

intensely, greatly
*"...what thou wouldst highly,/That wouldst
 thou holily..."* (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

holily

with sanctity and devoutness

"...what thou wouldst highly,/That wouldst thou holily..." (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

host

considered a sacred responsibility; harming a guest or allowing a guest to be harmed was a terrible crime

"...as his host,/Who should against his murderer shut the door..." (Macbeth, 1.7)

hurly-burly

din and tumult of battle; commotion, confusion

"When the hurlyburly's done, ..."
(Second Witch, 1.1)

Hyrcan

from Hyrcania, a region bordering the Caspian Sea (contemporary Iran/Turkmenistan); its tigers were proverbially fierce

"The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger..."
(Macbeth, 3.4)

incarnadine

make red

"No, this my hand will rather/The multitudinous seas in incarnadine..." (Macbeth, 2.2)

Interim having weigh'd it

having considered it thoroughly in the meantime

"...and at more time,/The Interim having weigh'd it..." (Macbeth, 1.3)

jump

leap over, risk, hazard (as in horse riding)

"We'd jump the life to come." (Macbeth, 1.7)

Kernes

light-armed Irish foot-soldiers

"... Of Kernes and Gallowglasses is supplied..." (Sergeant, 1.2)

lees

sediment or dregs that settle from a liquid, especially wine

"The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees/Is left this vault to brag of." (Macbeth, 2.3)

left the chamber

as a host, Macbeth's leaving the table before his chief guest is finished eating is a faux pas

"He has almost supp'd. Why have you left the chamber?" (Lady Macbeth, 1.7)

limbeck

the portion of a still into which vaporized spirits rise; alembic

"...and the receipt of reason/A limbeck only."
(Lady Macbeth, 1.7)

magot-pies, choughs, rooks

several crow-like European birds sacrificed for auguries; crows were usually bad omens

"By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth/The secret'st man of blood."
(Macbeth, 3.4)

make thick my blood

make courageous, fervid or impenetrable; thin blood allowed the passage of humors and spirits throughout the body, while thick blood stopped the passage of, in this case, fear and pity

"...make thick my blood,/Stop up th'access and passage to remorse..." (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

ministers

attendant spirits

"...you murth'ring ministers..."
(Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

mock the time

fool the world, perhaps by simulating the revelry of the present

"Away, and mock the time with fairest show..." (Macbeth, 1.7)

modern ecstasy

common emotion

"...where violent sorrow seems/A modern ecstasy..." (Rosse, 4.3)

Nature's copy's not eterne

nature has not given them an eternal lease on life

"But in them Nature's copy's not eterne."
(Lady Macbeth, 3.2)

near ... bloody

the closer in kinship (to Duncan), the closer to danger

"...the near in blood,/The nearer bloody."
(Donalbain, 2.3)

**Neptune**

Roman god of the sea

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/Clean from my hand?" (Macbeth, 2.2)

nonpareil

one without equal; paragon

"If thou didst it, thou art the nonpareil."
(Macbeth, 3.4)

obscure bird

owl

"...the obscure bird/Clamour'd the livelong night..." (Lenox, 2.3)

parricide

killing of a father

"Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers/With strange invention." (Macbeth, 3.2)

physics

remedies; treats

"The labour we delight in physics pain."
(Macbeth, 2.3)

poor cat i'th'adage

proverbial: the cat would eat fish, but would not wet its feet

"Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'/Like the poor cat i'th'adage?" (Lady Macbeth, 1.7)

possets

hot drinks of milk, wine and spices taken at bedtime

"I have drugg'd their possets..."
(Lady Macbeth, 2.2)

posters

swift travelers

"Posters of the sea and land..." (Witches, 1.3)

proper stuff

rubbish, nonsense

"O proper stuff!" (Lady Macbeth, 3.4)

raven

believed to be the herald of misfortune, an evil omen

"The raven himself is hoarse, ..."

(Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

Roman fool

reference to the Roman tendency to die nobly by one's own hand rather than face defeat

"Why should I play the Roman fool, and die/

On mine own sword?" (Macbeth, 5.8)

ronyon

abusive term for a woman; scabby, mangy creature

"Aroynt thee, witch! the rump-fed ronyon

cries." (First Witch, 1.3)

rooky

rooks are black European crows, which are associated with witchcraft

"Light thickens,/And the crow makes wing to

th'rooky wood..." (Macbeth, 3.2)

sacrilegious

violation against something sacred; Duncan's life was sacred because as king he was God's anointed on earth and his body was (metaphorically) a temple

"Most sacrilegious Murder hath broke open/The

Lord's anointed Temple, and stole thence/The

life o'th'building!" (Macbeth, 2.3)

scorch'd

wounded; slashed

"We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it..."

(Macbeth, 3.2)

sere

dry, withered state

"...my way of life/Is fall'n into the sere, the

yellow leaf..." (Macbeth, 5.3)

serpent under't

proverbial: snake in the grass

"...look like th'innocent flower,/But be the

serpent under't." (Lady Macbeth, 1.5.65-66)

sirrah

a term of address used to children or inferiors

"Sirrah, a word with you..." (Macbeth, 3.1)

sticking-place

notch on a crossbow into which the string fits when sufficiently taut

"But screw your courage to the sticking-place,/

And we'll not fail." (Lady Macbeth, 1.7)

surcease

end; death, murder

"and catch/With his surcease success;"

(Macbeth, 1.7)

Tarquin

traditionally the last king of Rome, who conducted a reign of terror; either he or his son Sextus are said to have raped the virtuous Lucretia, who then killed herself

"... With Tarquin's ravishing strides..."

(Macbeth, 2.1)

thane

title of feudal Scottish lords, commonly a clan chief, equivalent to an earl or baron

"The worthy Thane of Rosse." (Malcolm, 1.2)

Tiger

common name for a ship

"Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th'

Tiger" (First Witch, 1.3)



twofold balls ... treble sceptres

a golden orb is an emblem of sovereignty; the reference is to the joined kingdoms of Scotland (where kings carried one orb and one sceptre) and England (where kings had one orb and two sceptres)

"...and some I see,/That two-fold balls and

treble scepters carry." (Macbeth, 4.1)

trammel up

to catch, as with a net

"Could trammel up the consequence, and

catch" (Macbeth, 1.7)

tyrant

an usurper or a despot; Macbeth is both

"But, peace! – for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd/His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear,/Macduff lives in disgrace."

(Lennox, 3.6)

unlineal

not of Macbeth's lineage

"Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,/No son of mine succeeding."

(Macbeth, 3.1)

unseam'd ... th'chops

ripped him open from navel to jaw

"Till he unseam'd him from the nave to

th'chops," (Sergeant, 1.2)

unsex

take away my womanly qualities (alternately, take away human qualities)

"...unsex me here,/And fill me, from the crown

to the toe..." (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)

vaulting

leaping, as on to a horse's back; leaping over a vaulting-horse

"... sides of my intent, but only/Vaulting

ambition..." (Macbeth, 1.7)

vizards

masks (specifically those used by prostitutes to hide their faces in public)

"And make our faces vizards to our hearts,"

(Macbeth, 3.2)

Weird Sisters

the fates; weird: having the power to control the fate of human beings

"The Weird Sisters, hand in hand..."

(Witches, 1.3)

wink at

seem not to see

"The eye wink at the hand..." (Macbeth, 1.4)

Sources include Arden, Oxford and Cambridge Shakespeare editions of *Macbeth*; *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*; the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster; among others.

THE PORTER SCENE: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Editor's note: In act 2 scene 3, following Macbeth's murder of Duncan, we are introduced to the Porter, a character who, in the text as written, appears for only about 40 lines of text and then disappears. But this character and his short scene with Macduff and Lenox perform many key functions in *Macbeth*: it provides a comic relief to the tension that has built up surrounding Duncan's murder; it provides a number of topical references that at the time of the play's writing would have been "ripped from the headlines" of Jacobean news; and perhaps most importantly, the Porter articulates the important topic of equivocation, a themes that resonates throughout the tragedy. For a bit of fun, the Porter imagines the people who may find themselves at the gate of hell upon death. Below are explanations of some of the references in the Porter's speeches, many of which may be lost on a contemporary audience.

Hell gate

Miracle plays often featured a comic demon called the porter of Hell gate (in opposition to St Peter at Heaven's gate); this convention sets up a comic scene

Belzebub

a devil; in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a fallen angel second only to Satan

farmer

a farmer would hope for a poor harvest so that he might sell his crop at a high price; a bountiful harvest brings low prices. This is perhaps an allusion to the harvest of 1606, which is noted to have been abundant, so the price of corn was low.

other devil

miracle plays often didn't name devils besides Belzebub, so the Porter can't come up with the other devil's name.

equivocator

to equivocate is to be ambiguous enough to allow multiple interpretations of what is said. This is very likely an allusion to Henry Garnet, indicted as part of the Gunpowder Plot, who followed the doctrine of equivocation while on trial.

French hose

the French style of ample hosiery tempted the tailor to order extra fabric, which he kept for himself

The Porter scene, misunderstood by some critics, including even Coleridge, is not a mere imitation of the hell Porter episodes in miracle plays but ... the hinge of the play. The knocking connects the scenes, connects what went before with what comes after Duncan's death. It gives scope for banter about equivocation, an idea central to the entire play; the witches equivocate, the future equivocates, the Macbeths equivocate, the language generally equivocates. The Porter jokes that drink stimulates sexual desire and impairs sexual performance, but his words have a more general application; it comes between desire

and performance, the position of Macbeth in the interim time. Drink is another equivocator, but, unlike Macbeth's equivocations, it also brings on sleep. So, at this critical moment in the action, in the dark moment, disturbed only by the knocking, a central theme is persistently sounded – yet in an episode presented as grotesquely comic.

Frank Kermode, "Macbeth," in *Shakespeare's Language*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2000

From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in *Macbeth*. It was this: the knocking at the gate, which succeeds to the murder of Duncan, produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was, that it reflected back upon the murderer a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; yet, however obstinately I endeavoured with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see why it should produce such an effect. ...

Murder, in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason, that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life; an instinct which ... exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with him (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them, – not a sympathy of pity or approbation). ... [In] the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion – jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred – which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look. ...

Another world has stepped in; and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured: Lady Macbeth is 'unsexed;' Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how shall this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers, and the murder must be insulated – cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs – locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested laid asleep – tranced – racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is, that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

Thomas De Quincey, "On the Knocking on the Gate," *London Magazine*, October 1823

COMMENTS FROM THE CREATIVE TEAM



PHOTO: ANN MARSDEN

Editor's note: The following essays were edited from comments made by Joe Dowling and Monica Frawley to the *Macbeth* company and Guthrie staff on the first day of rehearsal.

JOE DOWLING, DIRECTOR

This production of *Macbeth* is the 50th Shakespeare play to be staged at the Guthrie. Since our opening in 1963 with Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Hamlet* with George Grizzard as the moody Dane, Shakespeare has been at the center of the Guthrie repertoire. We are very proud that generation after generation in our region have had the opportunity to see Shakespeare on our legendary thrust stage, which is, in my view, the best place to see and do Shakespeare.

In this play, the narrative drives relentlessly from the very opening of the play right through to the inevitable end. Because there is very little opportunity, in my view, to let the audience off the hook, we are going to do this play without intermission. Once the play gets going and Macbeth and Lady Macbeth make the decision to kill Duncan, the action that follows is relentless and happens at great speed. *Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays and is driven to a very large extent by its action. It also contains some of the greatest language ever written in Shakespeare. So the combination of those two things, driving the action forward and relishing the language, will be very much what this production is about.

Macbeth has so many different elements to it. One of the things that we're going to try to do is to deemphasize to some extent the supernatural. Not that it's not there – it's very much there in the play. But nowadays the movies do special effects better than the theater can ever do them. In this production we're aiming much more at psychological realities. There is very often the suggestion with this play that these three Weïrd Sisters, as they're called, actually impact the action. (They're not necessarily called witches in the play, they're called the Weïrd Sisters; some of the derivation of that comes from the word *wyrd*, and the sense that they are prophets.) They tell Macbeth what will happen but don't advise him what to do. It is Macbeth and Lady Macbeth who make the decision to murder Duncan, not the witches. The Sisters have a sense of being of another world, but they are real people. They're not spirits, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They are women who happen to have the power of prophecy. And that's all it is. They never tell him what to do. They simply tell him what's going to happen. Nowadays they'd have a little shop down on Hennepin Avenue, and people would pay a couple dollars and they'd read their palms.

The actual reality of the play, in my view, is that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are desperately ambitious and recognize an opportunity when it arises. They take that opportunity – it happens to be the murder of a king, which in the days of James I was the worst crime that you could possibly commit, regicide – and then we watch their destruction from within. Their relationship falls apart completely, and it is a loving relationship at the beginning. Their relationship disintegrates, and both their minds disintegrate as well. This is a play about two people who are the masters of their own destiny and create their own difficulties in the world. And, I believe, they mutually destruct as the play goes on. We watch the king start from this amazing, brave, courageous, moral man – a man who is capable of defending king and country beyond what anyone else can do – become the hounded, desperate man of the last couple of scenes. And watching that decline and creating a world where that decline seems real on a psychological level will be the stuff of what we're going to work on.

This is a play where visuals do have a big impact, with constant storms and a sense of darkness all the time. I think there's probably one or maybe two scenes in this play that take place in daylight. The rest take place in darkness and are illuminated by torches of one kind or another, and all the time there is a sense that that darkness pervades.

Macbeth is also, of course, a play about blood. It's about the royal bloodline that eventually led to James I. Shakespeare wrote this play shortly after the Gunpowder Plot, shortly after Guy Fawkes was discovered about to blow up king and parliament, and he wrote it in many ways to reassure the then-King James that he was the legitimate heir to the throne. Banquo's son and the notion that eventually his descendents would form a line of kings down to the present king was a way for Shakespeare to say, "This bloodline of yours, James, is actually legitimate." The constant belief that tyranny will not stand and that legitimate bloodlines will eventually work out is a very important part of the play. The other way in which blood is a hugely important part of the play is, of course, the amount of it that's shed throughout the play.

In working with designer Monica Frawley on creating the visual for this play, we talked very much about finding a generic world where an audience today would understand and appreciate the sense of destruction that's created by war and by a tyrant's repression. The look of the play will be mid-20th century, but at the same time we won't be specific either in time or in place. But at the beginning of the play, it is a destroyed world, and by the end of the play, the destruction is even more intense. The driving through of the narrative, the creating of both the psychological and external reasons why the Macbeths do what they do, will be the stuff of our rehearsals.



PHOTO: MIKE HABERMANN

MONICA FRAWLEY, SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

When Joe asked me to work on *Macbeth*, I was just about to do an opera in Germany. And the summer I spent in Germany, in Nuremberg, where the famous trials took place, influenced a lot of the way I thought about this play. The opera house that I was doing the opera for was Hitler's favorite opera house. It was a neoclassical, quite beautiful building, but he had all these extraordinary statues put in of

young men with muscles, and he had some other beautiful bits taken out. But what fascinated me, looking at exhibitions of him working

with architect Albert Speer, was Hitler's incredible love of beauty. It was that weird thing of making something extraordinary at the same time he was making the means of destroying it. He used art in an amazing way. Some of it wasn't great, but it was an extraordinary *use* of art to get his idea across.

And that struck me as strange because you always think of someone like him as being kind of black and a baddie, but there was almost a sensitivity in him that was so corrupted and weird. But the buildings that he liked and favored were also shared with people like Mussolini – neoclassical buildings that had a huge grandiosity about them.

I also spent some time in Paris, and I was looking at these wonderful rotundas that they have. That is why I used this idea of setting *Macbeth* in a neoclassical, destroyed building, so that there is the idea of inheritance and all of that in it. It's very dark, and it starts in the beginning with the battle and we see the destruction; the wall is blasted through. I was also looking at a wonderful book of photographs of the soldiers in Afghanistan, and how people try to domesticate the situation that they're in. So in the destruction on stage there are things like a domestic cooker, a television – things that show a way of life are broken around the place, in the debris. You're aware of the life that's being destroyed and going on around.

Another idea I loved is that this is an empire being built on blood, so that the debris from the destruction just gets pushed to the edge, and Macbeth's palace just gets stuck on top of the blood. We don't ever scene change into something that's glorious and beautiful. Macbeth's palace is set right in the middle of the mess, on top of the destruction. When the banquet gets brought in, and whenever there are sets that are massive and beautiful, they get destroyed. So there is a feeling of the world getting worse and worse, of the chaos building up and up. And anything that is palatial or beautiful is a veneer, so we see constantly what in fact his empire is built on.

Again it's dark and shadowy, with the feeling that you don't know who to trust anymore. Even within families you don't know who to talk to. There's constantly a feeling of people in the shadows and people walking by and voices that you can't quite see but you know they're there.

We move out of the palace in two scenes, when the action moves from this destruction: into Lady Macduff's room, the children are in their pajamas and their dressing gowns, so they're very vulnerable. It's bedtime; they could be drinking cocoa. A kind of feeling of English comfort and home, it's very simple and it's very imposed. When we go to England with Malcolm, we wanted something that was natural and beautiful, and outside, calm and pastoral. England should look beautiful and golden and happy, and then we go back to this darkness again.

BUILDING THE PRODUCTION

Backstage information about *Macbeth*.

Opening February 5, 2010

Compiled by Jacque Frazzini,
Artistic Relations

Production photos: Michal Daniel

INTRODUCTION

In comments made on the first day of rehearsal, Director Joe Dowling described *Macbeth* as a play that is “driven by its action – with some of Shakespeare’s greatest speeches.” Dowling noted that audiences will relate to the contemporary overtones in this production, which emphasizes the sense of destruction brought on by war. Acknowledging that the thrust stage is the “best stage to see and do Shakespeare,” this production will create a world in which audiences will see the decline of Macbeth (Erik Heger) and watch his relationship with Lady Macbeth (Michelle O’Neill) fall apart as they mutually

self-destruct. Shakespeare has written many scenes in the play that take place at night or in darkness, creating a sense of unease throughout the production.

SET

Monica Frawley, Costume and Set Designer
Ed Saindon, Assistant Technical Director

Set designer Monica Frawley explains her design concept as “an empire having been built on blood.” Macbeth’s palace is laid on top of destruction with debris evident onstage and in the partially shattered back wall of the set reminiscent of a neo-classical destroyed building. The overall result is the feeling that after the first battle, chaos continues to build.

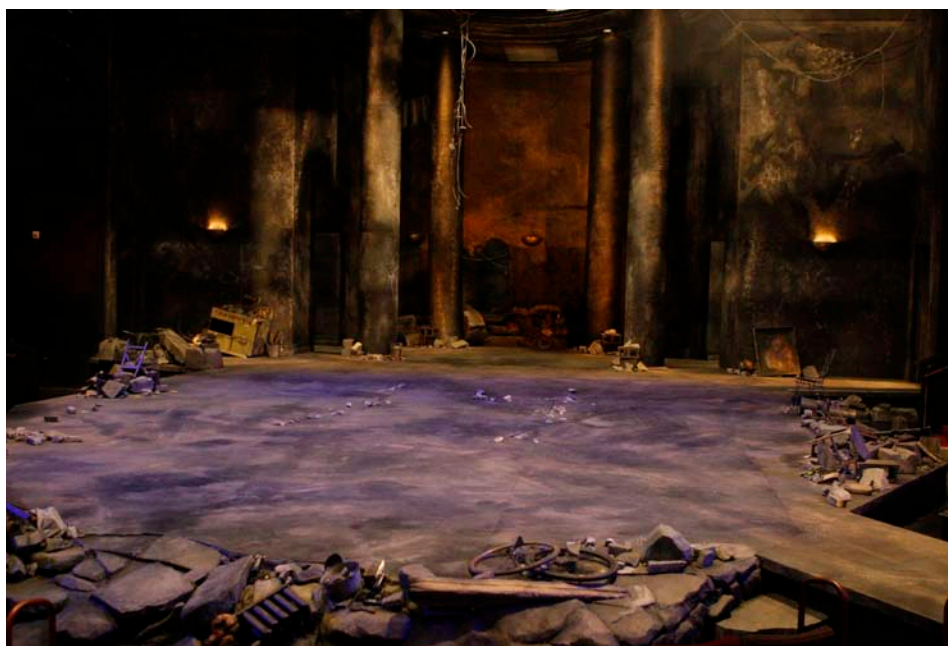
Assistant Technical Director Ed Saindon explains how this chaotic world was created onstage. The entire set is constructed of 1” x 4” plywood framing covered with Lauan (a type of plywood). Similar to a rib cage, the framing serves as a basis for the Lauan to be bent to a desired shape. Using Sonotube (a material used for concrete foundation footings in the housing industry) the four columns are constructed with a wood framing inside. Thirty inches in diameter with a height of 22 feet, the upstage sections of the columns are cut out to allow for steel pipes on which lighting instruments have been hung

The outer section of the ceiling opening is all wood construction using 1” x 6” and 1” x 4” framing with layers of polystyrene (a colorless Styrofoam) to create the recesses. Four recessed lighting instruments have been built into the set for downlighting on the columns. Two panels are used during the production to cover the ceiling opening – one that coordinates with the set color and one that has been painted with gold leaf for scenes within the palace such as the banquet and coronation scenes. In these scenes, a gold wall is lowered from the fly space above the stage. Built of all steel and wood construction, it is suspended on a line set (pipe) and controlled by a digital winch. To create the opening in the back wall of the set, Frawley sketched the type of opening she wanted, and the Scenic Shop cut it out and paint was applied.

Set painting is the job of Lead Scenic Artist Michael Hoover and his crew. Using a thin coating of a conventional product Surewall for texture, paint was applied to the set walls and doors. For the gold wall, the same technique was used, then painted with gold leaf and bronzing powder. The Scenic Shop purchased the carpet used in the palace scenes, designed and cut the desired shape; the edges were then professionally seamed. Hoover and his crew painted the black ring and added bronzing powder.

The stage deck has the same paint treatment as the set walls. To attain the amount of performance area that the production requires, elevators in the moat area (surrounding the stage) have been raised to their maximum level with the exception of the downstage center section. An elevator in the upstage area is used for three separate scenes – the witches’ cauldron, the appearance of the apparitions and the bathtub used in the Macduff family scene. For the cauldron and the apparitions, fluorescent lighting has been installed under the platform in the elevator.

All of the rigging in the production is computer controlled through a central unit located in the stage right wing and by automation systems in the catwalks above the stage. Using a series of digital winches, set pieces are moved on cues from the Production Stage Manager Russell Johnson. Stage Supervisor Brian Crow is responsible



for designing and installing the rigging for actors who fly in, and for the smoke and fog equipment in the catwalks and rubble piles on stage. Some of the rubble is two-pound polystyrene; some are real cinder blocks.

LIGHTING

Tom Mays, Lighting Supervisor
Ryan Connealy, Lighting Design Assistant

Lighting Design Assistant Ryan Connealy states, “The overall look of the production as a whole is very dark compared to other productions that I have worked on here – most likely due to the dark subject matter.” Much of the lighting is based on the scenic design and supports the architectural hints that surround the setting. With few exceptions, the lighting palette stays very cool throughout the entire production. Lights cascade through doorways to create the idea that there is action happening just outside of the audience’s view. Two follow spot operators use three follow spots to highlight Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the darker scenes.

Ministrips installed inside the four columns tone the upstage portion of the set, and light the gold wall that flies in and out. A total of 470 conventional lights are installed for the show with six moving lights and 44 color scrollers (which change color gels for



stage lighting). In addition, there are two HMI (Hydrargyrum Medium-Arc Iodide – a type of light which uses an arc lamp instead of an incandescent bulb – popular with film and television production companies) that provide light behind the ceiling piece. Twelve strobe type lights for lightning effects, two dry ice fog machines, three smoke machines and one hazer all create atmosphere for exterior scenes and for the battle. The production has approximately 100 lighting cues.

SOUND

Scott W. Edwards, Sound Designer
Adam Wernick, Composer

Sound Designer Scott W. Edwards describes the soundscape for this production as being abstract rather than realistic. The intention is to affect the sound of thunder, not to replicate the real sound. To create the dark atmosphere of *Macbeth*, Edwards has selected low frequency booms and percussive sounds used throughout but particularly in the opening battle scene. Floor mikes are used for amplification of the gun shots in this scene. Many of the sound effects – explosions, large cannons, battle sounds, horses’ galloping and whining, owl screeching and alarm bells – are from Edwards’ library. Sounds recorded in the Guthrie sound studio included music for Duncan’s (Raye Birk) entrance, the coronation of Macbeth, and the off-stage voices in the scene where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are plotting Duncan’s murder. Ringing bells, clinking party glasses and door knocking sound effects were also recorded in the studio.

Some scenes require amplification of voices to achieve the desired effect. When the apparitions appear, pre-recorded adult voices are heard with edited modifications. Macbeth uses a body mike with amplification for this scene. Other body mikes used in the production are for the weird sisters (Barbara Bryne, Isabell Monk O’Connor, Suzanne Warmanen), whose entrance is accompanied by percussive sounds.

With regard to the musical score, Edwards explains that it is a layered soundscape with low frequency rumbles and percussive sounds woven together with the actual music. In composing for the show, Adam Wernick explains his compositions as timeless and contemporary except for the traditional horn sounds. Due to the nature of this production of *Macbeth*, an electronic score seemed



appropriate as the dynamic, electronic textures keep the tension going. Wernick points out that entire scenes are underscored with sound textures that contribute to the audience’s engagement with what is happening on stage. Almost all of Macbeth’s soliloquies are underscored with sound, allowing the audience to experience what is going on inside his mind and understand his conflicts.

PROPS

Patricia Olive, Props Manager
Sarah Gullickson, Assistant Props Manager

Beginning with the battle scene that opens the play, weapons are a major part of the Props Department’s responsibility. Fight Director John Stead has choreographed fight scenes that are as realistic as possible while always being aware of the actors’ safety. As a result, the knives that are used were purchased from an online company, Cold Steel, Inc., and are made of rubber with blades spray-painted silver by Staff Props Craftsperson Kellie Larson. In the opening scene, Macbeth uses a .22 blank starter’s pistol; the “machine guns” are CO2 BB guns. Bayonets and bloody daggers have been pulled from Guthrie stock; however, the “blood” has been applied by Master Props

THE GUTHRIE PRODUCTION

Craftsperson Mel X. Springer by using shiny red nail polish which looks wet on stage. The “blood” that appears on the actors’ skin is Reel Blood purchased from the Reel Creations Company in California, which specializes in movie blood. It is particularly appreciated by the Costume Department as it is washable in cold water.

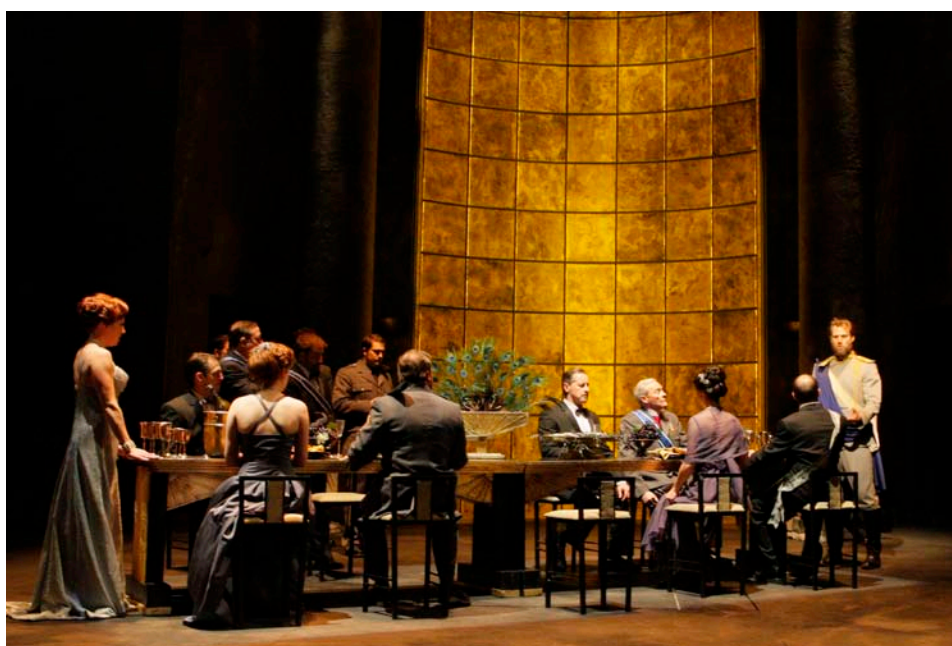
The most extensive scene for props is the banquet scene, which involved some challenges in flexibility and stability. Frawley based her design of the banquet tables on tables in the downtown Minneapolis Post Office. Built of wood by Staff Props Craftsperson Nick Golfis, the tables have pneumatic air castors which are lowered for stability at the beginning of the

scene, so Banquo’s ghost (Bill McCallum) can safely walk on the tables.

When the scene becomes chaotic, actors release the castors and the tables can separate. The art deco look of the tables was created by painting them with glossy black paint and adding gold leafing. Due to the violent nature of the latter part of the scene, some of the props such as dishes, goblets and food items are attached to the tables. Staff Props Craftsperson Stacey Schwebach made the peacock feather decoration; Golfis made the planter base. Chairs for this scene, including the two throne chairs, were built by Springer using welded box steel, which has been cut and welded. Larson did the upholstery.

Staff Props Craftsperson John Vlatkovich built the frame for the large sofa in the Macbeth castle, which is also air castored for stability; Props Craftsperson Cy Winship created the upholstery. Based on Frawley’s research, Schwebach designed the royal banners using satin fabric with gold lame for the gryphon design and gold fringe. Vlatkovich built the wall sconces using purchased 16” plastic globes which he cut to the desired shape and then attached to plywood.

Springer supplied the cast iron bathtub which was repainted by the Scenic Paint Department; all hardware was removed for the actors’ safety due to the physical nature of the scene. Finally, the rubble on the edges





of the stage has some interesting Guthrie connections. There is Marley's chair from the recent production of *A Christmas Carol*, and some of the burned books from the production of *9 Parts of Desire*.

WIGS

Ivy Loughborough, Wigmaster

Wigmaster Ivy Loughborough's department has responsibility for most of the blood effects that are used. Several characters have blood effects, but Loughborough cites that the extensive blood wounds for one of the characters required developing a blood effect that was quick, but did not spill over everyone else.

There are a total of 14 wigs in the production. All of the women have wigs with each of the witches having three – the grey ones having been specifically designed with colors which suit the actor's look. No men's wigs are used nor is there any use of facial hair. Loughborough cites the 2-hour running time as a challenge due to the quick changes that must be made.



COSTUMES

Monica Frawley, Set and Costume Designer

As with other elements of the production, the costuming affects a timeless look with obvious period differences and generally muted colors.

CREATING THE PRODUCTION

As the play develops, many consultations and "notes" are given about details in the play and the movement and characterizations of the different parts. Here is a photograph of one of those "notes" sessions with director Joe Dowling.



FOR FURTHER READING

EDITIONS OF *MACBETH*

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Huggett, Richard. *Supernatural on Stage: Ghosts and Superstitions of the Theatre*. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1975.

Marsha, Ngai. *Light Thickens*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982 (a murder mystery set during a production of *Macbeth*)

FILMS

Macbeth. 1948 adaptation directed by Orson Welles. Featuring Orson Welles as Macbeth, Jeanette Nolan as Lady Macbeth and Roddy McDowall as Malcolm.

Throne of Blood. 1961 adaptation set in medieval Japan. Directed by Akira Kurosawa, featuring Toshirō Mifune as Taketori Washizu and Isuzu Yamada as Lady Asaji Washizu.

Macbeth. 1971 adaptation directed by Roman Polanski. Featuring John Finch as Macbeth and Francesca Annis as Lady Macbeth.

Macbeth. 1979 television adaptation of a Royal Shakespeare Company stage production. Directed by Philip Casson, featuring Ian McKellen as Macbeth, Judi Dench as Lady Macbeth and Roger Rees as Malcolm.

Macbeth. 2006 adaptation set in the ganglands of Melbourne, Australia. Directed by Geoffrey Wright, featuring Sam Worthington as Macbeth and Victoria Hill as Lady Macbeth.

RELATED WEBSITES

Folger Shakespeare Library
www.folger.edu

The wealth of resources found on this site include lesson plans, study guides, and interactive activities, as well as sections of interest for students, teachers, and scholars.

Internet Shakespeare Editions
<http://internetsakespeare.uvic.ca/index.html>
Collection of materials on Shakespeare and his plays, an extensive archive of productions and production materials.

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet
shakespeare.palomar.edu
An annotated guide to Shakespeare-related websites, including links pertaining to Shakespeare's life, to criticism on the plays, and to historical context. Maintained by Terry A. Gray.

The Global Electronic Shakespeare Conference
www.shaksper.net
Educational mailing list for all things Shakespeare, edited by Hardy M. Cook.

Shakes Sphere
www.cummingsstudyguides.net
Includes study guides for a wide range of literary works. A comprehensive guide to Shakespeare in general, his life, his theaters, the meter of his poetry, and a variety of informative essays. The site is maintained by Michael J. Cummings, a freelance writer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

THE PLAY

1. Discuss the known source of the play (i.e. Holinshed's *Chronicles*) and how Shakespeare used and altered this history for his play. What does he retain from Holinshed? What changes does he make? Can you identify reasons for the changes he makes as well as the effect those changes have on the story as he tells it?
2. Examine the themes, situations and the characters' relations and motivations in the play. What similarities do you notice here common to other Shakespeare works familiar to you? Give examples of how this story relates to other tragedies or history plays you may know, such as *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Richard III*.
3. Shakespeare wrote this play very early in the reign of James I of England (formerly James VI of Scotland). Research the reign of James I. Discuss how the influence of James' monarchy, background and interests are reflected in *Macbeth*.
4. Identify various references to the classical world mentioned in *Macbeth*. Why and how does Shakespeare utilize these? How do these mythological figures or legends evoked in the text enhance the story being told? Which characters most relate to the classical allusions?
5. What role and/or function do the Weïrd Sisters have in *Macbeth*? What do we know about them and what questions are left unanswered? Why do you suppose they choose to share their prophesy with Macbeth? Describe how they have an active or passive role in the tragedy.
6. *Macbeth* is a particularly masculine play, with only one lead female character in Lady Macbeth, plus important but smaller roles in the Weïrd Sisters and Lady Macduff. How do these women fit into this masculine world? Compare and contrast them in terms of how each relates to gender, gender roles, power, relationships and other themes as they occur to you. How are these women similar? How different?
7. How does the world of England, which we see briefly when Macduff and Rosse visit Malcolm, differ from that of Scotland? How are the court and king of England described? Contrast that with Macbeth's court in Scotland.
8. Discuss the function of the Porter scene, both structurally within the play and topically as it would have related to Shakespeare's contemporary audience. Do you find the scene funny? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. Discuss the nature of the Macbeth marriage. Is it a loving relationship? Give examples why or why not. How does their relationship change as the play progresses? Contrast their marriage with the only other we see in the play, Macduff and Lady Macduff's. What can we glean from Lady Macduff's speeches about the nature of her marriage?
10. Why do you suppose Macduff flees to England without either taking his family with him or ensuring their protection? Does the play answer this question to your satisfaction? Why or why not?
11. Reread Macbeth's soliloquies. Describe his thought process and the nature of his philosophical tendencies. Compare them with speeches by other of Shakespeare's characters, such as Hamlet, Iago, Richard III, Henry V and Lear. How would you characterize the differences or similarities?
12. Describe Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's personalities. What do you think each character desires most? Fears most? The idea of murdering Duncan occurs to each of them individually very quickly. What is it about these characters that draws them to murder so easily? Compare and contrast the effect of that murder on each of them.
13. Discuss the nature of friendship and trust in *Macbeth*. Who are friends at the top of the play and how many of these bonds remain at the end? How do people determine who they can believe and trust in this play? How are allegiances between characters won or lost? Give examples from the play that illustrate how wary people must be around others.
14. Shakespeare gives us information about the world outside the immediate scenes we are watching. When he and Macduff come to wake Duncan, Lenox describes the wild night he witnessed. Rosse and Angus discuss the unnatural events that follow Duncan's murder. What is the effect of learning about these events, both on us the audience and on the characters? How does nature reflect the actions of the play?
15. Discuss the importance of sleep in this play. Why is Macbeth so concerned with the voice he claims to have heard saying "Macbeth does murder sleep"? How is this concern realized, or not, in the course of events?
16. Macbeth describes his only real motive for killing Duncan as "vaulting ambition." Describe the nature of ambition in this play. Who is ambitious and who is not? Is it a virtue? A vice? How does ambition relate to leadership?
17. Describe what you think the future of Scotland in this play will be. Has Scotland broken its cycle of violence or is it likely to continue after Malcolm is king? Give evidence for your opinion.

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

18. One exciting challenge of Shakespeare's text lies in the richness of the language. How do you feel about and respond to the language in *Macbeth*? Did anything in particular stand out to you? Select quotes from the play and discuss their appeal to you.

19. One of the themes that runs through *Macbeth* is the idea of equivocation. Define this concept in your own words. Give examples of characters in the play who equivocate and in what situations. What characteristics, if any, do these examples share?

20. A majority of the scenes in the play take place at night or in the early morning. Cite examples from the play of how Shakespeare's language creates the sense of time and darkness for the audience.

21. Identify words that have changed in either form or meaning since the Elizabethan days. How do they fit in our everyday patterns of speaking and writing? What makes them appealing, significant or obsolete?

22. The word "man" appears more than 30 times in the script (as the Guthrie is performing it.) Describe the various ways in which "man" or "manliness" are introduced in the play. How does it contrast with "woman" or "womanliness." What is considered "manly" or "womanly" in the world of the play. What other opposites to "man" are suggested in the play?

23. Voice and Language Consultant Andrew Wade has noted that one of the interesting aspects of the language in this play is the way in which characters avoid naming or talking about murder. As a result the word "it" appears frequently, such as in Macbeth's soliloquy that begins "If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly." Find other examples where this occurs and describe the effect it creates for the audience. What does this say about the characters?

THE GUTHRIE PRODUCTION

24. If you read the play before watching the performance, what did you find different onstage from what you imagined? How did the acting company help your perception of the characters? How does hearing the words spoken impact you differently than reading the words?

25. Director Joe Dowling thinks the play moves very quickly and relentlessly, and thus he wanted to perform the play in two hours without an intermission. Do you agree with his assessment on the play's speed? Give specific examples of how this play moves briskly. What effect would putting an intermission in have had on your feeling of the performance?

26. A number of roles have been combined in this production: Seyton has become the third murderer and takes a number of servant roles in the play; Cathness and Menteth, minor characters introduced late in Shakespeare's text, are here the murderers Macbeth hires to kill Banquo; and the Porter is also the messenger who tries to warn Lady Macduff that she's in danger. Can you identify any others? Describe the effect combining these roles has on the storytelling. Give examples from the text that support the decision to combine roles.

27. Joe Dowling has commented that he likes to alter the time frame of Shakespeare's plays since he has "an absolute aversion to the sort of puffy-pants productions and men in tights." Discuss this point in light of the claim that a so-called "classical approach" to the canon should be used when performing Shakespeare's plays.

28. Why do you think that artists prefer to transpose the setting of a play? How do such changes aid in making the plays more relevant to contemporary audiences? If you were to produce *Macbeth* and transpose its setting, what time and place would you choose? What would you hope to convey through this choice?

29. How do the technical elements of this show enhance the Guthrie performance? What aspects are strengthened by the set design, the costumes and the sound elements? How do they reflect the characters, their actions and affect your view of the play?

30. Describe the effect the scenes of battle and violence had on you and your view of the play. Had you imagined a similar amount of violence? Shakespeare's text calls for some violence to be shown on stage, but details are left up to the director and actors. In this era of realistic violence and gore on television and in films, what can the stage do to create a visceral experience? Shakespeare also has characters describe violent scenes, such as the bloody Sergeant's account of Macbeth's war efforts and Rosse delicately sidestepping questions about the Macduff family. What effects do the description of violence have on the audience? Is showing violence more powerful than describing it? Or vice versa?

31. How does the Guthrie production utilize music? How does it affect and shift your perspective of or feelings toward the story and the characters?