



**GUILDFORD  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPANY**

# MACBETH

**Directed by Caroline Devlin  
Designed by Sarah Bacon**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

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**Saxton Bampfylde**

**Holy Trinity Church, Guildford High Street  
4<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> February 2013  
BOX OFFICE: 01483 304384  
[www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk](http://www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk)**



## EDUCATION PACK

# INTRODUCTION

This education pack accompanies the site-specific production of *Macbeth* staged by Guildford Shakespeare Company at Holy Trinity Church in February 2013.

The content is for teachers preparing pupils and students in advance of attending the performances.

## A BIT ABOUT GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Guildford Shakespeare Company is a professional site-specific theatre company, specialising in Shakespeare. Our approach places the audience right at the heart of the action, immersing them in the world of the play, thereby demystifying the legend that Shakespeare is for an elite, educated few but rather is immediate and accessible to everyone.

We want our 21st Century audiences to experience the same thrill and excitement that Shakespeare's original audiences must have felt when they first saw the Ghost appear in *Hamlet*, the rousing battle cry of Henry V, and edge-of-your-seat anticipation in *The Comedy of Errors*.

At GSC we use diverse and unusual non-theatre venues to create dynamic and challenging productions. From castles to lakes, churches to pubs, our approach merges the audience and acting space so that you're given a visceral, stimulating and, above all, unique theatre experience.

GSC productions are fresh, fast and modern in their interpretation of Shakespeare, but always in the original text and NEVER dumbed down.

# MACBETH – WHAT MAKES IT SUCH A GOOD PLAY?

*Macbeth* is one Shakespeare's shortest and most popular plays. It is a gripping story full of blood-thirsty ambition, deadly revenge and supernatural powers. Shakespeare created the perfect case study of how someone can become consumed with desires, and how a rational mind can be so easily corrupted.

The nature of Kingship and what it meant to be a King was at the front of Shakespeare's audience's mind when he wrote this play in 1606: the new King James I of England & VI of Scotland had only recently survived an assassination attempt in the form of The Gunpowder Plot, and here was a play all about what happens if you kill a King.

Temptation and desire, riddles and questions are constantly thrown up during the play. The Weird Sisters talk in riddles "Fair is foul and foul is fair"; Macbeth talks in riddles "This supernatural soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good"; even the time of day is not clear "Almost at odds with morning, which is which".

Potentially only two scenes take place in daylight (the England scene in 4,3 and the final battle sequences in 5,1). It is a play shrouded in darkness, where nothing is what it seems; questions are everywhere "What are you?", "Is this a dagger I see before me", "Where are they? Gone?". Things constantly appear and vanish, people appear and vanish, forests seem to move and even tame animals turn on each other and attack.

Of course there is also a strong supernatural element in the play. The Three Weird Sisters do cast spells and there are ghosts and apparitions, but it is interesting to consider that the sisters are never referred to as witches by any character in the play, and indeed they never actually make anyone do anything...they merely suggest and plant the seed of a thought...

*If* there is magic at work in this play, then it is in the writing; it is Shakespeare who is the master conjurer. With just the potent power of words he casts a spell over us, transporting the listener/viewer to an intimate and almost claustrophobic world, where suspicion lurks around every corner. When you watch the play, for a moment close your eyes and just *listen* to the words and their sounds...

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR, **CAROLINE DEVLIN...**

*“A world of chaos and guerrilla war is being waged, where the Lords Macbeth and Banquo reveal themselves to be masters of bloody warfare, earning lands and well deserved plaudits from Scotland's grateful King, Duncan. But unbeknown to Duncan, his seat is not as safe as he might hope, golden boy Macbeth, has enjoyed the taste of success and spurred on by some 'supernatural soliciting' sets his sights on the ultimate goal, the crown itself.*

*Steeped in Celtic ritual and mysticism, this is an ancient world yet uncomfortably, one not too far from our own. Drawing inspiration from the epic visions of Edward Gordon Craig (early 20<sup>th</sup> Century theatre designer), the early medieval period and harnessing the dissonant sounds of early Celtic melodies this production evokes a world of tyranny, chaos and ritual, where life is cheap and power grasped by only the bloodiest hands.”*

**For more from Caroline and her vision of the play read the interview in the Souvenir Programme, available from the Box Office.**

# SYNOPSIS

On a battlefield a wounded soldier informs Duncan, King of Scotland, of Macbeth's great courage in battle. Macduff arrives to inform the King of the traitorous actions of the thane of Cawdor. The King immediately sentences the thane of Cawdor to death and confers that title upon Macbeth.

Macbeth and Banquo encounter the three weird sisters on the heath who prophesy that Macbeth (still uninformed of his new title) shall become the thane of Cawdor and eventually King, while Banquo shall be the father of Kings. When Macbeth is greeted with his new title, the sisters' prophecies already seem to be coming true, and Macbeth begins to wonder if Kingship really could be possible.

At home, Lady Macbeth receives a letter from her husband detailing the sisters' prophecies and their accuracy thus far. She sets her sights on becoming queen and plans to murder the King when he visits.

That evening, whilst Duncan is a guest at their home, Macbeth, with his wife's urging and assistance, murders the sleeping King in his bed. The King's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee the country in terror, and Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland. However, he is haunted by the prediction that Banquo's children are to inherit the throne and fearful that Macduff, a nobleman suspicious of Macbeth's quick rise to power, will take matters into his own hands.

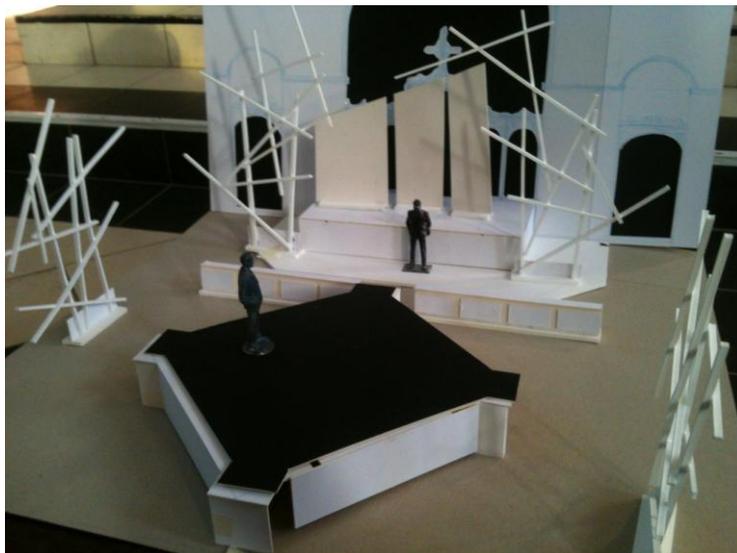
Macbeth arranges for the murder of Banquo and his son, Fleance. The double murder is botched and Fleance escapes. Later at a banquet, Macbeth is about to take his seat when the ghost of Banquo appears (invisible to the guests), and his frenzied and incriminating remarks break up the feast and raise Macduff's suspicions even more.

Troubled, Macbeth goes back to consult the weird sisters. They assure him that 'no man of woman born' can harm him and that he cannot be defeated until Birnam Wood, the nearby forest, moves toward Dunsinane, the site of Macbeth's castle. When told that Macduff has fled to England, Macbeth, in increasing paranoia orders the murder of Lady Macduff and her children.

Macduff, gathering forces with Malcolm who had also fled to England, leads an army against Macbeth, the soldiers covering their advance with branches cut from the trees of Birnam Wood. Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth has been completely overcome by remorse and guilt and, with an unsettled mind, dies, presumably by her own hand.

During his fight with Macduff, Macbeth learns that his opponent was prematurely ripped from his mother's womb, a Caesarean birth. The sisters' prophecies resonate but, rather than being captured alive, fights to his death. He is killed and Macduff announces Scotland's freedom from tyranny.

# THE VENUE & SET DESIGNS



# COSTUME DESIGNS BY SARAH BACON



# DESIGN QUESTIONS

What challenges might working in a real church present for a theatre company staging *Macbeth*? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Looking at the model box designs, what kind of an experience do you think the audience are likely to receive from this production?

What do you think are the challenges for actors using this type of staging? Is it very different from Shakespeare's original theatre?

What are your expectations of the play now you have seen the set designs?

What do you think the tall structures around the edges of the model box might be used for?

What do the costume designs suggest about how the play might be staged?

Did you expect these sort of costumes when you read the play?

How would you costume the characters if you were designing a production?

# THE CAST



Tom McGovern  
*Macbeth*



Johanne Murdock  
*Lady Macbeth*



Noel White  
*Banquo*



Robert Maskell  
*King Duncan/Porter*



Ben Ashton  
*Malcolm/Weird Sister*



Matt Pinches  
*Donalbain/Weird  
Sister/Doctor*



Morgan Philpott  
*Macduff/Captain*



Hayley Doherty  
*Lady Macduff/Weird  
Sister*

# CREATIVE TEAM

<b>Director</b>	Caroline Devlin
<b>Designer</b>	Sarah Bacon
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Declan Randall
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Matt Eaton
<b>Fight Director</b>	Philip d'Orléans
<b>Movement Director</b>	Vanessa Cook
<b>Verse &amp; Vocal Coach</b>	Sarah Stephenson
<b>Assistant Designer</b>	Jessica Howard
<b>Production Manager</b>	Olivia Dermott-Walsh
<b>Deputy Prod. Manager</b>	Ian Taylor
<b>DSM</b> Elaine Yeung	<b>ASM</b> Lisa Cochrane
<b>Producer</b>	Sarah Gobran

# GET MORE FROM GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY...

Visit our website to view the special films we have had made for Macbeth:

**Meet the Macbeths** – interviews with actors Tom McGovern and Johanne Murdock

**Boys With Swords** – how stage fights are created and interviews with actors

**From Holy Trinity to Dunsinane** – a time lapse sequence charting the transformation of the venue.

All films can be viewed online at [www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk/films](http://www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk/films)

## WORKSHOPS

Don't forget, GSC also create and deliver bespoke in-school workshops.

Workshops are practical, fun and designed to explore the text as a script written for performance.

For more information about our education work and costs visit [www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk/schools](http://www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk/schools)



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Reg. Office: Suite 5B, The Oast House, 5 Mead Lane, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7DY