



**GUILDFORD
SHAKESPEARE
COMPANY**

MACBETH

&

ROMEO AND JULIET

SCHOOLS TOURS 2018

EDUCATION PACK

INTRODUCTION

This education pack has been written by GSC to complement the schools tour of Macbeth & Romeo and Juliet. The information is aimed at final year GCSE students

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Romeo and Juliet 2018. Image Credit: Steve Porter

GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY OUR APPROACH TO THEATRE

"This company is nothing short of miraculous"

Brian Blessed OBE, GSC Honorary Patron

Guildford Shakespeare Company is an award-winning professional theatre company. A registered charity, we are based in Guildford, Surrey. Established in 2006, GSC is one of the largest producers of home-grown theatre in the region.

As well as our main performance programme, we run a huge range of in-house education classes for all ages, develop community Outreach projects and actively work in and with schools across Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire.

Our Vision is to be a centre for performance and production excellence, as well as the go-to the providers of Shakespeare education in the South East.

"This is why British theatre is such a marvel"

Daily Telegraph

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.

"I am so thrilled to be able to bring my grandchildren to such quality theatre right here on our doorstep. I also think that the proximity to the stage makes the action all the more real and compelling for youngsters"

Audience member.

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

We hope you enjoy these fabulous stories as much as we enjoy re-telling them.

All best wishes

Matt & Sarah

Joint Artistic & Executive Producers

THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

MACBETH

Lady Macbeth, Malcolm, First Witch

Rebecca Camilleri

Macbeth

Ben Dearden

Banquo, Duncan, Ross, Seyton

Imran Momen

Macduff, Doctor, Murderer, Second & Third Witch

Joanna Clarke

Director

Ant Stones

Designer

Beth Mann

Associate Director

Francesca McNally

ROMEO AND JULIET

Tybalt, Nurse, Prince, Lady Montague

Rebecca Camilleri

Mercutio, Friar Laurence, Capulet, Balthasar

Ben Dearden

Romeo, Paris, Montague, Abraham

Imran Momen

Juliet, Benvolio, Apothecary, Gregory

Joanna Clarke

Director

Gabriella Bird

Designer

Beth Mann

Associate Director

Francesca McNally

MACBETH 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. He is killed and Macduff announces Scotland's freedom from tyranny.

MONARCHY AND MACBETH

Shakespeare was writing for the theatre during the reigns of two monarchs, Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. The plays he wrote during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are often seen to embody the generally happy, confident and optimistic mood of the Elizabethan people. However, those he wrote during James's reign, such as *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, are darker and more cynical, reflecting the public insecurities and civil conflict of the Jacobean period.

When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, she had no children, or even nephews or nieces. The throne was offered to James Stuart, James VI of Scotland, a distant cousin of Elizabeth. Brought up by Protestant regents, James maintained a Protestant regime in Scotland and so was an acceptable choice for England which had become firmly Protestant under Elizabeth. However, his accession was by no means a popular choice with everyone. Since he was not a direct descendant of Elizabeth, James feared that discontented factions might gather around them.

Guy Fawkes and his men tried to blow up James and his parliament in 1605. The conspirators were betrayed, and horribly tortured on the rack until they confessed. They were then executed in the most brutal fashion as a warning to other would-be traitors. *Macbeth* is to some extent a cautionary tale, warning any other potential regicides (king-killers) of the awful fate that will inevitably overtake them.

King James had this medal (shown below) made to commemorate the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot. Shakespeare included a strong link to this medal in *Macbeth*.

'Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't'

Lady Macbeth (A1.S5).



WHY DID SHAKESPEARE CHOOSE MACBETH?

Shakespeare's plot is only partly based on fact. Macbeth was a real eleventh century Scottish king, but the historical Macbeth, who had a valid right to the throne, reigned capably in Scotland from 1040 till 1057 so 17 years! Not the one year that we see in Shakespeare's play. He did kill a King Duncan, whom he had defeated in battle, but the real Duncan was a weak man, around Macbeth's own age, not the respected elderly figure we meet in the play. He was in turn defeated by Duncan's son, Malcolm. But that's about all they have in common.

As a tribute to the Stuarts, and James in particular, Shakespeare presents Banquo as a wise, noble and regal figure who arouses jealousy in Macbeth as much for his own good qualities as for the promise the witches make to him of founding a dynasty. The Stuart kings claimed descent from Banquo, but Banquo is a mythical figure who never really existed.

The patronage of the King and court was obviously valuable to Shakespeare. In Macbeth, he seeks to flatter and please the King. When the witches show Macbeth the future, he sees a line of kings descended from Banquo that seems to 'stretch out to the crack of doom'. This flatters King James with the promise of a long-standing dynasty, although in fact James's father, Charles I, would be executed, and the Stuart line was to die out with Queen Anne in 1714.

James was also very interested in the supernatural and had written on the subject. During his reign as King of Scotland, James is known to have been directly involved in some witch trials at North Berwick. Women were regularly burnt as witches, and Shakespeare presents his witches as powerful and evil emissaries of the devil. The witch scenes would have been taken very seriously by audiences at the time.



Macbeth 2018. Image Credit: Steve Porter

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR OF MACBETH ANT STONES

What appeals to you about the play?

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most dynamic plays. Its plot is fast-paced and it has some of the most incredible language. "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" feels like a condensed version of many of his most famous speeches and there's still space for Shakespeare to almost abandon poetry altogether with the quick-fire panic of the Macbeths, "Did not you speak? / When? / Now / As I descended? / Ay."

The Macbeths are the heart of the play and their relationship is one of the most intriguing in history. We've studied the play with thousands of students, actors and creatives, yet everyone has a different opinion on where the power lies. Throw the witches and their prophecies into the mix and it gets even more complicated. Every production must make their own choices as to who is to blame for the play's tragic end. Is it a powerful woman bullying her husband? Does the mighty warrior-Thane know exactly what he's doing from the start, or is everyone the victim to otherworldly evil?

When did you decide to set the play?

We chose to set the play in an alternate version of history, inspired by the 1930s and the 'Year of Three Kings'. The play's events take place in a very short space of time and affects a whole nation. As Macbeth descends into madness, his country turns against him and we used the media of the time (newspapers and radio) to highlight the impact of Macbeth's actions on his subjects.

The witches are based on protesters of the time, allowing us to explore the play's anti-establishment themes further, while hinting at their ulterior motives. The witches are fascinating characters, as they flirt between the real world and the supernatural. Hiding them behind their masks allowed us to keep them at arm's length and retain a level of mystery. Are there real people beneath their masks, or are they an embodiment of an unnatural and evil power?

How did you find adapting the Script?

Cutting Macbeth to an hour leaves you with an intensely-focused version of the story. As the full play revolves around the Macbeths, with no real sub-plot to speak of, you lose less nuance and detail than you might in Shakespeare's other works.

To counteract the limited time for the secondary characters, it's important to maintain their important scenes. During rehearsals, we discovered that it's essential for Macduff and Malcolm's story that they're both present to hear of the attack of Macduff's home.

This becomes the catalyst for their revenge and allows the audience a moment to crown them as our undoubted heroes.

The idea of the seen and unseen, reality versus fiction, is important in the play. Macbeth sees things that no one else can. Lady Macbeth enters her own world of dreams (or nightmares). She never sees the witches, only hear of them through reports and her death is kept off stage. Cutting the play allowed us to explore it with some bold choices, such as keeping the ghost off stage and withholding the death of Banquo from the audience, mirroring Lady Macbeth's ignorance of her husband's plan.

FACTS ABOUT MACBETH

Did you know that...

- Macbeth is the only play by Shakespeare that includes the word 'rhinoceros'. (Act III scene 4)
- The role of Macbeth is 719 lines long, which is only half the length of Hamlet.
- There is a superstition that says you must not call the play Macbeth when in a theatre and so, many people call it 'The Scottish Play'. Origins of the superstition against saying "Macbeth" in a theatre are unclear. One idea is that Shakespeare took some lines for his three witches from a real coven who cursed the play. If you do say 'Macbeth' in a theatre, you are meant to walk three times in a circle anti-clockwise, then either spit or say a rude word.
- At the premiere, it was reported that an actor died when a real dagger was used in a performance, rather than a fake one. Also, in the 1940s, actor Harold Norman was stabbed during a sword fight in the play during a production of it in Oldham and would die from his wounds. These are just a few examples.
- Originally Shakespeare's plays were performed by all male casts of actors, as it was not acceptable for women to perform.

ROMEO AND JULIET SYNOPSIS

The ancient feud of two rival families, the Capulets and the Montagues, spills out on to the streets of Verona, fueled by the fiery Tybalt Capulet. It is broken up by the Prince who threatens death for anyone “who disturbs our streets”.

Later that evening the Capulets hold a great ball to introduce their daughter, Juliet to a young count, Paris, whom they wish her to marry. The young members of the Montague family, Romeo and his cousin, Benvolio along with their friend Mercutio, decide to attend the event in disguise.

During the ball Romeo sees Juliet from across the room and is instantly enchanted by her. Juliet’s cousin Tybalt notices the presence of the Montagues, but Capulet reminds him of the Queen’s warning and the party comes to an end without a fight.

Romeo sneaks back into the garden and hears Juliet on her balcony talking to herself about the danger of loving an enemy. Their overwhelming attraction for one another results in the exchange of vows of love and they plan to marry in secret the next day.

That morning Romeo confesses his love to Friar Lawrence. The Friar considers that their marriage might end the feud between the families and agrees to marry them. Once married, they go their separate ways, until they may meet that night.

However, Tybalt tries to pick a fight with Romeo and when Romeo refuses to fight, Mercutio takes up his sword and a street fight ensues. Mercutio is killed and Romeo, enraged at the death of his friend, kills Tybalt and is banished by the Prince.

Before he flees Verona, Romeo and Juliet have their one night together. The strength of their love transcends the uncertain future, yet a shadow hovers over them.

Unaware of this secret marriage, the Capulets continue to go ahead with their plans for Juliet to wed Paris. In a panic, Juliet goes to Friar Lawrence for help. He gives her a sleeping potion that will make her appear “as though dead” and assures her he will get word to Romeo of the plan. When she awakes, they will be reunited.

Tragically, the message goes astray. Romeo receives word of Juliet’s supposed death and blinded by grief, he returns to Verona, determined to be with her in death. At the tomb he meets Paris who has also heard of Juliet’s death. To stop Romeo entering her tomb Paris challenges him and is killed. Then at the side of Juliet’s body, Romeo drinks a fatal draught of poison.

Just as the poison takes its effect, Juliet wakes up. Seeing Romeo dead beside her and using his dagger, she takes her own life.

CONSIDERING THE VIOLENCE IN ROMEO & JULIET...

In the same way that we flock to the cinema to see the spectacular stunts and special effects in the latest James Bond film or Star Wars, the same could be said for the Elizabethan theatre's audience, who were drawn by a larger than life spectacle...and a key ingredient of that spectacle was the violence. Sword fights and associated on-stage physical action staged by the professional artists was a huge draw. Don't forget that on Bankside, the Globe, Rose, Hope and Swan playhouses all rubbed shoulders with bear and bull-baiting, cock and fighting pits.

Consider the first eight plays of Shakespeare's career – The 3 parts of Henry VI, Richard III and Titus Andronicus are blood-soaked tales. A Midsummer Night's Dream, written in the same year as R&J, opens with a threat of death.

Shakespeare's society was a violent one. During her reign, Elizabeth I faced down numerous assassination attempts – a word that Shakespeare himself coined in Richard III. Throughout her reign there was a very real fear from religious fanatics seeking to upturn the established faith, a fever which would culminate 10 years after R&J in the famous Gunpowder Plot. England was almost at constant war – whether it be Spain, France or Ireland.

Weapons were fairly easy to come by. Most young men, even servants, carried a knife or similar. In 1592, the Lord Mayor had to travel to Southwark to quell a riot of apprentices from the Feltmakers Guild at a playhouse.

In the year of Romeo & Juliet, London saw the largest riots for 80 years, when 1000 apprentices took to the streets around Tower Hill to protest about social inequality. A curfew was imposed and the theatres closed. The Lord Mayor even requested that the Theatre and Rose playhouses be pulled down.

The Italian Fencing Master Vincentio Saviolo from Padua had recently set up his fencing school in Blackfriars, and in 1594-5 published the first manual on the art of using the rapier and dagger (many of the terms Mercutio mentions in the play can be found in this manual). Given the number of fights in plays, one of the pre-requisites for being an Elizabethan actor was skill in swordsmanship. R&J has three major sword fights, two of them resulting in loss of life.

Actors also seemed to take their "mad blood", as Benvolio calls it, into the taverns and streets. Christopher Marlowe famously died from an argument over a bill and died from a dagger through the eye in 1593; Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's friend and rival playwright, actually killed a man in 1598; whilst one William Whyte claimed to have been set upon by four assailants outside the Swan playhouse in 1596, one of them being a Mr William Shakespeare!

Being in the audience could be equally dangerous it would seem. In 1587 there was the report of a child and a pregnant woman being shot from the stage, and in 1613 William Besty was stabbed in a stage fight at The Fortune playhouse.

But the violence in R&J is not only confined to the streets and the young bloods. Indoors there is also the threat of domestic violence. Lord Capulet is particularly visceral in how he will “drag” Juliet on a “hurdle” to her wedding with Paris if he has to. ‘Carting’ was a regular punishment especially for those who had committed infidelity or incest, where you were dragged through the streets for all to see, with a sign announcing the crime tied to you or the horse.

Capulet also comments that his “fingers itch”: a wonderfully written phrase with terrifying connotations. Wife-beating, although illegal and condemned by everyone, was still prevalent in families. In 1589 Simon White admitted he had beaten his wife and “corrected her with a small beechen wand”, whilst the astrologer Simon Forman said of his wife that “she would not be quiet till I gave her 2 or 3 boxes” – as in a boxing of the ears.

Mothers and daughters were principally seen as the property of their husbands and fathers, and although his role was primarily to protect and nurture, the way a man conducted himself was largely up to him. Capulet himself says he has worked “tirelessly” in his “care” to ensure Juliet be well “matched”. The vitriolic tirade that pours out of him at her disobedience is truly shocking...but again, possibly not as unusual to the audience as it might seem to us watching today.

Common punishments for breaking the law included standing in the pillory, having your ears cut off or even having them nailed to the pillory. The death penalty could be given for crimes ranging from egg stealing to treason. Given these retributions, Lady Capulet’s fervent desire to seek out one she knows can find Romeo and poison him, is perhaps not such a surprise.

The Friar’s solution to Juliet’s plight even proposes a death-like scenario, whilst Juliet herself in the end commits suicide – something which was abhorred at the time as a crime. Those who took their lives were refused Christian burial, buried outside the city walls, and their family’s honour forever tainted.

R&J on the one hand is a time-less, tragic love story with some of the most exquisite poetry about the tenderness of the heart. On the other hand, it typifies the aggressive world which in our heroes not only are pitched against but also what Shakespeare and his audience lived with on a daily basis.

NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION ROMEO AND JULIET

The Play

Romeo and Juliet is a classic in every sense of the word. The central characters are the most famous lovers in the world. The warring families are instantly recognizable touchstones for all modern conflict and the fate of their youngest members – lying side-by-side in the tomb – is considered one of the most poignant images of tragedy in history.

Shakespeare tells us exactly how the play will unfold in his beautiful prologue. In a striking blend of poetry and theatre, he presents the tale in the form of a sonnet. This lets us know that this is first and foremost a love story. Nor is the last time we're reminded of this fact. When Romeo and Juliet first meet, their exchange also takes this form - fourteen lines, ending with a rhyming couplet.

JULIET
ROMEO

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

Shakespeare never lets us forget that these two lovers also live in a world of excessive violence. Immediately after the prologue, we are thrown into a fight between the two families. No one can escape this enmity and even our hero, Romeo, has slain two other characters by the end of the play. There is no escaping the violence of Verona and the beautiful language of love is thrown into the harsh contrast of hate, of blood and public brawls.

The Setting

Setting the play in modern-day Italy honoured the play's original setting, while representing the timeless quality of the story. The conflict between love and hate, youth and age, parent and child are still as prevalent today, as they always have been. A Mediterranean setting, with its sweltering heat and busy streets also helps make sense of the quick-tempered and passionate characters.

As the play progresses and the toll of the violence reaches its peak, we wanted to draw comparisons to knife-crime closer to home. It barely seems like a day goes by when the news isn't reporting some tragic loss of young life in our capital city. Despite the warnings of the play, it seems there will always be gangs and the inevitable casualties when they clash.

Adapting the Script

Cutting *Romeo and Juliet* to an hour is a challenge, as is portraying the vast array of characters with only four actors. There is a large list of strong supporting characters,

from the Nurse, the Friar, to Tybalt and Mercutio. Juliet's parents give us a wonderful insight into the family dynamics and the pressure the young are placed under (especially in contrast to the lack of stage-time for Romeo's mother and father).

Giving Lady Capulet's lines to her husband may lose some of the play's commentary on the role of women in society, but it replaces this with an enforced image of the patriarchal society. In our version of the play, we see a man, the head of the family, who expects his child to go along with his every wish and flies into an instant rage when he meets resistance. With the Nurse unable to compete with Capulet's power, Juliet has no one else to turn to and is forced to take drastic action.

FACTS ABOUT ROMEO AND JULIET

Did you know that...

- Written in 1595, Romeo and Juliet was 1st published in 1597 in a First Quarto.
- The Second Quarto was published in 1599 & is the one on which most modern editions are based.
- The folio version of the play does not feature the 'Star-Crossed lovers' prologue.
- The most likely source for Romeo and Juliet is Arthur Brooke's The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet (1562), an English verse translation of an Italian tale.
- There is reference to 'Montagues and Capulets' in Dante's early fourteenth-century work, Divine Comedy, as two warring Italian families.
- Juliet is only 13 years old, but we never learn Romeo's exact age.
- Shakespeare's play was adapted by Nahum Tate, who changed the story to give it a happy ending.
- Mary Saunderson became the first woman to play Juliet on the professional stage in 1662. Until 1660, women were not allowed to perform in public.

VIDEO LINKS

During a break in the tour we asked our cast a few questions. Follow the links below to see the individual videos.

Macbeth

[How does the production's setting explore the themes of Macbeth?](#)

[Who is more powerful, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth?](#)

[How would you define Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's relationship?](#)

[Is Macbeth completely to blame for his actions?](#)

Romeo and Juliet

[How does the production's setting explore the themes of Romeo and Juliet?](#)

[How would you define Romeo and Juliet's love?](#)

[How did the doubling of roles impact your view of the play?](#)

[Are the parent figures responsible for Romeo and Juliet's death?](#)



Macbeth Rehearsals 2018. Image Credit: Steve Porter